

YOUTH LESSON

Recognizing the Light



TEACHING PROPOSITION

We can look for and recognize the presence of God illuminating our way by listening to Jesus and seeing the light of Christ in and around us in order to walk confidently into any unknown future.

TEXT

Mark 9:2-8

LEADER PREPARATION - IN PERSON

- Make copies of Appendix A if not using class Bibles or a Bible app.
- Have a copy of the closing song ready to play:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00MMGfPrNIU>

LEADER PREPARATION - VIRTUAL

- Have the scripture open in a tab on your computer using this link:
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%209%3A2-9&version=NRSV>
- Become familiar and comfortable with using Google's Jamboard sticky note function (<https://jamboard.google.com/>). There are several short, helpful tutorials on YouTube if you are not familiar with Jamboard.
- Create a Jamboard with the title "Facing the Future." Designate one color for prompt #1 and another color for prompt #2. Be prepared to share the link in the Chat function of the video-conferencing platform so that participants can collaborate.
- Have the clip of the closing song open on a tab on your computer:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00MMGfPrNIU>

RESOURCES & MATERIALS - IN PERSON

- Refreshments
- Computer and speakers
- Two different colors of larger sticky note pads—designate one color for responses to prompt #1 and the second color for responses to prompt #2 (see the "Facing the Future" activity below)
- Markers
- Bibles or a Bible app.
- AV equipment to play the closing song and music video

RESOURCES & MATERIALS - VIRTUAL

- Computer and wifi
- Google Jamboard

CLASS OUTLINE

- 5 minutes Welcome and Gathering Ritual
- 8 minutes Searching for the Light
- 10 minutes Recognizing the Presence of God
- 10 minutes Listening to and Seeing the Light of Christ
- 10 minutes Walking Confidently into the Unknown
- 7 minutes Sending Ritual

AS YOUTH ARRIVE

In-Person Teaching

Greet each student by name, taking a moment to welcome and connect with each participant personally. Invite them to pick up a snack and connect with one other person about the "highlights" and the "low lights" from their week. Once everyone has had an opportunity to connect with at least one other person, gather everyone into a circle.

Virtual Teaching

Greet each student by name, taking a moment to welcome and connect with each participant personally. Invite them to quickly go pick up a snack at their home and then return to the screen. As participants return, send them to "breakout rooms" with two or three other youth to share the "highlights" and the "low lights" from their week. Once everyone has had an opportunity to connect with at least one other person, bring everyone back to the main room.

GATHERING RITUAL

Now that everyone has arrived, open the gathering with a prayer, inviting each person to share one place this week they saw God or one concern from the week they believe requires prayer.

Offer a prayer incorporating the comments of the group. You may use this one or your own words:

God of all life, we give you thanks for bringing us together once again here in this place. We thank you for all the ways and places we saw you at work this week...[insert places participants mentioned]. We are thankful to you, too, for opening our eyes to the people and situations still in need of your healing and care [insert places and situations mentioned by participants]. Use us as partners in your service to share your love, mercy, and justice in our relationships and in your world. Amen.

WE CAN LOOK FOR AND RECOGNIZE THE PRESENCE OF GOD ILLUMINATING OUR WAY...

Give participants five minutes to go around the church (if in person) or their home (if virtual) and identify as many types of lights/lighting as they can. If teaching in person, send participants out in pairs and make sure at least one of them has a phone and your cell number, and they yours. Start the clock and send them on their task.

*At the end of five minutes, play this buzzer sound:
<https://www.myinstants.com/instant/bruce-buffer-its-time/>*

If not all the pairs or participants have returned, send them a text to gather them back with the whole group. Once everyone has returned, begin the discussion with these questions or ones of your own choosing. If teaching in person, Write responses on the dry erase board or easel paper. If teaching virtually, use Google Jamboard (<https://jamboard.google.com/>) or white board function in your video-conferencing platform.

- **What kinds of lights and lighting did you find?**
- **What was their purpose?**
- **What did they illuminate?**
- **Why were there different lights in different places?**

These Teaching Points may be incorporated into your discussion:

- **Light is necessary for healthy living.**
- **Light was the first act of creation. "God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good." (Genesis 1:3-4a)**
- **We have a whole list of the ways in which light makes life easier and allows us to do the things that make life more enriching.**
- **Without light, we would, literally and figuratively, be in the dark.**
- **Light changes how we see. It changes what we see. It has the power to change our understanding of the world around us and even of ourselves.**

...BY LISTENING TO JESUS AND SEEING THE LIGHT OF CHRIST IN AND AROUND US...

Explain that there is a story in scripture that uses light to change how the disciples saw things.

Invite five people to participate in reading the scripture aloud in an embodied narration. Ask someone to serve as the narrator to read those parts in scripture. Ask someone to read the parts that Peter says. Another, the words that Jesus says. Another, the voice of God (to open up the hearing of this text in new ways, invite a young woman to be the voice of God).

Invite someone to be Elijah and another to be Moses. Even though Elijah and Moses do not have speaking parts, they are integral to the story and can "step in" to make their presence known. You may want to read it twice for impact.

Mark 9:2-9

Post-Transfiguration Press Conference:

Invite the class to imagine that the transfiguration happened today and those on the mountaintop have just walked down, only to be confronted by a group of reporters wanting to hear all the details of what happened and what they experienced. Ask some to be the disciples and Jesus, and others to be journalists. What questions would be asked? How would the disciples and Jesus respond?

Enter into discussion using these or your own questions:

- What thoughts and emotions fueled their responses?
- What thoughts and emotions motivated your face/body responses?
- How do you think you would have reacted?
- Why were they afraid?
- Why did Peter want to stay on the mountaintop?
- When have you had a "mountain top" experience?
- As the time came to an end during your "mountain top" experience, what were you thinking and feeling?
- Why would Jesus, who loved his friends, tell them "no," they couldn't pitch a tent and stay on the mountain top?
- What do you think the light was about in this story?

These Teaching Points may be incorporated into your discussion:

- This story in Mark 9 is often called "The Transfiguration." "Transfiguration" means to be changed. In this instance, it means to be spiritually changed.
- Moses and Elijah are two significant characters in both the Jewish and the Judeo-Christian faith.
- Moses is the central human figure in the identity story of the ancient Israelites. God used Moses to save the Hebrew people enslaved in Egypt and lead them to freedom and to the Promised Land, and to mediate the covenant relationship between God and God's people. They know who God is, who they are, and to whom they belong through their mediated experience with God. There were to recognize, honor, and worship the one true God and no other gods. In so doing, they would be given the Promised Land.
- Elijah, whose very name means "Yahweh is my God," was a great prophet sent from God to bring the Israelites back onto the right path of relationship with God. The ancient Israelites strayed from the covenant and began to flirt with other gods, namely Baal, and Elijah is the one sent to call Israel into greater faithfulness. The end of Elijah's story is that in a great whirlwind, a chariot of fire appears and whisks Elijah away to heaven. To this day, during every Passover Meal, there is an empty chair and a cup of wine awaiting Elijah's return to announce the coming of the Messiah.
- The return of Moses and Elijah signals to Peter, James, and John—all three faithful Jews—the announcement that Jesus is the Messiah.

Return to the story once again, inviting someone to read it aloud. Then continue the conversation to dig a bit deeper, using these questions or some of your own:

- If transfiguration means to be changed spiritually, what changes occurred in and through this story?
- Why do you think God let God's voice be heard then and there? There were lots of times and places where God could have made God's voice audible, but God chose this time and place. Why do you think that was?
- Again, thinking of the other stories about Jesus, where do we hear those same words spoken by God about Jesus? (Mark 1:11)
- Why do you think this story of the Transfiguration is so strongly linked to the story of Jesus's baptism?
- Thinking about this story within the larger sweep of the Gospel story, what was Jesus facing in the coming days of his ministry?
- What were the disciples facing (even though they didn't realize it then)?

These Teaching Points may be incorporated into your discussion:

- In both the story of Jesus's baptism and in this transfiguration story, the identity of Jesus is revealed and confirmed: "This is my son, my beloved, in whom I am well pleased."
- Baptism is our identity story. It tells us who we are and to whom we belong.
- It is an outward expression of an inward experience.
- The Transfiguration gives the disciples the experience of witnessing a most amazing vision.
- That vision was not light shining ON Jesus, but coming FROM Jesus.
- The Spirit shone in that moment, showing the disciples who Jesus truly was.
- But then, as quickly as it happened, Jesus's appearance went dark.
- However, the disciples couldn't "un-see" the light that shone, and they would take that experience with them as they returned to everyday life with Jesus.
- It is natural to want to stay on mountaintops—especially when we feel closer to God.
- It is one thing to have that amazing mountaintop moment, with the voice of God in a cloud, prophets, and dazzling lights, but this is not the end of the game of life.
- Jesus would not allow James, Peter, and John to stay on the mountain. He would not allow himself to stay on the mountain. There was life and work and even death that still needed to be done.
- Jesus knew he was headed to Jerusalem and his death. He shared this with his disciples, and, while they followed Jesus wherever he went, they had to, at some level, acknowledge a very human and natural fear of the unknown that faced them.

...SO THAT WE CAN WALK CONFIDENTLY INTO ANY UNKNOWN FUTURE.

In Person Teaching

Give each student several pieces of large sticky notes in both colors and a marker. Invite them to find a quiet place in the room and ponder the two questions below. Have them write their responses to prompt #1 on the designated color sticky note and responses to prompt #2 on the other designated color. Post the responses to prompt #1 on one part of the wall and the responses to prompt #2 on another part of the wall.

Virtual Teaching

Share the link to the Jamboard you created before class in the Chat function at this point in the lesson. Invite students to find a quiet place in their room and ponder the two questions below. Type and post their responses to prompt #1 on the designated color sticky note and the responses to prompt #2 on the other designated color. Post each color on its own side of the "board."

Prompts

1. What uncertainties are you facing, now and in the future, that may cause you fear or concern?
2. How do you deal with it?

Incorporate these Teaching Points into your final remarks:

- Invite the participants to remember the opening activity of identifying lights.
- There were lights all around us—all over our homes, in the church, at school, in the world... We simply get so caught up on our fear of the unknown that we have difficulty seeing the light that is already there.
- God does not leave us alone to face uncertain times. God gives us:
 - An identity as Christ's own siblings, signed and sealed in baptism
 - A voice within and around, reminding us we are God's beloved
 - A place to belong
 - Friends who bear and bring light to us
- All of these are lights that illuminate our way.
- Even when we don't know exactly where we are going, or where we will end up, or what we are to do—or even when we feel lost—we're not really alone.
- God knows where we are. God finds us, and God brings us light.

As you transition into a time of closing, play this version of "You Will Be Found" from Dear Evan Hansen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00MMGfPrNIU>

CLOSING RITUAL

Close with this prayer or one of your own:

Radiant God, source of light, as you surrounded Jesus with your glory, so you come to us in penetrating brightness. You leave us in awe of your beaming brightness. Lighting up our ways when we are fearful and confused. Fill us with light and courage to carry good news into all the corners of the world and to bring back the joy of your presence. Transfigure us to be who we are called to be. Amen.

Writing Team



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