

Adult Teaching Resources

February 14, 2021



Season of Epiphany

Mark 1:29-39—"Jesus, the Traveler"

Mark 9:2-9—"Jesus, the Dazzler"

Season of Lent

Mark 1:9-15—"Jesus, the Preacher"

Mark 8:31-38—"Jesus, the Challenger"

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“Jesus, the Dazzler”

Mark 9:2-9

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Key Verse

Mark 9:7—“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!””

Opening

Begin your lesson in the large group. Ask everyone to share their favorite superhero. As folks share, record their answers on the board.

Then, ask everyone to share why that superhero is their favorite. Is it because of their outfit, their name, their story, their power.

After giving everyone time to share, ask each person to share what superpower they would like to have and how they would like to obtain that power.

For example, Peter Parker (aka Spiderman) was bitten by a radioactive spider. Bruce Banner (aka the Hulk) was exposed to gamma rays. Superman was born on the planet Krypton with his superpowers.

How many want a transformation to get their superpowers?

How many want to be born with them?

Is one way better than the other?

Spend a little time talking about transformation and change before moving to the Bible.

Reading the Bible

Where did Jesus lead Peter and James and John? (up a high mountain)

What happened to Jesus on the mountain? (he was transfigured before them)

What happened to his clothes? (they became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them)

Who appeared to them? (Elijah with Moses)

What did Peter say? (“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”)

Why did he say that? (he did not know what to say, for they were terrified)

Reading the Bible *continued*

What overshadowed them on the mountain? (a cloud with a voice)

What did the cloud say? (“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”)

When they looked around again, what did they see? (they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus)

What did Jesus order them to do as they came down the mountain? (tell no one about what they had seen until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead)

Making Connections

When have you gone on a retreat to a beautiful spot to learn more about God and your faith? Where did you go? Who taught you? What did you learn?

How much of Jesus’ teachings do you say you understand, but don’t; and how much of Jesus’ teachings do you definitely understand? How do you handle those situations when you are asked about things you don’t quite understand about Jesus and faith? How do you handle those situations when you are confident in your response?

When have you experienced a time when your understanding of a teaching was different than the truth? How was the truth revealed to you? How did that truth affect you?

Our Lesson Writer says, “As they settled down at a certain place, Jesus underwent a mind-blowing transformation the gospels struggle to describe. Both Matthew and Mark describe the change with the Greek word *metamorphoō*, the root of our word ‘metamorphosis.’” What does “metamorphosis” mean to you? When have you experienced a metamorphosis?

Has God every used a divine event to get your attention? What was the event? What did God need to tell you?

When have you seen the divine at work? What did it look like? How did you know it was God?

How do stories and events from the Old Testament help you understand and make sense of stories and events in the New Testament?

When have you been tongue-tied with something religious and tried hard to say the right thing, only to mess it up? What was the situation? What did you say?

How does God speak to you? What does God say to you? How do you know what you hear is from God?

So What?

Remain in the large group. Share with your class what our Lesson Writer says, “We can experience God’s saving grace in a moment, but transformation as disciples is a life-long process.”

Ask everyone to think about their journey of faith and their life of discipleship. Ask them to think specifically what they thought and believed when they first started the journey and compare it to what they think and believe now on the journey. As folks feel comfortable, have them share with the large group.

What did you first believe?

What do you believe now?

What has changed? What has remained the same?

How did you act in the beginning?

How do you act now?

What has changed? What has remained the same?

How has God transformed you during your journey?

How is God continuing to transform you during your journey?

Spend time in conversation and discussion about the transformation we all go through as people of faith. We are different now than when we first started. We see things differently and have shifted our views as we have gone further down the path. When we were a child, we thought and acted like a child. Now that we are older, we put aside our childish ways.

The Challenge

This week, pay attention to how God is working in your life for more transformation. What is it that God wants you to do so that you will be a more committed disciple?

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for Jesus’ transfiguration when he revealed his true nature to Peter, James, and John. We thank you that the transformation the disciples saw was not only meant for them to see, but also for them, and us, to live. Continue to work in our lives so that we might be transformed into the disciples and servants you need for your kingdom. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Nature, and gods—The photo below was taken near the place where Jesus and his disciples were when Jesus asked the disciples to verbalize their understanding of who he was. Today the place is called Banyas (or Panyas, depending on whether one uses the Hebrew or Arabic pronunciation). It is named for the Greek nature god Pan, who was worshipped in a small temple adjoining the grotto in the center, from which the stream used to flow prior to a massive earthquake that shifted its course.



Christ, the messiah—Peter’s answer “you are the Christ” is translated “you are the messiah” by the NRSV. This is because “*Christos*” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew “*Meshiah*,” which means “anointed one.” In English, if we say “Christ” or “messiah,” we are referencing the same concept.

Transfiguration—We often refer to this memorable story of Christ’s temporary transformation as the “Transfiguration of Christ.” The word “transfiguration” derives from the Latin Vulgate translation. Normally, the word is translated as “transformed,” or “changed” (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Light—The author of the Fourth Gospel takes a more metaphorical approach that would appeal to an audience familiar with Greek philosophy. He did not repeat the story of the transfiguration, when Jesus took on a shining appearance, but he spoke often of Jesus as the light of the world (John 1:9, 3:19, 8:12, 9:5, 12:46).

Day or night?—Matthew and Mark (Matt. 17:1-2, Mark 9:2) give the impression that Jesus was transfigured soon after they arrived on the mountain, which would suggest that it happened during the day. Luke’s version, however, implies that the scene took place at night, since he notes that the disciples were “weighed down with sleep” and could hardly keep their eyes open (Luke 9:32). If that were the case, the effect of Jesus’ glowing transformation would have been even more impressive.

Terrified—When Mark says the disciples were terrified before the transformed appearance of Jesus, Moses, and Elijah, the word he uses is “*ekphobos*.” The word *phobos* alone means fear (as in the derived English word “phobia”), and *ek* means “out of,” so the combination means something like “beyond fear” or “scared out of their wits.”

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Why are stories of the Transfiguration so different?

All three synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) include a version of this story, each with distinctive characteristics. Why, we might wonder, would the writers introduce different elements or emphasize different aspects of the story?

Most scholars who study the relationship between the synoptic gospels believe that Mark was written first, followed by Matthew and Luke, both of whom would have had access to the stories in Mark. Both Matthew and Luke also include material from a common source that scholars call “Q” (for the German word *quelle*, which means “source”). Matthew and Luke also had access to birth and infancy narratives about Jesus that were unique to them.

It’s likely in this case that Matthew and Luke, as they composed their version of Jesus’ biography, began with Mark’s version of the story and tweaked it to suit their interests, or to incorporate additional traditions they may have known from another source.

Matthew’s gospel appears to have been written mainly for a Jewish audience. It is characterized by a greater emphasis on Hebrew history and quotations from the Old Testament. Thus, while Mark and Luke speak of Jesus’ shining raiment, Matthew’s account (17:1-8) puts more emphasis on his shining face, perhaps to reflect the stories about how Moses’ face had shone after his encounters with God—so brightly that he had to wear a veil to keep from frightening the people (Exod. 34:29-35). Matthew is also the only gospel to say that Jesus comforted the frightened disciples with both words and touch (17:6-7).

Mark’s version of the story (9:2-8) speaks of Elijah and Moses appearing with Jesus (in that order), while Matthew and Luke list Moses first. Perhaps Mark’s prophetic interest was paramount, while the others followed the chronological appearance and relative importance of the ancient heroes by putting Moses before Elijah. Mark’s gospel, which many believe to have been drawn from conversations with Peter, is also more likely to point out the disciples’ foolishness or failures than the other gospels. He alone tells us that Peter and the others “did not know what to say, for they were terrified” (9:6).

Luke was a Gentile who wrote for a Gentile audience. His version (9:28-36) is the longest story, and he alone preserves the tradition that the disciples were so sleepy that they could barely hold their eyes open when Jesus’ transformation took place (9:32). This gives more of a dreamlike quality to the disciple’s experience, emphasizing its visionary nature, probably in keeping with Luke’s interpretation of what happened. Luke is also the only one of the three to hint at the contents of Jesus’ conversation with Moses and Elijah: he says they were talking about Jesus’ imminent “departure” (lit., “exodus”) “which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (9:31). This is an apparent reference to Jesus’ suffering and death

The Hardest Question *continued*

yet to come, and would have explained to Luke's readers that Jesus' death was not his idea alone, but part of a divine plan that Moses and Elijah also knew about.

It should come as no surprise that three people would tell the story in three different ways. We do the same thing, adding or subtracting elements in keeping with our own interests or the particular angle we want to put on the story. As we read the gospels, it is helpful to think about why each writer told the story as he did. Even when that results in stories that are sometimes contradictory, we should not be threatened, but should seek to understand the particular truths each writer hoped to convey.