

Bible Study Series

Valley Creek Church

Lesson #1 – Follow the Cloud – Introduction to our Video Series by: Author/Pastor John Stickl @ Valley Creek Church – Scripture Verses for this lesson **NO VIDEO** - Prepared by Salt Shakin Sister Outreach & Ministry: www.saltshakinsister.com

Follow the Cloud

Lesson #1

August 2/5 – Valley Creek Church-Pastor John Stickl

Lesson #1 Scripture Verses – NO VIDEO- This is an introduction to our Bible Study Series

“Wherever You are going is better than where you’ve been”

Key Verse: Exodus 13:21-22

1 Corinthians 2:9

Exodus 13:21-22

Galatians 5:25

Psalms 119:105

John 16:12-13

Proverbs 16:9

Hebrews 12:1-2

John 14:6

Matthew 4:19

John 10:4

Psalms 32:8

Deuteronomy 1:31

Exodus 14:19-20

The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

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Exodus 13:21-22 (NLT)

²¹The LORD went ahead of them. He guided them during the day with a pillar of cloud, and he provided light at night with a pillar of fire. This allowed them to travel by day or by night. ²²And the LORD did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from its place in front of the people.

Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)

⁹That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

Galatians 5:25 (NLT)

²⁵Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.

Psalms 119:105 (NLT)

¹⁰⁵Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

John 16:12-13 (NLT)

¹²“There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

Proverbs 16:9 (NLT)

⁹We can make our plans, but the LORD determines our steps.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NLT)

God’s Discipline Proves His Love **12** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. ²We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.

John 14:6 (NLT)

⁶Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

Matthew 4:19 (NLT)

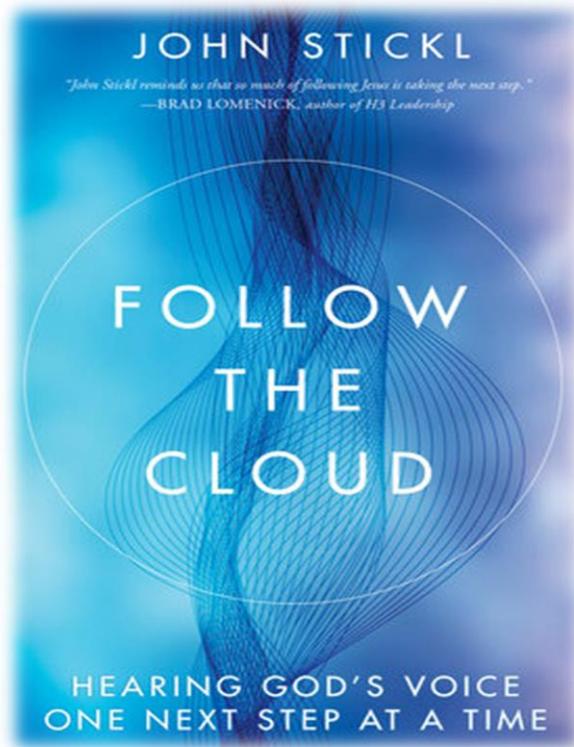
¹⁹Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!"

John 10:4 (NLT)

⁴After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.

Deuteronomy 1:31 (NLT)

³¹And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you all along the way as you traveled through the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child. Now he has brought you to this place.'



Our verses for today in “Outlined” and paraphrased format-bfc

❖ Exodus 13:21-22

- The Lord **went ahead** of them (The Holy Spirit is always leading and guiding us every day. It should be our hearts desire to “listen to the still small voice” and go **in the direction** He leads daily. We can only do this through prayer, bible study, praise, and fellowship with Him DAILY)
- He **guided them**
 - **Guided means**-To escort, pilot, lead, show, command, control, direct
- He **guided** them by **day** with a pillar of cloud
- He **guided** – provided light at **night** with a pillar of fire
 - He “allowed them” to travel by day or night
 - He is with us **day and night** – His word tells us He will never leave or forsake us. That is some comforting words!
- The Lord did not remove the pillar of cloud or fire for the entire journey
- He was **in front of them**, leading them all the way!
- See in our lesson or on our website, some additional commentary and research articles regarding the pillar and clouds in this journey

❖ Corinthians 2:9

- What the Scripture means is:
 - **No eye has seen** – (We can only see Him in our spirit as He speaks to us through His Word and oftentimes gives confirmation via additional scriptures, sermons, teachings, Christian friends. If you are not saved there is no way you can comprehend or understand anything God’s scriptures say.
 - **No ear has heard** (Be still and know that I am God-Listen for his still small voice- Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God)
 - **No mind can imagine** (Our mind is not big enough to comprehend ALL He has done, or will do and the eternal home - heaven that awaits us when we die- This reminds me of the popular song “I can only imagine”)
 - God has prepared so much for all that love Him.

❖ Galatians 5:25

- We live by the Spirit
- Let us “**follow**” the Spirits leading
- We need to do this in every part of our lives

❖ Psalms 119:105

- The Word is a Lamp (Gives me light)
- The Word is a Light (It directs me **and** lets me **be a light** to others and help them along their paths and journeys in life)
- The Word directs my path – shows me which way to go, gives me **guidance and wisdom** in making the right choices and decisions, and keeps me safe from harm whenever I listen and obey.



❖ John 16:12-13

- There is so much more God wants to tell us (Our infinite minds can only handle so much, remember the previous verse we studied?)
- **He tells us we cannot handle any more than what He is telling us now**
 - The Spirit of Truth will come (be filled with the Holy Spirit-be renewed and refreshed with Him daily, new grace for a new day and new challenges. The Spirit of Truth convicts' sinners and draws them to Him)
 - He will **guide us** into all truth
 - The Spirit will not speak on His own
 - The Spirit will tell us only what He hears from God the Father
 - The Spirit will tell us about our future (I think this means He will continue to guide us one day at a time; Step by Step; He won't tell us the "details" of our future; if He did that we couldn't handle it and we would run and it wouldn't be in the right direction!)

❖ Proverbs 16:9

- We make our own plans (most of the time without even praying or asking God what He wants and where He wants us to go- my mind is made up when I go to Him in prayer – I just want Him to bless what it is I have planned or what I want to do. We are all guilty of doing this)
- The Lord determines and directs our steps - what is best for us. (He keeps us safe and answers prayers in ways we do not always like or understand. He is the only one that can make good come out of something bad. The Way Maker!)

❖ Hebrews 12:1-2

- We are *surrounded by a huge crowd of witnesses* to the life of faith (Who are these witnesses? See the last page of this lesson)
- Let us **“strip off”** every weight that slows us down
 - Especially sins that keep us away from God and **“trips us up”**
 - **Run with endurance** the race God set before us!
 - We can do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus
 - **Jesus endured** the cross for you and me
 - Jesus is the champion who **initiates and perfects our faith**
 - Joy awaits Jesus because He endured the cross for us
 - He disregarded the shame from death on the cross
 - NOW He is seated in the place of honor – at the right hand of God!

❖ John 14:6

- Jesus said:
 - I am The Way
 - I am The Truth
 - I am The Life
 - No man can come to the Father except through Him!

❖ Matthew 4:19

- Jesus said:
 - **Follow Me**
 - I will show you **how-to** live-in victory and joy
 - I will show you **how to** “fish” for men (see souls won for Him)
 - We are to be fishers of people-lost souls-**go** out there and be a light in the darkness-share the gospel of Jesus Christ

❖ John 10:4

- Jesus gathers His own flock (He knows who belong to Him)
- Jesus walks ahead of us (protects us with angels of protection)
- We **follow Him** because we know Him and trust Him

❖ Deuteronomy 1:31

- God cares for us all along our journeys in life
- He travels with us in our wilderness (trials, tribulations, sorrows, pain)
- As our earthly father cares for us, God our Father cares so much more!
- God will bring us out of our troubles and trials stronger and full of more faith if we will “follow – obey – endure – trust Him)

What Does Hebrews 12:1 Mean (Commentary Notes)

Therefore, since we have so **great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us**, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **run with endurance the race that is set before us**,

Hebrews gives us a wonderful list of people who are commended by God for their faith. It is a catalogue of men and women, named and unnamed, that stand as witnesses to lives that honored the Lord – and who like Abraham looked for a city, whose Builder and Maker is God. They are called “a great cloud of witnesses”, and indeed their lives demonstrate a trust in God that stands as a wonderful testimony and great encouragement for us – to run the race that is set before us, as we look to Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Despite the many trials and tribulations, they were called upon to face, these men and women obtained a good testimony through faith. They finished the race that was set before them having set aside the sin which plagues so many Christians – the sin of unbelief. And as we look at their example, we are challenged in our own race through life, to discard anything and everything that might impede our progress or hinders our witness, as we press towards to goal for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

It is the sin of unbelief that can so easily ensnare and entangle us, for unbelief can become an unbearable weight on our heart, which allows fear to choke our faith.

When trust in God begins to falter, it is unbelief that hampers our progress; renders us impotent in our Christian walk and taints our testimony. How important therefore, that as an act of will, we seek to lay aside all the seeds of doubt, and everything that ensnares and hinders us, so that we may run with endurance the race that is set before us,

During those times when we are tempted to feel that we are the only one that is facing difficult challenges in life, it is good to reflect on that great cloud of witnesses who trusted God despite the enormous trials and tribulations they were called upon to face in their uphill walk of faith.

Life is a race, which has a finishing line and we are exhorted to set the eyes of our hearts and the determination of our spirits on to the goal of our calling – and that goal is a Person, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Knowing that we too are following in the footsteps of such a great a cloud of witnesses, let us endeavor to lay aside every weight that hinders our personal Christian life so that we do not fall into the sin of unbelief, which can so easily beset us in the race of life – and let us run with patient endurance the race that is set before us, looking to JESUS, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Source: <https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/hebrews-12-1>

The Pillar of Cloud- Additional Resources

Exodus 40:36-37

Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up.

Exodus 13:21

The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.

Exodus 14:19-20

The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night.

Exodus 40:34

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 16:9-10

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Come near before the Lord, for He has heard your grumblings.'" It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.

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Exodus 19:16

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

Numbers 16:42

It came about, however, when the congregation had assembled against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tent of meeting, and behold, the cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord appeared.

Pillar of Fire and of Cloud

PILLAR OF FIRE AND OF CLOUD. During the wilderness wanderings, Israel was guided on her way by the phenomenon of the

When Israel left Succoth and reached the edge of the wilderness, Yahweh went before them “by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light” ([Exod 13:21](#)). Thereafter, the pillar guided and protected Israel as she journeyed. Normally, the cloud by day and the fire by night moved in front of Israel to point the way.

As Israel left Egypt, however, the cloud moved to the rear to provide protection from the Egyptians ([Exod 14:19, 20, 24](#)). There are other references to “pillar of cloud” (or cloudy pillar) descending and standing at the door of the tent of meeting when Moses entered the tent ([33:7-9](#)). Possibly the “cloud” that came down at Sinai when Moses spoke with God was the same pillar of cloud ([34:5](#)).

When Miriam and Aaron murmured against Moses, the Lord came down in the pillar of cloud and stood at the door of the tent of meeting to confirm Moses' authority ([Num 12:5ff.](#)). As the time of Moses' death approached, Joshua was called to the tent of meeting where the Lord appeared in the pillar of cloud to give him a charge as Moses' successor ([Deut 31:15](#)). In these latter instances the pillar of cloud was the place of divine revelation.

The explanation of this phenomenon is not easy. The association of the term "cloud" with God is very frequent in the OT. In some of the above passages the term "cloud" may mean "pillar of cloud" ([Exod 34:5](#)) although the presence of the Lord often is denoted by a theophany of cloud and glory. Perhaps there are two different phenomena—the guiding cloud and the cloud of the divine presence.

Question: "What did the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night signify? (Exodus 13:21-22)"

Answer: The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night guided the Israelites during their exodus from Egyptian bondage. This allowed them to travel by day and by night. [Exodus 13:21–22](#) explains that God gave them the pillar of cloud by day to lead them in the way He wanted them to go and the pillar of fire by night to give light.

The pillar was not just symbolism but a real phenomenon. We have no way of knowing how God made the pillar, but it was obviously a miraculous event that God used to lead them for their forty years in the wilderness. During the day the pillar guided their journey. During the night it gave light and, no doubt, comfort.

In addition to guidance for the Hebrews, the pillar was a testimony to other nations concerning God's involvement with and protection of His people Israel. In [Exodus 14:24](#) God troubled the Egyptians through the cloud, and Moses used this in [Numbers 14:14](#) in his plea to God to not destroy the Hebrews because of their sin.

[Exodus 13:22](#) says, "Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people." The pillar is a picture of God's faithfulness and a lesson to us that God never leaves nor forsakes His people. He reminds us of this in [Hebrews 13:5-6](#), "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for he has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do to me."

Christ – The Pillar of Cloud and Fire

Exodus 13:21-22

Exodus 13:21-22 says, “The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, **that they might travel by day and by night.** He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

The Lord is leading His people out of Egypt into the promised land. The children of Israel have no roads to follow, and no guide to lead them. They are leaving Egypt, but they do not know where to go. But God graciously came to them and provided a guide. The guide would be a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. **Now, there were not two pillars, one of a cloud by day, and another by a fire by night. No, there was one pillar. That pillar appeared as a cloud during the day, and it appeared as a fire by night.**

Now, who or what exactly was this pillar, that appeared as a cloud and a fire? Well, look at Exodus 14:19, “The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.”

This pillar of cloud and fire is identified here as “the angel of the Lord.” Well, who is that? Sometimes an “angel of the Lord” refers to one of God’s many holy angels, ministering spirits, that He sends to do His will on the earth. However, in this place there can be no doubt that this “angel of the Lord” is none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ.

1. The Pillar Was A Manifestation of God's Presence

Throughout the book of Exodus, the Lord's presence is signified by a cloud and fire. The Lord appeared to Moses in a bush that was on fire. In Exodus 16:10 it says, "It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud." When Moses ascended Mt. Sinai, to receive the law, the Lord descended upon it in fire (Ex. 19:18). In 2 Chron. 7:1, when the temple had been completed, God sent fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

The fire and the cloud are constant manifestations of the presence of God. The glory of God appeared to the sons of Israel in the cloud. Jesus was the real, literal, physical manifestation of the presence of God. Jesus was "God with us."

2. The Pillar Was Not Given Until the Hebrews Were Delivered from Egypt

3 The Pillar Was A Gift of God -Likewise, the Spirit of Christ, is also God's gift to us. Jesus said in John 14:16, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."

4. The Pillar Led The Way Through The Wilderness- The primary purpose of the pillar of cloud and fire was to lead the way for the children of Israel through the wilderness to the promised land. In Numbers 9:15-23, this is made very clear. There we read that whenever the cloud rested on the camp of Israel, the Israelites would stay put. But whenever the cloud lifted, the Israelites would break camp, whether it was in the day or the night. Sometimes the cloud would rest on Israel for many days, or a month, or a year, and in those times they would just camp and stay put. But the cloud could set out at any time.

Also, notice that the pillar became a fire at night, so that it would illumine their paths and enable the children of Israel to march at night. Without this pillar, they would just be stumbling around in the dark and getting lost.

The Lord Jesus Himself will guide you in all your ways to heaven. He is the Light that shines on your path. Just as the pillar went before them, leading them on their journey, so the Lord Jesus does the same. He said in John 10:4, “When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.” The shepherd does not drive the sheep from behind, but walks ahead of them and the sheep follow. That’s exactly what the children of Israel were doing as they followed the cloud.

The prophet Isaiah wrote in Is. 9:2, “The people who walk in darkness will see a great light, those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.” Jesus told His disciples, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” John wrote in John 1:4-5, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” My friends, if you are a Christian, Jesus Christ is your resident guide.

5. The Pillar Provided Protection to the Israelites- Notice Psalm 105:39, “He spread a cloud for a covering, and fire to illumine by night.” The pillar of cloud was for a covering. You can imagine traveling through the wilderness in the hot, arid wilderness of the Middle East, with babies and little children. How miserable it would be to travel in the scorching sun. But the Lord graciously provided a covering to protect His people from the scorching heat of the sun. Wherever the children of Israel were, there was a cloud to cover and protect them during the day.

When the Egyptians pursued Israel, the cloud moved around and got in between them, and brought an eerie darkness over them. That’s why the Egyptians didn’t come near the Israelites all night. God was standing between them forbidding them to get too close.

The Egyptians were going to have to go through God if they were to get to the Israelites! You and I have many enemies in this Christian life. We have the enemies of our sins, our temptations, our persecutors, death, Satan, and hell. But as we face all of those enemies, we can know that they have to go through Jesus to get to us. And the Lord will not allow any of them to touch us unless it is part of His sovereign plan.

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who **will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation **will provide the way of escape** also, so that you will be able to endure it” (1Cor.10:13). The Lord will protect us from those temptations that are beyond what we are able.

6. The Pillar Was Darkness To The Egyptians- Interestingly, though the pillar provided light to the Hebrews, it brought darkness upon the Egyptians (Ex.14:21). The same One who sheds light on our path, is only darkness to the world.

7. The Pillar Was Never Taken Away Until They Reached the Promised Land- Listen to the words of Nehemiah 9:18-19, “Even when they made for themselves A calf of molten metal and said, ‘This is your God Who brought you up from Egypt,’ And committed great blasphemies, **You, in Your great compassion, Did not forsake them in the wilderness;** The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To guide them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go.

“In spite of all of Israel’s failures, including their murmuring, their unbelief, their forsaking the Lord to worship a golden calf, the Lord never forsook them. He never **withdrew the pillar of cloud and fire.** The Lord Jesus will never forsake you. Jesus said in John 14:16, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.” According to Hebrews 13:5, the Lord will never forsake or desert His people.

Lesson #1 – Follow the Cloud

“Introduction to our Bible Study Series”

Scripture Verse Review Questions

1. In Exodus 13:21-22 – What did God guide the people with?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
2. In 1 Corinthians 2:9 – Write the full scripture out below: _____

3. What does Galatians 5:25 say we are to “do”?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____ (in every part of our lives)
4. Write out Psalms 119:105 below: _____

5. In John 16:12-13-When the Spirit of Truth comes, what will He do for us? _____
6. How do you deal with verse Proverbs 16:9? _____

7. In Hebrews 12:1-2 What are we surrounded by? _____ What are we to strip off? _____ What trips us up? _____
 What are we to run with? _____.
8. What does John 14:6 say? _____

9. What did Jesus say in Matthew 4:19? _____

10. John 10:4 – Why did the people follow the cloud? _____
11. In Deuteronomy 1:31 -the portion of scripture that says: “they traveled through the wilderness”- can you relate to that portion of the scripture in your daily lives? If so, how _____
