


A photograph of a tree-lined path. The path is paved and runs through a lush green area with many trees. In the background, several people are walking along the path, though they are out of focus. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a pleasant day.

Journey towards the Promised Land



From the early days, God has led Trinity on a journey of faith. Forty years on, the church is still following



His lead. **Dr Kevin Mannoia** shares about the importance of leaving one's comfort zone, a concept Trinity was well-accustomed to in the early days of its nomadic past. Have you left yours yet?

In Exodus 13:17, it reads, *When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.* Further down, in Exodus 13:20 it says, *After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. 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.*

The people of Israel were living in the land of Egypt and although they were in bondage, they had some level of comfort and security there. It was a known place: they knew where they were going to lay their heads every night, where they were going to get their food and the rules under which they lived. Even though they were in bondage and it had become oppressive, Egypt was, in a strange way, their comfort zone.

But God said to them, *I want you to come out of Egypt onto a journey toward a promised land.* And on this journey, God neither gave Moses a roadmap nor a final picture. He just said, *I want you to leave this place and I want you to walk into the Promised Land.*

You have to know something about a comfort zone. The people of Israel went to Egypt because they didn't have food. Egypt was an answer to their prayers! It provided food, connections and validation through their brother Joseph. Egypt was a 'God thing'. It was a blessing to them. But **your blessings can become bondage if you stay there too long.**

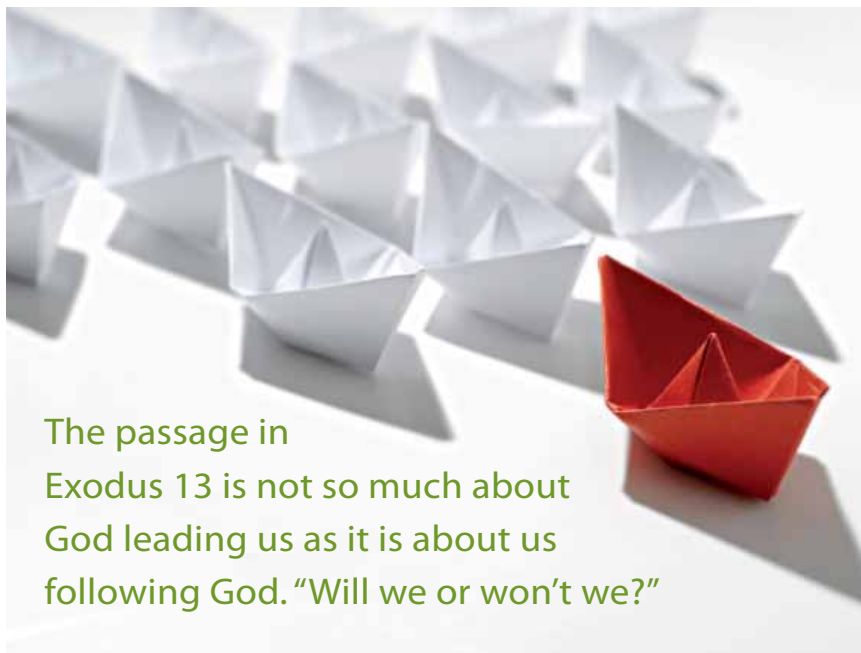
In your spiritual comfort zone, you could be saying, "I'm a pretty good Christian. I pray this amount, I tithe this amount, I serve this amount, I've got things pretty much under control". While these may be good, soon you might begin to depend on your own ability to manage your life. **Comfort zones will breed independence and isolation.**

Independence is neither a Kingdom principle nor is it something that God has in mind for you, but following God out of your comfort zone will breed interdependence. It is a Kingdom principle. Interdependence is where we mutually submit to one another as to the Lord, depending on, learning from

and growing with one another. Interdependence is a Kingdom principle, independence is not and certainly co-dependence is not.

This passage in Exodus 13 is not so much about God leading us as much as it is about us following God. And

the question is, "Will we or won't we?" God is saying, *I want you to leave your comfort zone of Egypt, and I want you to walk out to a Promised Land that I have in mind for you.* I don't know what that might be in your life, but I think you might and your spirit certainly does.



How did God lead them? It's very interesting He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. What was that pillar? What was the cloud?

Some people say that the pillar of cloud was nothing more than a dust devil. They occur when the wind begins to swirl, creating a vortex, a suction that sucks the dusts of the desert up into a tornado-looking thing. These tubes where the winds suck the sand up look



like a cloud. Some people think that the pillar of cloud was nothing more than a dust devil, or that the pillar of cloud was nothing more than their imagination.

But think about this: there were estimates that there were around six million people in this exodus. If you think it was a dream, then you have to believe that God had put, in the minds of six million people, the picture of a cloud everyday for 40 years running and that cloud in their minds moved at precisely the same direction. Similarly, you would have to believe that God had created a dust devil every single day for 40 years running that moved precisely where He wanted it to.

I happen to think that it was a cloud, and if you walked into that cloud, you couldn't see what was in front of you. A real cloud, a cumulous cloud, a white puffy cloud in the desert sky.

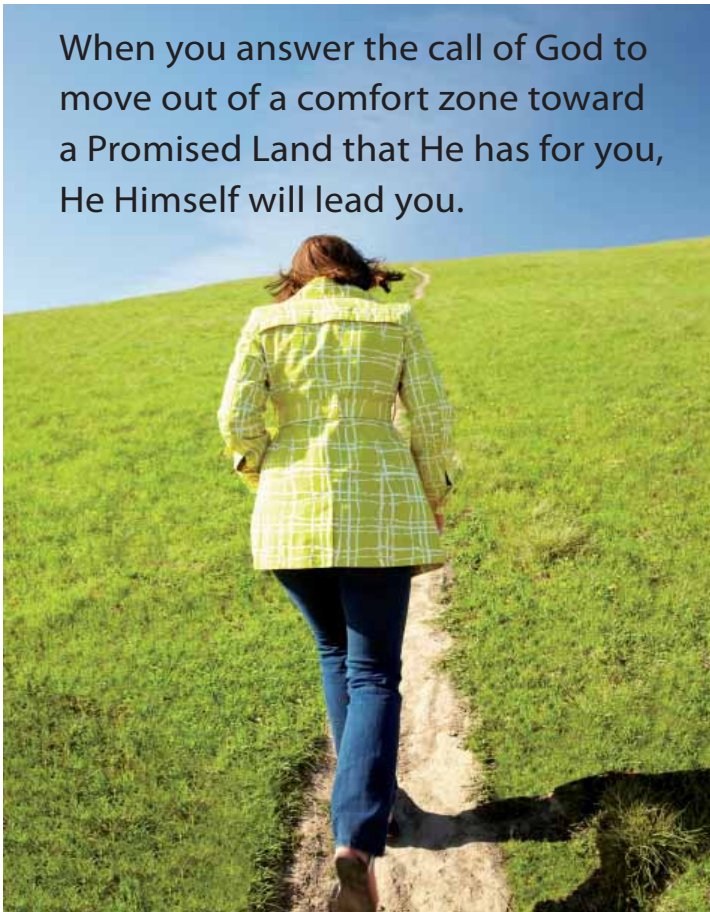
Some people believe that the pillar of fire by night was nothing more than the dust devil positioning itself over the altar of sacrifice where they were burning the

animal flesh in sacrifice to God. And so as the dust devil positioned itself right over the flames, the light of the flames was refracted on the dust particles up through the cloud, such that from a distance it looked like a very beautiful pillar of fire. That is why we have beautiful sunsets in the L.A. area because we have so much dirt in there. It would require an awful lot of faith to believe that every night, God would move that dust devil and position it over the fire so the fire would refract up through it and make it look like the pillar of fire.

I happen to believe that it was fire in the cloud. Whatever that pillar was, I can assure you that it represented the presence of God. God Himself was going before them toward the Promised Land.

You may be frightened to come out of your comfort zone into that journey of the unknown. You may be frightened, but this I assure you: when you answer the call of God to move out of a comfort zone toward a Promised Land that He has for you, He Himself will lead you. All you have to do is focus on the presence of God, keep your heart soft and

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be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. But again, this passage is not so much about God leading as it is us following. Will we, or won't we?

It's interesting that God used cloud and fire. One can't really see inside of a cloud or know what's inside of it. **The cloud represents the unknown things that lie in front of you in your journey when you leave your comfort zone.**

I was in the airplane looking out the window and began to wonder what was inside those clouds, if there was a mountain in there that we were going to hit. I wondered if there was

another airplane flying through the same cloud we were flying through. **I don't know what are inside those clouds, yet each time the cloud has been faithful in carrying me to my destination.** Likewise, you don't know what lies ahead of you but the presence of God will be faithful to guide you to your Promised Land. It will guide you on your journey of following God.

Fire, what about fire? It's warm, breeds community but also **sheds light to cast out darkness.** It reveals the things that might trip us up. It shows us where there is a turn in the road.

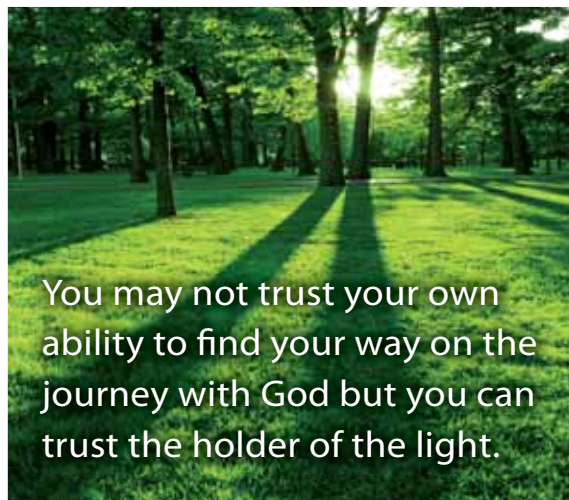
A few years ago, I was speaking at a college education retreat up on the mountains. That evening, we went up to the fire circle. It was dark out there and the director went up to the fire circle to light the fire in preparation for the students who were coming out. I asked if he was going to drive his golf cart up to the fire circle and if I could I ride with him. He said, "Sure, come on in". I got up and had my flashlight with me. I went up to a golf cart and asked if I could drive since I had never driven one before. He said "Yeah okay, give me your flashlight and wherever I point the flashlight, you turn that direction." I gave him my flashlight and he turned it on. Every time he showed the light to the right, I turned to the right and every time he showed it to the left, I turned to the left. I thought to myself, as I blindly turned whichever he pointed to, that he could drive me into a tree, off a cliff or into a pool if he wanted to. Ultimately, I had to trust the holder of the light.

You may not trust your own ability to find your way on the journey with God but you can trust the holder of the light.

Why would God use a cloud? The thing about the desert sky is that it's a very deep blue and there usually are never clouds in the sky. God made it very obvious by putting a white, bellowing cloud in a deep, blue desert sky. That way, it would definitely be seen even from miles away.

And why would He use fire? It is pitch black at night in the desert. Similarly, God was saying, *I want to lead my people, and to do it I'm going to put a pillar of flaming fire in the night sky. So that wherever they are, they can see it from kilometers away.* God is saying, ***I'm going to lead my people as obviously as I know how, and they're not going to be able to miss my presence, unless they choose to ignore it.***

What are you going to do? Remember, this passage is not so much about God leading you as it is about you following Him. Why is He calling you? Look at Exodus 13: 21. *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. He gave them light so that they might travel.* So they could move, press on, grow, deepen, expand and achieve to move into their Promised Land. So that they might leave their comfort zone, so that they would always be in motion.



God does not want us to settle down comfortably in our spiritual comfort zones. He wants us leaning

forward, on the balls of our feet, tilting ahead. He wants us growing, deepening, in action. He wants us climbing higher, going deeper. God wants growth out of you because **the minute growth stops, stagnation begins.** He has given you His presence to guide us. He's even said, *I will go before you.* But remember: this passage is not so

much about God leading as it is about us following.

So here's the deal, it's really simple. God may be saying to you, *I want you to move out of your comfort zone.* I don't know what that comfort zone is in your life, but the Holy Spirit does. You've been depending on it too much. It used to be your blessing but now it's your bondage. Now it's holding you back and God is saying. "Step out!" Step out of the comfort zone. Step out in faith believing that His standing presence will guide you.

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