

Follow the Fire! *Numbers 9:15-23*

During their years of travel in the desert, the Israelites had built the Tabernacle according to God's very specific instructions. It was a holy place of worship where God met with His people. We read in this passage the thrilling account of how, after the Tabernacle was completed, the Presence of God settled over it in the form of a pillar of cloud and fire. As they wandered about in the wilderness, that pillar of cloud and fire was their only compass. By day the cloud hovered; at night it became a column of fire so that even in the pitch-black darkness of the desert, God's presence was a visible night-light. There was no pattern to the movement of the pillar as far as the people could tell, and there was no use in guessing the timing of God's movements. "Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and lifted the next morning...Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on" (*Numbers 9:21-22, NLT*). The Tabernacle was a huge, moving temple with much ritual and intricacy involved in its set-up and use. I wonder how long they waited to unpack each time the pillar of cloud and fire stopped. After all, they could be moving again in the next hour...or perhaps not until the next year! I can imagine that the eyes of every Israelite were drawn to the pillar of cloud and fire as the first act upon awakening and the last act before closing their eyes in sleep. Whatever chores they had to do, agendas they had set, or even weddings they had planned...it was all subject to the movement of God, and they had to be prepared. Numbers 9:23 says, "So they camped or traveled at the Lord's command".

Sometimes I wish I had something that tangible to follow. It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of life and ministry and end up following a path that is self-directed rather than God-directed. Oswald Chambers said, "My life as a worker is the way I say 'thank you' to God for His unspeakable salvation". Yet I remember John 15:5 where Jesus warns, "Apart from Me you can do nothing". My "life as a worker" for God will have no Kingdom value unless I am continually following the fire of His Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 6:19 says, "Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God?" As believers in Christ, we are now the living, breathing, moving "tabernacle" and the presence of the Holy Spirit rests upon us just as surely as the pillar of cloud and fire rested upon the wilderness tabernacle. Though intangible to us, His Presence and His Light are no less real. Seek His face, watch for His movement, and listen for His voice. Before even starting your day, ask Him to prioritize your task list (and be prepared for Him to give you a new agenda altogether!). Move when He prompts you to move and stay when He prompts you to stay, and learn to live with a "follow the fire" mentality!