

2 Kgs. 2:1–12

Ps. 50:1–6

2 Cor. 4:3–6

Mark 9:2–9

On the Mountain

Goal for the Session

Tweens will engage with the mystery and wonder of the transfiguration as they explore the various ways that the identity of Jesus is revealed.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 9:2–9

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Stanley P. Saunders

Mark recounts the transfiguration as an event that is for the disciples and is told through their eyes: Jesus leads Peter, James, and John up the mountain and is transfigured “before them;” Elijah and Moses “appear to them;” Mark describes their reactions and emotions; the cloud “overshadows them;” the voice from the cloud addresses them; and the end of the vision is described in terms of what they see when they look around. The whole scene, in other words, is addressed to any disciple struggling to see, hear, comprehend, and believe the gospel reality.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Marilyn McCord Adams

However wonderful and challenging, human cultures and social systems must be recontextualized within a much wider, really Real frame. Jesus’ glory on the mount of transfiguration shows up merely human social constructions as paper tigers, wineskins too brittle and inelastic to contain the bubbling creativity of the really, really Real (Mark 2:22). The threat of Jesus’ glory is not just that this or that individual will come to an end, but that the whole framework in which we have lived and moved and had our being is insubstantial. Jesus recognizes as disciples those who have the courage to march open-eyed into the unknown of Jesus’ glory.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Rodney J. Hunter

Christians are not called to exhibit a passive love that simply tries to be good and avoid evil. Nor is the way of the cross a private bearing of personal woes for the sake of Jesus. It is rather a vigorous, assertive pursuit of social and personal righteousness through a love that refuses to play the world’s power game of domination, exploitation, greed, and deception. The transfiguration story is a call to affirm the ultimate truth of this contrary claim of God and God’s way of salvation, and to begin living it with all our heart, soul, and strength in the confidence that Jesus’ nonviolent way is truly the way of salvation, healing, and eternal life.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Donald Booz

Sometimes we react just like Peter and are speechless from fear. Other times we do not think anyone will believe our story, even if we feel safe to share it. The thought that our experiences in life are linked with God’s story unfolding in the world can be reassuring, but it can also be terrifying! The point is this: faith communities can become safe places for both members and seekers to explore the various ways that the identity of Jesus is being revealed.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Mark 9:2–9

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens are fascinated by stories of amazing supernatural events, and this one certainly fits the bill. While we will be encouraging the learners to engage with this story of mystery and wonder, it is also an opportunity to explore what it reveals about Jesus' identity. This last Sunday in Ordinary Time or the season after the Epiphany is also a good time to review the stories of the previous seven weeks and think about how they might transform our lives and understandings.

God of glory, as I engage with this story of mystery and wonder, guide me to a deeper understanding of your beloved Son, Jesus. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ white cloth, large battery-powered candle, gold metallic ribbon
- ☐ Color Pack 10, 26, 30, 33
- ☐ Resource Sheet 1 from December 31, materials listed there
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player
- ☐ highlighters in three colors

For Responding

- ☐ option 1: drawing paper, fine-tipped markers
- ☐ option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils, card stock, hole punch, scissors, thin ribbon, fine-tipped markers
- ☐ option 3: computer with Internet access, printer

■ LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Play “We Are Dancing in the Love of God” (Color Pack 30; track 23 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024) as tweens arrive. Greet them by name, and ask them to arrange a worship space with white cloth, gold metallic ribbon, and a battery-powered candle.

Place Color Pack 10 next to the candle and add the last star sticker (see Resource Sheet 1 from December 31) so that the word *Messiah* is complete. Recall that the Hebrew word *Messiah* means “God’s anointed or chosen one.” In the Jewish Scriptures, the king was given this title. In the Christian Scriptures, the title is given to Jesus. Light the candle and sing or listen to the fifth verse of “God, We Sing” (Color Pack 33; track 8 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Observe that today is Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday in the season after the Epiphany. Explain that the word *transfigure* means to be changed or transformed.

Offer the following opening prayer or one of your own:

Light-giving God, as we explore the Scriptures today, shine the light of your Spirit into our hearts, so that we may know how to follow in your ways. Amen.

Extinguish the candle.

Comment that sometimes we have moments in our lives that are so awesome all we can say is, “Wow!” Tell about an incredible experience of your own, and invite group members to tell their stories as well.

Say that the Bible passage today is about a time when Jesus and some of the disciples had an incredible experience.

God, We Sing

5. God, we sing with praise
to you,
Light the flame of Christ
anew;
Light this candle, light the
way,
We celebrate new life today.
Christ, be near us as we
pray
And celebrate new life
today.

If tweens do not have their own Bibles or if you prefer not to have them highlight in their Bibles, bring copies of Mark 1:1–8, Mark 1:14–20, and Mark 1:29–39. You can print the text from a Web site such as www.biblegateway.com.

EXPLORING

Set the stage for the session text by reviewing the stories from Mark that have been explored this season. Cut apart Resource Sheet 1 (Bible Highlights). Form three groups and give one passage to each group. Distribute highlighters for tweens to use in their Bibles, following the instructions on the resource sheet. After they have finished the assignment, invite them to summarize the story and tell the whole group what they discovered about Jesus.

If possible, darken the room and play some music that conveys mystery and wonder, such as “Music for Meditation” (track 16 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). As the music plays, read aloud Mark 9:2–9. After you finish reading, allow a few moments for the silence to gather. Turn the lights back on. Ask:

✠ As you heard the story, what did you imagine or feel?

Distribute Bibles and have learners turn to Mark 9:2–9. Ask:

- ✠ What words in the passage suggest something strange and mysterious?
- ✠ How was God’s presence revealed?
- ✠ What different feelings are described in the story?
- ✠ What do you think the disciples learned about Jesus that day?
- ✠ How do you think this experience transfigured or changed Jesus and the disciples?

Show Color Pack 26 and ask the group what they know about Elijah and Moses, explaining if necessary that they were important figures in Jewish history. Moses was called by God to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt—he was also called the great lawgiver because God gave him the Ten Commandments and other laws that helped the people live in God’s ways. Elijah was a prophet who was called by God to speak God’s words to the people. He challenged the people to follow God and live in God’s ways. Ask:

- ✠ What do you think it was like for the disciples to see Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus?
- ✠ What do you think Moses and Elijah said to Jesus?
- ✠ What does this story tell you about Jesus?

Recall together some of the transforming events and experiences that have been described in the stories during this past season: Simeon and Anna, creation, the call of Samuel, the call of the disciples, Simon Peter’s mother-in-law healed, Naaman healed. Wonder together:

- ✠ Who or what experienced transformation or change in these accounts?
- ✠ How might these stories change the way we see Jesus or follow in God’s ways?

Look once again at Color Pack 8. Invite tweens to consider what it might be like to experience the mystery and glory of God.

EASY
PREP

In that desolate place we see the Holy One,
glorious, dazzling, beloved.
God speaks. Our lives shatter.

To save time, cut and paste the passage from on an online Bible reference such as www.biblegateway.com into the word cloud generator and remove the verse numbers.

We Are Dancing in the Love of God

We are dancing in the love of God,
We are dancing in the love of God.
We are dancing in the love of God,
We are dancing in the love of God.
We are dancing, we are dancing, ooh,
We are dancing in the love of God.
We are dancing, we are dancing, ooh,
We are dancing in the love of God.

Siyahamba, ekukanyen' kwenkos',
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos'.
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos',
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos'.
Siyahamba, siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos'.
Siyahamba, siyahamba, oh,
Siyahamba ekukanyen' kwenkos'.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- Shape Poems** Like it did for the disciples, experiences of mystery and wonder can transform our lives. Invite tweens to recall a time when they felt that something awesome and wonderful was happening around them. How might they express that through poetry? Have them compose poems on scratch paper, then use fine-tipped markers to write the words of the poem to form a shape that represents that special moment in their lives. If tweens are unable to think of a story from their own experience, they might imagine they are one of the characters in the Bible story and write from that perspective.
- Bookmarks** In Mark 9:7, Jesus' identity is revealed as "Beloved Son." Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Jesus' Many Titles). Have tweens form pairs and unscramble the letters to discover some of the titles given to Jesus. Ask tweens to choose a few that help them understand Jesus better. Have them cut card stock into bookmarks, punch holes in one end, and print one of Jesus' titles on a bookmark, along with the corresponding Bible verse. Invite them to decorate their bookmarks as desired and thread short lengths of ribbon through the holes. Tweens can make several bookmarks, one to keep and some to give away.
- Word Cloud** Words spoken from a cloud helped reveal Jesus' identity. Invite tweens to use a word cloud generator such as worditout.com to create a word cloud using the words of Mark 9:2–8 or the names of Jesus from Resource Sheet 2. Once the program has created the word cloud, tweens can change its appearance by clicking the regenerate button until they create a cloud they like or adjusting the different options to the left of the word cloud. Ask: What words stand out? How does the cloud change the way you look at the story? Word clouds can be printed and displayed.

CLOSING

Gather learners and look at all the stars made over the past seven weeks. Form a circle and lead a closing blessing:

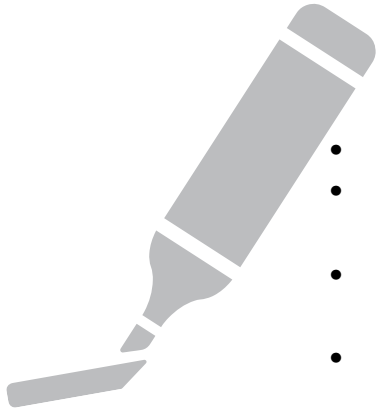
We have traveled through the light-filled days after Jesus' Epiphany. We have seen God's light shine forth.

To the learner on your right, say: "Shine with Jesus' love this week." This learner then blesses the next person to the right, continuing until all have received the blessing.

Sing "We Are Dancing in the Love of God" (Color Pack 30; track 23 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024).

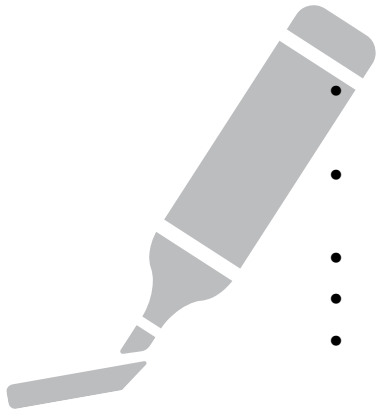
Invite group members to take a star (or several) home as a reminder of all they have learned during these past weeks.

Bible Highlights



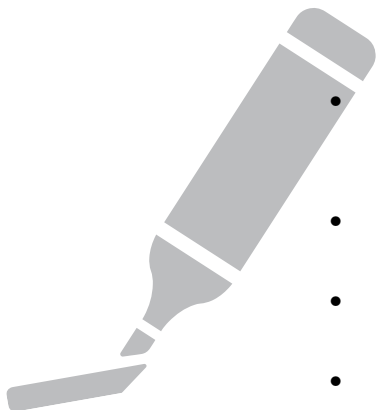
Read Mark 1:1–8.

- Use one color to highlight the verse that tells who Jesus is.
- Use another color to highlight the verse that tells how John felt about Jesus.
- Use another color to highlight the verse in which John the baptizer describes what Jesus will do.
- What does this story tell us about Jesus? (Hint: Look at the verses you highlighted. What clues do they give?)



Read Mark 1:14–20.

- Use one color to highlight the verse that describes what Jesus does after John the baptizer is arrested.
- Use another color to highlight the verses that describes the fishermen's response to Jesus.
- Why do you think the fishermen were willing to follow Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus wanted the fishermen to follow him?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus? (Hint: Look at the verses you highlighted and your answers to the questions. What clues do they give?)



Read Mark 1:29–39.

- In the time of Jesus, it was believed that demons (forces of evil) caused illness and other afflictions. Use one color to highlight the verses that show Jesus is more powerful than the demons.
- Use another color to highlight the verse that tells you that Jesus had a close relationship with God.
- Healing people and driving out demons were part of Jesus' ministry. What else did he do?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus? (Hint: Look at the verses you highlighted and your answers to the question. What clues do they give?)

February 11, 2024
On the Mountain

Tweens
Resource Sheet 2

Jesus' Many Titles

In the Bible, Jesus is given many names or titles. Each one offers a little glimpse of who Jesus is and helps us understand him a little better. Unscramble the letters in each box and write out the correct title. If you get stuck, look up the Bible reference.



Title or Name for Jesus	Bible Reference
MMAEENUL _ _ _ _	Matthew 1:23
DROW _ _	John 1:1
IORVAS _ _ _ _	Luke 2:11
ORLD _ _	John 14:5
OFGDOAMBL _ _ _ _	John 1:29
FILEFORBAED _ _ _ _ _	John 6:35
TLIHGOFHETOWLRD _ _ _ _ _	John 8:12
OODDSHEGHERP _ _ _ _ _	John 10:11
ANDEILFRESUCTERRION _ _ _ _ _	John 11:25
EETURVIN _ _ _ _	John 15:1
CORK _ _	1 Corinthians 10:4
GGRHIHEATIEPRST _ _ _ _ _	Hebrews 4:14
NORMSTARING _ _ _ _ _	Revelation 22:16
THRICS _ _ _ _	Mark 1:1
SOGOFNOD _ _ _ _	Mark 1:1
BENSLOOVED _ _ _ _ _	Mark 9:7
TREACHEDOOG _ _ _ _ _	Luke 18:18

- What images do these names conjure up in your mind?
- What do they tell you about who Jesus is?
- Circle the three that you think describe Jesus the best.