

Glory

Session 4 • Matthew 17:1-13



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Peter in Matthew's Gospel*). Make copies of **Pack Item 12** (Handout: *The Mount of Transfiguration*).

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 33.

ASK: What kind of sign would you like to receive concerning a decision you need to make? (p. 33)

DISCUSS: Lead a brief discussion on why decisions can be hard to make at times. Share a situation in which you desperately needed a voice from a cloud or a message in the sky telling you what to do—and how you responded when it didn't come. Allow a few volunteers to share their stories.

SAY: *As humans, we approach decisions in a lot of different ways. Some of us make decisions quickly and confidently. Others of us put off making decisions until absolutely necessary. And then many of us take our cues from other people, letting their decisions shape our decisions.*

CONTEXT: Affirm that waiting around for a sign or a voice from heaven is rarely the best approach, but in Matthew 17 Peter, James,

and John received a special sign from Jesus that was impossible to ignore.

TRANSITION: *As we study the disciples' "mountaintop experience," let's consider how we can see Jesus as the fulfillment of everything the Law and the Prophets predicted—and how that offers hope to all who believe in Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 17:1-3 as the group imagines what the disciples felt walking up the mountain.

ASK: How do you imagine Peter, James, and John reacting to Jesus's transfigured appearance? (p. 35)

DISCUSS: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (Handout: *The Mount of Transfiguration*). Encourage adults to scan the article. Highlight Matthew's description of how Jesus's appearance changed. Note that Jesus had said some of His disciples would experience His glory (Matt. 16:28).

CLARIFY: Point out that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus. Summarize the following:

- **(17:3)** Moses, the great Old Testament lawgiver, and Elijah, the great Old

Testament prophet, represented the law and the prophets. In the New Testament, the Scriptures were sometimes called “the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 3:21). Moses and Elijah together represented a way of saying that the whole of the Old Testament revelation found its fulfillment in Jesus.

ASK: Where do we see Jesus’s glory revealed each day? (p. 35)

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Matthew 17:4-8 aloud as the group underlines words that stick out to them from the verses. Allow a few volunteers to share the words they highlighted and to explain why those words resonate with them.

ENGAGE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Peter in Matthew’s Gospel*). Point out Peter’s role in previous sessions. Note that he once again played a role in this account.

ASK: What was Peter suggesting in verse 4? Why do you think he spoke up? (p. 35)

RECAP: Discuss responses and provide more insight into Peter’s words:

- “Mark and Luke comment that Peter was at a loss for words and uttered the first thing that came to mind (Mark 9:5-6; Luke 9:33). His declaration was that it was ‘good for us to be here.’ Most likely, Peter was indicating that it was good in the sense that he, James, and John were there to help. He was not content to observe this scene but wanted to be in the scene. Apparently, Peter didn’t grasp the significance of the conversation of

Jesus with Moses and Elijah concerning His coming arrest and crucifixion (see Luke 9:31).” (p. 37, Day Two)

SAY: *As Peter talked, God stepped into the conversation. In a scene reminiscent of His actions at Mount Sinai, the Father spoke from a bright cloud. And, as He had at Jesus’s baptism, God affirmed Christ as both His Son and as One in whom He was pleased. His final command was to listen to Jesus. Instead of talking without thinking, the disciples were challenged to see Jesus for who He really is and to respond appropriately.*

ASK: What hinders our ability to hear and act on Jesus’s words? What may hinder a person from taking Jesus’s teachings seriously? (p. 35)

CHALLENGE: Note that once the cloud moved away, the disciples saw only Jesus standing there. Emphasize that while the experience made a huge impact on their lives, the presence of Jesus is really what mattered. Urge adults to consider changes they might need to make to focus on Jesus first and foremost in their lives each day.

READ: Direct the group to read Matthew 17:9-13 silently, carefully noting the discussion between Jesus and His disciples.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus instructed His disciples to remain silent about the transfiguration until after His resurrection? (p. 35)

EXPLAIN: Point out that the other disciples almost certainly would not believe

the account; however, after He was raised from the dead, this story would be easier to accept and would help them see God's plan to send His only Son.

RECAP: Draw attention to the disciples' question about Elijah. Explain the connection between Elijah and John the Baptist.

- **(17:11-12)** The disciples recalled that the scribes taught that Elijah must come first before the Messiah's arrival. These experts of the Mosaic law based their beliefs on Malachi's prophecy (Mal. 4:5-6). According to Malachi, Elijah would help usher the day of the Lord when evil would be judged and proper order would be restored. Since Elijah had just appeared on the mountain, Peter, James, and John may have wondered if they were on the cusp of the Messianic Age. Jesus affirmed the scribes were right about Elijah coming. The problem was that the religious leaders didn't recognize Elijah when he came.

SHARE: Read Matthew 17:13 again for the group. Emphasize that the disciples were beginning to grasp some important things Jesus was trying to teach them. Encourage adults to consider how they can grow in their knowledge of Jesus.

ASK: How are you making an effort to grow in your understanding of Jesus, His identity, and mission? (p. 35)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Pray that you would see the glory of Jesus.
- Worship is always the appropriate response to Jesus.
- Seek to know Jesus better by learning God's Word.

REFLECT: Invite adults to determine which of these statements will be the greatest challenge for them this week.

ASK: Have you ever prayed to see God's glory? How do you feel about asking that of God?

DISCUSS: Read aloud the **Apply the Text** questions from page 35. Encourage volunteers to share where they have seen God's glory revealed in their lives. Lead a brief discussion about how God's glory should lead us to know Him better and to worship Him more.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking Jesus to show His glory in the lives of each adult. Invite God to speak through times in His Word and through our corporate worship experiences.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group an email or text during the week. Prompt them to engage with God's truth on their own even outside of the group time. Encourage individuals to share any truths that are revealed through their quiet times this week. Remind them that Peter, James, and John were called to listen to Jesus's voice and to focus on His presence.