

LEAD SHEET

EXODUS: BEFORE THE SEA WAS PARTED - WK 6

PILLAR OF FIRE /CLOUD

AUGUST 14, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:

DIALOGUE WITH GOD

If you want to know God better, talk to Him!

GETTING STARTED

At this point in the book of Exodus we find a transition period. The Israelites have just left Egypt and are on their way to the Promised Land. Yet Egypt is not quite done with Israel. From this point on, we will witness the end of Egypt's control over Israel and the beginning of Israel as its own nation. Some things to keep in mind as we move forward with the story:

- The Exodus story is not just about being freed from slavery; it's about the presence of God.
- God saving His people through the Exodus stems from the covenantal promises He made to the Patriarchs (*Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph*).
- The major themes in this section are God's sovereignty (control), God's faithfulness, and God's presence.

DIGGING IN

Read Exodus 13:17-18

Discussion Questions:

1. Why didn't God lead Israel out of Egypt along the shortest route? (*He didn't want them to grow fearful of war and change their minds.*)

2. Does trusting in the presence of God mean we don't need to be prepared? (*No, He still instructs them to march, and to be ready for conflict.*)

3. Why do you think God would avoid leading His people through the land of the Philistines instead of just going right through it? Was He afraid of the Philistines? (*God was not afraid of the Philistines, but this seems to be the first of many exercises in faith and trust for Israel.*)

4. As an Israelite, do you think you would have trusted God when He led His people through the wilderness instead of taking the shorter route? (*Allow for discussion.*)

It's easy to forget as we read, but we're talking about a community of a couple million people marching through foreign land. They would have been perceived as a threat to anyone they met.

Read Exodus 13:19-20

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Moses take with them as they leave Egypt? (*Joseph's bones.*)

2. Why is this mentioned here? (*Joseph had rightly prophesied that God would take care of them and deliver them from captivity. This is God making good on that promise.*)

God promised the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that He would make them a great nation and lead them into their own land. God is not saving the Israelites because they are so good and deserve it, but because He is faithful to His people and keeps His promises. Joseph had faith that God would keep His promise and lead His people into the Promised Land.

Read Exodus 13: 21-22

God didn't lead His people in an audible voice. Instead, God chose to lead His people by using a giant pillar of cloud during the day and a giant pillar of fire at night! Just like with the burring bush in chapter 3, the cloud and fire were manifestations of God's presence.

Discussion Questions:

1. Besides giving guidance, what other purpose did the cloud and fire have? *(The cloud and fire gave them protection. The cloud blocked the sun and the fire provided light.)*
2. What do the pillar of cloud and fire tell us about God? *(He is always present and His presence is a comfort.)*
3. What does verse 22 say about the pillar of fire and cloud's presence among the people? *(It never left it was always present.)*
4. Do you think you would have ever doubted God again after seeing a giant pillar of cloud and a giant pillar of fire? *(Israel did. I'm sure we would too.)*

MAKING IT REAL

In this story, God revealed three truths about Himself: He is in control, He is faithful, and He is always present.

He is in Control

God took His people the long way out of Egypt for their benefit. We already talked about why. We already speculated that some might have doubted God's chosen route. But He was in control.

General Discussion:

- How do you let God take control of your life? (*Don't doubt His chosen route, follow His path and not your own ambition, etc.*)

- Have you ever doubted where God was leading you? When? (*Allow for discussion.*)

- Is following God difficult for you to do, when where He's leading doesn't make sense? Why? (*Maybe you have a hard time trusting in what you cannot see, have had a past full of disappointment, etc.*)

If trust is difficult for you, if it's hard to give up control, then reflecting on God's faithfulness is a good exercise.

He is Faithful

God honored the promise to Joseph and the promises to the Patriarchs. He also keeps His promises to us.

General Discussion:

- Tell about a time when God kept His promise to you. (*Allow for discussion.*)

- What are some promises God makes for everyone that He keeps? (*He promises to be with us, to forgive us, provide for us, etc.*)

Sometimes it's easy to think about the ways God doesn't come through—or so it seems to us. However, He is always faithful. Perhaps when it seems as if He's not fulfilling His promise, we just haven't waited long enough. Remember, Israel waited 400 years to be delivered from captivity in Egypt. God may not always keep His promises in our timing, but He does always keep His promises.

He is Always Present

God was present with His people by cloud and fire, giving them shade for comfort and light to see.

General Discussion:

- We don't have a pillar of fire or a cloud any more. How is God present in our lives? (*The presence of His Holy Spirit in us, His Word, etc.*)

- How should God's Word lead us like the cloud and fire? (*It should direct our steps.*)

- How can God's Holy Spirit guide us? (*He directs our conscience, convicts of sin, leads us to repentance, etc.*)

The Israelites left Egypt and discovered intimacy with God. God freed us from sin and death and now it's time to draw near to Him. This story is a great reminder that God has saved us and that His protection and guidance is waiting for us if we just draw near to Him.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray that God will lead your students the same way that He led Israel.