

The Cloud And The Fire

Numbers 9:15-23

MEMORY VERSE

NUMBERS 9:23

“At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Three blue or black stamp pads (washable ink), paper and pencils with erasers.

Brown paper grocery bags and markers.

Enough “feet” patterns (included with lesson) and balloons for the number of children in your class, markers, string (pre-cut into 2 foot lengths) and tape.

Various colors of construction paper (2 sheets per child) and scissors.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Follow the Cloud

Let the children make a “cloud map.” You will need a few blue or black stamp pads, pencils with erasers and paper. Allow the children to make several thumbprints onto the paper to represent clouds. They could then stamp dotted lines between the clouds by using pencil erasers to stamp on the stamp pad and then onto the paper. Make an imaginary path the people followed while following the cloud. If you would like, you could also allow the children to decorate the picture with markers so that it would look like a desert scene.

Explain that God doesn't give us a map ahead of time just like the children of Israel didn't have a map. We are led by the Holy Spirit. If He mapped everything out we would often rush to the finish when He would rather teach us along the way. But as we walk with Him we can look back and understand that He had everything all "mapped" out for us.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever played a game of "Red Light, Green Light"? Everyone lines up at the wall and then someone calls out "green light!" and everyone moves as fast as they can towards the person who is calling out. Then they call out "red light!" and everyone has to freeze. Finally, the first person to reach the finish line where the person calling out is standing wins. It was kind of like that for the nation of Israel. God would lead them and direct them and tell them when they could go and when they needed to stop. The Holy Spirit continues to direct our paths today because He dwells inside of us.

In today's lesson we are going to learn about God directing our steps and ordering our paths just as He did for Israel in the appearance of the cloud and the fire. We will learn how God's people learned to trust God and when God said move, they moved and when God said stop, they stopped. We will learn that we need to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways and HE will direct our paths! **God directs our steps.**

NUMBERS 9:15-23

And on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire.

So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night.

Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents.

At the command of the LORD the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped.

Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not journey.

So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the LORD they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the LORD they would journey.

So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey.

Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey.

At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

In these nine verses they are talking about the cloud and fire that God used to lead His people Israel in the wilderness. Notice that the people are in a wilderness. Could you imagine being lost in a big desert and not having any map or direction of which way to go? God is faithful not to leave us without direction. He tells us what He wants us to know and what paths that we should take.

Even though Moses was their leader, they looked to God for their guidance. There was no detailed plan to follow, they simply had to trust in the Lord and He led them in the cloud and the fire.

The pillar of cloud and fire were one and the same. There was not a pillar of cloud and then a pillar of fire, but they were the same thing (Exodus 14:24, 14:19; Numbers 9:21). So this pillar that contained the very presence of the Lord would appear as a cloud during the day and as fire by night. The cloud during the day could shield them from the scorching sun (Isaiah 49:10.). The fire by night would light their way in case they had to travel at night. Isn't it great that the Lord not only wants to direct our paths, but He also wants to protect us along the way?

The cloud and fire also kept enemies away. Could you imagine going to attack someone and they have this gigantic moving cloud or fire above their camp (Psalm 91:5-6)? This cloud was the presence of God leading His people, taking care of them. When the cloud would stop, it would descend upon the Tabernacle, the place that was made for God to dwell in.

Where else have we seen this fire? Could it have been the same fire that spoke to Moses in the burning bush? Could it also be the same cloud which descended upon Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16-18)? This is something all the people could see, the very presence of God was leading them, and all they needed to do was simply follow.

The children of Israel followed God whenever God wanted them to move. It simply says in the Bible that they moved when He wanted

them to, and they stopped and set up camp when it stopped. It didn't matter if it was in the afternoon or in the middle of the night, they followed God and it didn't matter how long-it could be weeks or months or just hours, but wherever the cloud and fire went, they went.

When we invite Jesus into our hearts to become Lord of our lives, He transforms us from our old sin nature and gives us the nature of Christ. He then comes into our lives and lives inside of us and makes our hearts His home. So He makes us His tabernacle, His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), and we have His very presence living inside of us, guiding us and directing us.

God's presence is always with us because the Holy Spirit lives inside of us. In the same way that God directed the Israelites, He also directs us. He leads us when it is time to do something in our lives. He also protects us from the enemy we have, the devil. All we need to do is to obey and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives. **God directs our steps.**

My Own Story

Just like the children of Israel have a story of where they went and how long they stayed and what happened there, each of us has a story of where we have been. Sometimes it is much easier to see the Lord's hand in our lives if we will put down in paper where He has taken us. Help your kids to begin this project and they can complete it at home with their parents.

Give each child a fairly large portion of a brown paper grocery bag, torn around the edges instead of cut. Show them how to crumple it up and gently open and crumple it again a few times. The more they do this, the more it will look like parchment or a piece of leather.

Let them start with their birth, drawing pictures to represent different times in their lives. Things that they may want to record could be moving to a new town or house, the birth of a sibling, a trip to the beach, a special Christmas, asking Jesus to save them, meeting a special friend, the day they broke an arm, etc. You could provide rubber stamps appropriate to the activity, or stickers or just markers. Ask them to look at their histories and think about how the Lord has worked in their lives.

Today we don't see God's presence in the form of a cloud or a pillar of fire lighting our way. So how do we know that God is with us? We know by faith that He lives inside of us and God proves Himself to us in all areas of our life: in providing for us, protecting us, comforting us, loving us, and being that loving father to us. Most importantly, He sent His Holy Spirit to empower our lives so that we can live more like Jesus. So we have in our own personal lives the same Spirit that was guiding the Israelites in the path they were supposed to take (1 Corinthians 10:1-2.).

Does that mean that God wants us to move around a lot? God can, if He wants to and we should if that is what He tells us to do, but God directs our paths in other ways. He could call us to a certain school to be a light. He could call us to give food or clothes to the less fortunate. He could direct us to pray for our family or witness to our friends.

So if you ever wonder what you should do, just ask Jesus (Proverbs 3:5-6,) and He will be faithful to answer, BUT it might not be right away. When the cloud would stay within the camp, sometimes it was for a short time, but sometimes it was for months, or years. Sometimes we will ask the Lord to direct us in an area and sometimes we get an answer the next second, but sometimes it takes a while. Only God knows what is best for our lives, just as He did for the children of Israel. **God directs our steps.**

Look at the trust they had in the Lord whenever the cloud and fire moved, they were right behind it. Whenever God calls us somewhere or to do something, we must follow God. God loves it when we trust Him. He loves when we come and cast all our care on Him, for He cares for us. How do we learn how to trust in the Lord? By spending more time in the Word, learning about Him and all He does for us, and following Him when He wants us to move. The more we follow Him, the more we will trust Him.

Another thing, whatever God calls us to do, we never have to be afraid because the Almighty God is there with us, living inside of us. So let us be obedient to His calling. Let us trust Him so completely that we never have to ask questions about what He does. Also, when we come up against anything, let us ask our Lord in prayer what we should do; and just trust that He will direct our steps!

The Walk of the Big Heads

Cut a pair of feet for each “Big Head” (the pattern is included). Blow up and tie off a large balloon for each child. Let them decorate the balloons with a big face. Make sure that the tie on the balloon is at the bottom. Slide the feet onto the big head after cutting on the dotted line. Then tape a long (2 foot) piece of string to the top of the balloon.

When all of the children have made their “Big Heads” have them all get together and allow them to walk their “Big Heads.” Explain to the class that they are able to direct the “Big Heads” steps. The Lord will also direct our steps.

ACTIVITY FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Match Game

Help the children trace their feet two or three times on different colors of construction paper. Then cut them out. Put all of them in a basket and mix them up.

Then help the children take turns to match up the pairs of feet and colors.

Explain to the children that **God directs our steps.**

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to follow the Lord's leading in our lives as He directs our steps. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.

PATTERN FOR BIGHEAD FEET,
TRACE ON POSTER BOARD

