

DISCUSSION GUIDE



August 17/20, 2017

Follow the Cloud

BIG IDEA: God leads us one next step at a time into a life of freedom.

KEY VERSE By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Exodus 13: 21-22

MAIN POINTS & SCRIPTURES

Following the cloud is about hearing God's voice and following Him, by faith, into a life of freedom. Our example of Following the Cloud comes from the Israelites freedom from Egyptian slavery and their journey to the Promised Land. **(Exodus 13:21-22)** God's heart is always drawn to the cries of man. God gave the Israelites a cloud to follow; a personal and ever present cloud to show the Israelites that God is intimately personal and ever present. The Old Testament cloud is a physical picture of a spiritual truth. Today, the cloud of God's presence isn't above us but rather within us. **(Galatians 5:25 NLT)** We may not always understand where the cloud is leading us but we can be confident that with each step God is leading us out of our bondage and into a life of freedom.

A few thoughts on living a lifestyle of next steps:

1. **God leads us in small steps, not giant leaps.** By taking a series of small next steps, we learn that His faithfulness yesterday provides the faith we need for today. That is why God talks to us in sentences, not paragraphs, because we can only handle one small step at a time. God is the lamp that shines on our next step and a light that points in the direction we are headed. **(Psalm 119:105)** Withholding the details forces us to be dependent on Him. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will show us what we need to know, when we need to know it. **(John 16:12-13 NLT)** We may be unsure of where we're going, but His plans are always better than our plans. **(Proverbs 16:25, Proverbs 16:9)** In the kingdom of God we obey and then we understand. God's detours are always faster than our freeways.
2. **Each next step is designed to help us discover who we are, who God is, and what we were created to do.** Next steps are the process, but freedom is the outcome. A journey of next steps isn't about where we go, what we do, or what we accomplish; it's about who we become. When we receive His grace **(Ephesians 2:8-9)**, we realize that what is said of Jesus is true of us, **(1John 4:17 NKJ)** and our identity changes. **(Romans 5:19)** Once we realize our identity the only natural response is to move into relationship with Him and experience His presence. Once we've experienced His presence we will be able to release His kingdom, which is our purpose. **(Genesis 1:28 AMP)** When we know who we are, who He is, and what we're created to do, we are drawn into the Father's heart. Jesus is the way and the Father's heart is the destination. **(John 14:6)**

DISCUSSION

1. Share a time in your life that God's faithfulness yesterday gave you the faith for today? (See point 1)
2. When has God asked you to take a next step that seemed off course to you? What was the outcome? (See point 2)
3. Where in your life do you need to trust and receive more freedom from God? (See point 2)
4. How will you engage in the Follow the Cloud Challenge?
5. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

THIS WEEK I WILL FOLLOW THE CLOUD BY



We believe life transformation happens through relationships.



An encounter with Jesus leaves a story to tell. Share yours at valleycreek.org/MyStory



@vccfamily