



preparing

Knowing God's love and presence deep in your bones takes practice being attentive and alert; being expectant and hopeful. What must it have been like for the Israelites who had left the life of slavery and bondage – the only way of life known to many of them – to risk moving out and away, not sure of where they were to go? But God showed them. He revealed His presence to them in an unmistakable way – as a cloud by day and fire by night. Where might you see God in the day and in the night as He is leading you? How does knowing that you are deeply, deeply loved by the creator of the universe and everything in it help you to trust and see as you risk moving in the direction He's showing you?

settling and listening

You might want to have this conversation while at home or in the car or any time that you hear that still small voice cheering you on.

If at home and if you make it a practice at home to set aside a special time and place, consider laying out a cloth and lighting a candle as you say

LEADER: Come, let us draw near to God.

PEOPLE: And God will draw near to us.

Prayer leader can pray. ***"Come, Holy Spirit. As we make space for you, open our ears to hear. Open our mind to understand. Stir our heart. Help us to know and love you more. Amen."***

If the nudge to speak comes at a time when you are out and about, just go for it!

I wonder what you know about clouds? See fun facts about clouds on the last page and/or read parts of The Cloud Book by Tomie de Paola or Clouds by Anne Rockwell or Little Cloud by Eric Carle.

I wonder what connections you are already making to God as we talk about clouds?

Did you know that after God rescued the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt, one of the things he used to lead them through the wilderness to the Promised Land was a cloud? What must that have been like? How does God lead us and provide for us day to day?

Invite a kid or grownup to read one of the Scripture passages below.

A reading from Psalm 78:1-4, 7, 12-14.

1 My people, listen to my teaching.

Pay attention to what I say.

2 I will open my mouth and tell a story.

I will speak about things that were hidden.

They happened a long time ago.

3 We have heard about them and we know them.

Our people who lived before us have told us about them.

4 We won't hide them from our children.

We will tell them to those who live after us.

We will tell them what the Lord has done that is worthy of praise.

We will talk about his power and the wonderful things he has done.

7 Then they would put their trust in God.

They would not forget what he had done.

They would obey his commands.

12 He did miracles right in front of their people who lived long ago.

At that time they were living in Egypt, in the area of Zoan.

13 God parted the Red Sea and led them through it.

He made the water stand up like a wall.

14 He guided them with the cloud during the day.

He led them with the light of a fire all night long.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

A reading from Exodus 13:21-22.

21 By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud. It guided them on their way. At night he led them with a pillar of fire. It gave them light. So they could travel by day or at night. 22 The pillar of cloud didn't leave its place in front of the people during the day. And the pillar of fire didn't leave its place at night.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A reading from Nehemiah 9:19-20.

19 "Because you loved them so much, you didn't leave them in the desert. During the day the pillar of cloud didn't stop guiding them on their path. At night the pillar of fire didn't stop shining on the way you wanted them to go. 20 You gave them your good Spirit to teach them. You didn't hold back your manna from their mouths. And you gave them water when they were thirsty.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

I wonder why this story is repeated and remembered so many times throughout the Bible?

I wonder how you see God's big love in these passages?

I wonder what connections you are making to other stories in the Bible?

I wonder how you've experienced the Lord going before and behind you? Guiding and directing you?

responding

Invite kids to respond to the readings by moving outside to lie in the grass and gaze up at the clouds. **Read Psalm 36:5-9 over them three times as they gaze:**

- ⁵ Lord, your faithful love reaches to the sky.
Your faithfulness is as high as the clouds.***
- ⁶ Your goodness is higher than the highest mountains.
Your fairness is deeper than the deepest ocean.
Lord, you protect people and animals.***
- ⁷ Nothing is more precious than your loving kindness.
All people can find protection close to you.***
- ⁸ They get strength from all the good things in your house.
You let them drink from your wonderful river.***
- ⁹ The fountain of life flows from you.
Your light lets us see light.***

praying

Seal your time and conversation by giving thanks to God by saying together the Lord's Prayer or singing the Doxology.

CLOUD FACTS

- Clouds are made out of water droplets and/or ice crystals (plus various chemicals).
- There are main 3 types of clouds (determined by height).
- All planets and moons with atmosphere have clouds but not all are made out of water.
- Clouds move because of the wind. They can travel at more than 100 mph.
- Contrails are "artificial clouds" that sometimes form behind planes.
- Clouds can be made out of thousands and thousands of tons of water.
- Fog is also a cloud.
- Clouds reflect light and that's why they are white.
- The type of cloud associated with thunderstorms is cumulonimbus.
- Clouds produce precipitation, like rain, snow, hail and sleet.
- Clouds can hold millions of gallons of water.