

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 does not give us a map ahead of time just like the children of Israel did not 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. Though we do not know where God will lead us in advance, we can be sure God has it all mapped out in advance.

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 must 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 and direct them. When He said move, they moved; and when God said stop, they stopped. The Holy Spirit directs our paths, today, because He dwells inside of us.

It’s important that we learn to follow God’s leading just as the children of Israel. Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your 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.

Can you imagine wandering in a big desert without a map or someone to direct you? Although Moses was their leader, the children of Israel 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 (Exodus 14:24, 14:19; Numbers 9:21). 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 would 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. God not only leads us, He protects us. As David said of the Lord, the Great Shepherd, in Psalm 23: “I will fear no evil; for You are with me.”

When the cloud would move, the people would journey. When the cloud would stop and descend upon the Tabernacle, the dwelling place of God among His people, the people would stop and remain encamped until the cloud moved again. It did not matter if it was in the afternoon or in the middle of the night, they followed God; and it did not matter how long—it could be weeks or months or just hours—but, wherever the cloud and fire went, they went.

Could it have been the same cloud that descended upon Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16-18)? Could the pillar of fire have been the same fire that spoke to Moses in the burning bush?

When we invite Jesus into our hearts to become Lord of our lives, He comes into our lives and lives inside of us and makes our hearts His home. He transforms us from our old sin nature and gives us the nature of Christ. It is awesome to realize, we are His tabernacle, His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19); and we have His very presence living inside of us, guiding us, and directing us, keeping us from danger! **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 do not see God's presence in the form of a cloud or a pillar of fire lighting our way. 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, and loving us. Most importantly, He sent His Holy Spirit to empower our lives so that we can live more like Jesus. We have in our own personal lives the same Spirit that was guiding the Israelites in the path they were to take (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

Does God want us to move around a lot like the children of Israel did? We should be available to “move” at anytime God wants us to, but God directs our paths in all kinds of ways. He may “move” our hearts to give to those in need, to pray for our family, to witness to a friend, to be a light at our school.

Do you desire God to direct your life? Proverbs 3:5,6 is a great promise: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” **God directs our steps.**

How do we learn to trust in the Lord with all our heart--to trust Him so completely that we like the children of Israel will be ready and willing to move whenever He calls us to? Our faith and trust will grow as we spend time in the Word, learning more about Him, becoming acquainted with His nature and character. Our trust will also grow as we experience His leading day by day, as we can look back and remember His faithfulness each step of the way. The more we follow Him, the more we trust Him.

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. May we allow God to 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.

PATTERN FOR BIGHEAD FEET,
TRACE ON POSTER BOARD

