



Session 9  
Winter 2015–16  
Primary

# Transfiguration

LUKE 9:28–36

## prepare

### PRAYER

*God of mystery, there is so much about you we cannot understand. Help us, like the disciples, to glimpse your glory today. Amen.*

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

To discover Jesus' glory on the mountaintop

### STORY SUMMARY

Jesus took Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. While praying, Jesus' face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Peter suggested making three dwellings. A cloud passed over and terrified the disciples. A voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" The disciples were frightened, but Jesus told them not to be afraid. They told no one about what had happened.



### teaching tips for primary

Children, with their natural sense of wonder, may have an easier time embracing the mystery of the transfiguration than adults, who would be more likely to explain it away. Children may connect to the emotions the disciples felt when they saw Jesus transfigured. They may have experienced amazing events themselves. Give them opportunity to share these experiences.

Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared.

## Luke's reader

Luke's original readers are more difficult to name and imagine historically than Matthew's or Mark's. We think of Matthew as writing to the church in Antioch and Mark to the believers in Rome.<sup>1</sup> We have more difficulty with Luke. Both his volumes (Luke and Acts) are addressed to someone named Theophilus, but there is no historical record of such a person. We speculate that Theophilus may have been a wealthy patron who supported Luke while he was writing, but we don't know for sure.

From a literary perspective, however, Luke's reader is easy to imagine. Theophilus, whoever he was, functions for us today as "every believer" in much the way John Bunyan's Pilgrim functions in the classic book *Pilgrim's Progress*. From the prologue of this Gospel we know that he is someone who knows something about Jesus but who is also puzzled. The book is written to set the record straight—this writing is essentially for teaching.

## Suffering and glory

The basic meaning and construction of the transfiguration story are the same in all three Gospel accounts.<sup>2</sup> All three stories happen on a mountain. All three talk about clouds and light, and Moses and Elijah. All three come after Jesus' discussion with his disciples about how, as Messiah, he will suffer—contrary to every current expectation.

But Luke's Gospel differs in a number of ways. One difference is in how the story is set up. In Matthew and Mark, the prelude focuses on Peter's difficulty in accepting that the Messiah must suffer. In Luke, Peter is also the one who recognizes that Jesus is the Messiah; but as Jesus goes on to say that he will suffer and as he calls disciples to take up the cross, Peter is not singled out for rebuke. In fact, no one is rebuked in Luke's account. In Luke, this struggle to understand the connection between Christian suffering and Christian glory is shared by all Luke's readers (modern as well as early readers). None of us are



rebuked for this struggle. Rather, we are all called to understand that, as for Jesus, the path to freedom and promise lies through the hard work of the cross.

## Prayer and freedom

Luke's transfiguration account is unique in two other ways. First, it is the only one to set the experience in the context of prayer. Jesus prays before or during every critical juncture in the story. On this point, Jesus' concern for his disciples and Luke's concern for his readers—present and future—overlap. As Jesus encourages his disciples in the habits and practices of prayer, so Luke encourages his readers. Secondly, Luke is unique

because he describes the topic of conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah on the mountain. It is Jesus' "exodus"—often translated as "departure"—to be accomplished in Jerusalem. This choice of wording points both backward and forward in time. It recalls the story of the Israelites, delivered from oppression in Egypt and suffering in the wilderness. The word also points forward to Acts 7, where Stephen, just before he is martyred, compares Jesus and Moses. Most important for Luke's readers, the idea of exodus defines Luke's perspective on Jesus' passion and suffering. Jesus, too, will face the hand of oppression and will wander his own inner wilderness. He, too, will be delivered into freedom and promise. As we know from reading the whole of Luke and Acts, the way Jesus walks is the way he shows us how to walk. His path to exodus is also our own.

1. There is debate about these locations in both instances. Nevertheless, there is more scholarly consensus on the original recipients of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew than that of Luke.
2. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina series), Liturgical Press, 1992, 155.

# gather

## supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player

## poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Luke 4)

## BUILD COMMUNITY

Give each child an opportunity to share a “mountain” or a “valley” experience from the week. A “mountain” is a happy, fun, or exciting event. A “valley” is a sad or hard thing that happened. Respect each child’s comfort level; don’t require children to share something if they don’t feel comfortable doing so.

## WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing “I Lift My Eyes Up” (track 10, page 17 in the *Year Two Songbook*).

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Sing two or more verses of “Praying” (track 17, page 26 in the *Year Two Songbook*).

Invite children to talk about different times and reasons we pray. The song offered some examples, which you could highlight as well.

Take time for children to share prayer requests. Pray together. Some children may enjoy praying aloud, while others will pray silently.

Close this time by noting that Jesus prayed at different times and different places too. They will hear a story about that today.

## media connections

- *Little Grey and the Great Mystery* by Rachel Rivett (about a squirrel who wants to know about the mystery “at the heart of everything”)
- “Jesus’ Transfiguration” by The JESUS Film Project on YouTube
- Internet search for Global Gospel video “The transfiguration of Jesus”
- Internet search for *The Transfiguration* painting from Vie de Jesus Mafa

## Bible memory

Read Luke 4:18–19, the verses that are printed on the scroll of the Bible memory poster. Pause at each of the bold words (*good news, release, recovery, and so on*) so children can say them with a loud, strong voice. Repeat this, and have children add a movement when they say the bold words. For instance, they could jump as they say the words, or raise their arms overhead each time.

**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.**

—Luke 4:18–19

# experience

## SHARE THE STORY

Open a Bible to Luke 9 and show the Bible story illustration on page 218 in *Shine On*. As background, read the information about Moses and Elijah on page 2 of the leaflet.

Use story figures from the poster pack to represent Jesus, the three disciples, and Moses and Elijah as you read the story. Make a mountain by placing a small box underneath a green or brown cloth. When Jesus is transfigured, place a piece of sparkly white cloth or paper over his figure. Lay a piece of tulle or gauze over the scene when the cloud appears.

## WONDER AND REFLECT

Talk about the story together. Start by asking the children what they are wondering. Use the following questions to encourage thinking.

- (Point to the “mountain” scene laid out.) I wonder where this could really be. I wonder if you have ever been in such a special place.
- Imagine seeing Jesus’ face and clothes brightly shining.
- What did Jesus’ shining face and clothes really mean?
- The disciples were afraid; I wonder if I would have been afraid, too.

## PEACE NOTES

Jesus took his disciples up on a mountain to pray. Have children find Mount Tabor on the Travel guide poster from the poster pack. Some people believe this is the mountain in today’s story.

Although we know God is everywhere, many people find it easier to feel God’s presence in particular places, such as out in nature or in a church or room of their home. These places can help us feel peaceful inside. Talk with the children about some places where they feel peaceful. What is special about these places? Say a prayer thanking God for being present with us at all times and in all places, but especially in these peaceful places.



## Transfiguration

Luke 9:28–36

## supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Primary leaflets

## storytelling props

- Small box
- Brown or green cloth
- Small piece of sparkly white cloth or paper
- Larger piece of tulle or gauze

## poster pack

- Travel guide poster
- Six story figures

## to do

- Cut out the story figures in the poster pack. Attach them to cups, blocks, or cardboard tubes so they stand upright.
- Gather storytelling props and practice telling the story.

# explore

## CREATE

Provide art materials so children can create pictures of today's story. Provide glitter or glitter pens so they can make Jesus "shine." Tape a waxed paper "cloud" shape over each child's finished picture. Tape it only along the top edge so it can be lifted to reveal the picture underneath. *Tip:* If using glitter and glue, send the cloud shape home so the child can add it once the picture is dry.

### supplies

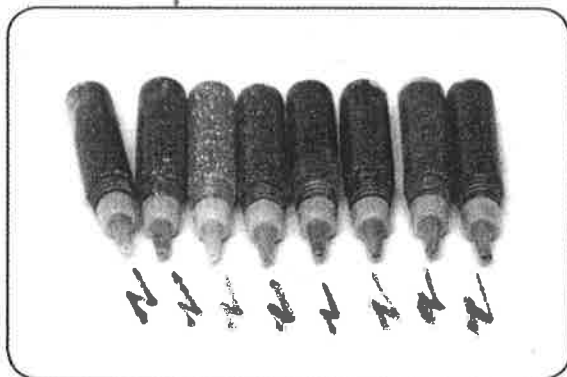
- White paper
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Glitter and glue or glitter pens
- Waxed paper
- Tape
- Scissors

## MOVE

Have children spread out around the room so they have room to move. Read the prompts for the movement activity on page 3 of the Primary leaflet, pausing so children can do each motion. Children may have suggestions for other movements that could be added to the story. This can be done as a partner activity, rather than a whole group activity. One person reads while the other person moves; then switch roles.

### supplies

- Primary leaflets



## other ideas

- Use diluted lemon juice to write a hidden message or word on white paper, such as "Jesus" or "This is my Son." Hold it up to a lightbulb to reveal the message.
- Look at something familiar, such as a leaf, in a magnifying glass to see parts of it you couldn't see before.

## RETELL

Drape a thin white cloth over some chairs to make a mysterious "cloud." Children can move inside the cloud with the story figures and act out the story.

### supplies

- Story figures (wooden or from poster pack)
- Storytelling props
- Chairs
- Thin white cloth

## LEAFLET

Children can solve the word puzzle on page 1 to see what God said.

*Solution:* "This is my Son. Listen to him."

Learn about transformations in the natural world. Some animals change dramatically as they get older. Some plants and animals change with the seasons. Some can change their looks to protect themselves. On page 4 in the Primary leaflet, children can read the clues on the left side and draw lines to match the clues to the pictures on the right. The solution is on page 96 in this guide.

### supplies

- Primary leaflets
- Pencils

# bles

## PRAY

Gather in a circle. Say a prayer, thanking God for the amazing and surprising things that God does.

## SEND

Sing "God's Light Shines" (track 8, page 14 in the *Year Two Songbook*).

Read a blessing to each child based on Psalm 118:27a.

**The Lord is God and has given you light.**

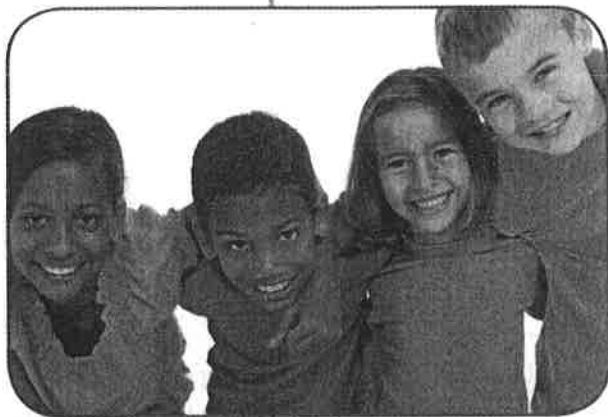
Make sure to send leaflets home with the children.

## supplies

- Primary leaflets
- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player

## looking ahead

Bring several packets of yeast and a loaf of yeast bread for session 10. If possible, bring a bird's nest as well.



## leader's closing prayer

Does teaching—or life in general—sometimes feel like an uphill climb? Keep your eyes open for moments of glory.

*God of glory, create in me a willingness to make the climb and an openness to see what's at the top of the mountain. Fill me with a sense of expectation and increase my capacity for wonder. Amen.*

*Share unique moments with other leaders. Your experiences can encourage and teach others at just the right time.*

—Stephen Murphy  
Holland, Michigan