

Cloud of Witnesses



**Harriet**  
Tubman



# Cloud of Witnesses: Harriet Tubman

## Main Idea

We are not free until all are free.

---

## BIBLE CONNECTIONS

---

### Psalm 136:10-16

Give thanks to the one who struck down the Egyptians' oldest offspring—God's faithful love lasts forever. Give thanks to the one who brought Israel out of there—God's faithful love lasts forever. With a strong hand and outstretched arm—God's faithful love lasts forever! Give thanks to the one who split the Reed Sea in two—God's faithful love lasts forever. Give thanks to the one who brought Israel through—God's faithful love lasts forever. And tossed Pharaoh and his army into the Reed Sea—God's faithful love lasts forever! Give thanks to the one who led his people through the desert—God's faithful love lasts forever.

---

## BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS

---

Hebrews 11 tells the stories of people of faith throughout the Bible, offering encouragement to the original audience that they can step forward in faith surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. In the creeds of the church, we profess belief in the "communion of saints." These are both ways of saying how important our foremothers and forefathers of faith are to our own relationships with God. Their stories offer wisdom for living, inspiration and encouragement, and a sense of spiritual companionship.

Harriet Tubman was born in the 1820s as a slave on a Maryland plantation. She experienced brutal physical punishment, and the tearing apart of her family when her siblings were sold. In 1849, Harriet and two of her brothers fled slavery, but when her brothers turned back, she went alone to Pennsylvania. She traveled ninety miles on the Underground Railroad, a network of routes that connected abolitionists who would assist her. But rather than stay in safety, Harriet returned to the South over and over to help bring slaves north to free states and to Canada. She eventually

became a spy for the Union Army during the Civil War, continuing her work for liberation. Through this work of leading people to freedom, Harriet earned the nickname “Moses,” after the biblical figure who led the enslaved Hebrew people out of Egypt into freedom and the Promised Land.

---

## GATHERING ACTIVITY

---

### *Following the Leader*

This activity needs plenty of space for learners to move and roam. Invite the learners to stand in a line and follow the person in front of them. As they walk, the leader should make body movements for the followers to imitate. Swinging arms, bobbing heads, silly faces, and funny walks will give followers more complex movements to mimic. Play enough times so that each learner gets to be the leader for an interval.

---

## STORY CONNECTION

---

**Say:** Today we’re going to learn about a leader who led people through very dangerous situations, when following closely could make the difference between freedom and slavery, or life and death. Harriet Tubman was a witness to God’s freedom and justice. She was a slave in the United States before she ran away, north, to be free.

**Ask:** Can someone tell us what slavery is?

**Say:** Slavery is when a person holds another person captive and forces them to work without pay. The person who is the slave does not have a choice about their life, and has to work and do whatever their owner says. In the United States, holding slaves was legal until 1865. Slaves in America were captured from Africa, and they had black and brown skin, while slave holders were mostly immigrants from Europe, and had white or pale skin. Harriet heard that if slaves could escape north to a city called Philadelphia, they would be free, so she made a plan and escaped. After a long hard journey, walking hundreds of miles and being so scared, Harriet made it to safety, but after a time, she decided to go back. Go back? Yes! She went back to bring her friends and family to freedom as well. People started to call her “Moses.”

**Ask:** Do you know who Moses was?

**Say:** Moses was a prophet and the leader of the Hebrew people in the Bible. He led the people out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. People called Harriet “Moses” because she had the same kind of calling. Harriet’s life and work teach us that we are not free until everyone is free, and our growth and abundance should lead us to greater courage and generosity.

TIP: Telling the story in a calm, smooth voice will draw the children into the story.

---

## PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

---

### *Questions for Discussion*

**Ask:** How do you think Harriet felt when she made it to a free city? What do you think she did first?

### *Prayer of Blessing*

**Pray:** Dear God, thank you for Harriet Tubman, who witnessed to your love and hope for freedom. Give us the courage and persistence to work for freedom for ourselves and everyone. Amen.

### *The Drinking Gourd*

Pass out the constellation handout on page 6.

**Ask:** Have any of you ever gone stargazing?

**Say:** If you go outside on a clear night and look up and around, you might see stars that make the shape of a cup with a handle. This is a constellation, a picture of stars, called the Big Dipper. When slaves wanted to run away north, they would tell each other to “follow the drinking gourd,” the Big Dipper, which points toward the North Star. Use a pencil or marker to connect the dots of the Big Dipper constellation. Then, on the back of your paper, draw your own starry sky and connect the dots to form constellations, or pictures of people, animals, and so on.

### *Follow-the-Leader Obstacle Course*

**Say:** Harriet Tubman led three hundred slaves to freedom. She made nineteen trips from the North to lead groups of slaves along the Underground Railroad. Slaves gave Harriet the nickname “Moses” because she delivered the slaves to freedom, just like Moses delivered the Israelites to freedom.

Play a game of “Follow-the-Leader.” You can make it more interesting by setting up obstacles for the children to go around. Encourage the children to be quiet and sneaky as they go through the obstacle course. Play several rounds, giving every child an opportunity to be Harriet.

### *Watch the Animated Hero Classic About Harriet Tubman*

Purchase the animated story of Harriet Tubman or check it out from your local library. [https://www.amazon.com/Harriet-Tubman-Inspiring-Animated-Heroes/dp/B000JJ4W92/ref=pd\\_sim\\_74\\_2?encoding=UTF8&pd\\_rd\\_i=B000JJ4W92&pd\\_rd\\_r=YAWBJP3BRQ430E40FDED&pd\\_rd\\_w=tg7Ql&pd\\_rd\\_wg=LRMwS&psc=1&refRID=YAWBJP3BRQ430E40FDED](https://www.amazon.com/Harriet-Tubman-Inspiring-Animated-Heroes/dp/B000JJ4W92/ref=pd_sim_74_2?encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=B000JJ4W92&pd_rd_r=YAWBJP3BRQ430E40FDED&pd_rd_w=tg7Ql&pd_rd_wg=LRMwS&psc=1&refRID=YAWBJP3BRQ430E40FDED)

#### Supplies:

- Handout on page 6
- Pencils

Watch the thirty-minute video together.

**Say:** Harriet had faith in God and trusted her call to take people to freedom.

**Ask:** What did you learn from Harriet's example?

*Send home the "Reflecting at Home" sheet on page 5 with each child. This will help engage the whole family in this spiritual practice together.*

---

**REFLECTING AT HOME**

---

This week your child learned about Harriet Tubman, a woman who was born into slavery before the Civil War, and escaped by fleeing to Philadelphia. Despite having found safety, she made many return trips to the South, working tirelessly to lead other slaves along the Underground Railroad to freedom. Slaves gave Harriet the nickname “Moses” because she delivered the slaves to freedom, just like Moses delivered the Israelites to freedom. Harriet’s life and work teach us that we are not free until everyone is free, and our growth and abundance should lead us to greater courage and generosity.

---

**FURTHER READING**

---

To reflect more on God’s liberating work and how Harriet Tubman leading slaves north paralleled Moses leading slaves out of Egypt, read Psalm 136 and Exodus 12–14.

