

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen (Old Testament)

Numbers 2:1-2, 34

The Banner of His Love

And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "Everyone of the children of Israel shall camp by his own standard, beside the emblem of his father's house; they shall camp some distance from the tabernacle of meeting..." Thus the children of Israel did according to all that the Lord commanded Moses; so they camped by their standards and so they broke camp, each one by his family, according to their fathers' houses.

That must have been impressive. Thousands of campers divided into twelve large units, each flying their colors in their individual campgrounds. Can you imagine an enemy cresting a hilltop and seeing this sight as they gazed over the plain? I'm sure that alone was intimidating, not to mention the widespread knowledge that the God of Israel camped with these sojourners.

Although there are traditional descriptions of the designs of each standard, it's not known for sure what they might have looked like. It's clear from the Scripture that emblems were used to mark each of the twelve families. In fact, the same Hebrew word used here for *emblem* is used in Genesis 4:15 where we read that *the Lord set a mark on Cain*. The use of the words must be understood in each context, of course, but there is no doubt that something peculiar marked, or emblemized, each tribe of Israel.

Even though we don't know exactly what shapes and colors were used, we do know that each standard had a significant meaning for the family it represented. Perhaps the designs were based on the blessings Jacob gave to each of his sons before he died (Genesis 49). Maybe the emblems were patterned after the trade or occupation in which each family excelled (Exodus 36:1-2). Mostly, this is unimportant for us to know. What is important is that God's command was meant to remind each tribe that they were children of promise.

We, too, are children of promise, a promise wrapped up in the faithfulness, justice, and advocacy of Jesus. Through Jesus, God promises to forgive us if we confess our sins (I John 1:9; 2:1-2). Because of Jesus, the Heavenly Father promises to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32). From Jesus Himself comes the promise to wash us clean with His own blood and make us kings and priests to His God and Father, who is also our God and Father (Revelation 1:6).

So, as His prince, I camp beside a standard that has the design of His love stamped all over it. You'd think that as much as I love the outdoors, my emblem would look like a firearm or a fishing pole, or an antler or a hook. These are altogether unimportant compared to God's banner of love, which reminds me that I am a child of promise, a child of the King, a child camping out under the banner of His love.

My banner is not of this world. The emblem is not of this earth. It might not look like one of the standards of the tribes of Israel but at least my camp is made. And it's one that I can live in forever.

*He brought me to the banqueting house,
and his banner over me was love.*
(Song of Solomon 2:4)

Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Numbers 2:1-2, 34
The Banner of His Love

HOOK

1. What is your favorite color? Why do you like this one?

2. Choose two outdoor activities you enjoy. What emblem would you use for each? Why?

3. Describe all that you know about the symbolism used in the design of the American Flag.

LINE

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Camp beside the standard that has the design of His love stamped all over it. Let this standard remind you that you are a child of promise, a child of the King, a child camping out under the banner of His love.

Describe two ways that Jesus shows His love to you. Be specific, in a personal way.

How close are you to the banner of God's love (near, lukewarm, or distant)? What will you do to draw closer to Him? How will you recognize that He is near you?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: emblem promise love
