



## Parkway Fellowship

PEAK ENCOUNTERS • MT. TABOR • MATTHEW 17:1-9 • 8/2/2020

### MAIN POINT

We must not interpret how God feels about us by what happens to us, but by what Scripture tells us who Jesus is.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is your most memorable “mountaintop” experience, a spiritual or profound experience that affected you to your core and changed the way you lived?**

**What constitutes a mountaintop experience for most people? How does that experience impact the person beyond that day?**

A momentous “mountaintop experience” is both life-altering and perspective-changing. Although we are to enjoy these experiences, we’re not meant to stay there. Peter, James, and John learned this as they saw Jesus in His full glory and finally understood His divinity when He transfigured before them in Matthew 17.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 17:1-6.

**This event took place six days after Peter’s confession and Jesus’ prediction of His death. Why is that important?**

**What does it mean to be transfigured?**

**What was the significance of Moses’ and Elijah’s presence?**

A transfiguration is an alteration or transformation into something higher, better, and more beautiful. Jesus was transformed, or transfigured, before Peter, James, and John. Jesus' appearance became radiant: "His face shone like the sun. Even His clothes became as white as the light" (v. 2).

The presence of Moses and Elijah on the mountaintop is significant: Moses was highly regarded by the Jews as a man of God. The Lord used Moses to lead His people out of captivity in Egypt. Furthermore, prophecies of Jesus identified Him as "the new Moses." Elijah was a prophet who, through God's miraculous power, both challenged and defeated the Canaanite god Baal. Elijah never experienced death—he was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.

**Why did Peter want to pitch three tents? Why is his desire to pitch tents practical, or understandable?**

Upon seeing Jesus transformed, Peter was undone. So impacted by the glorious and heavenly experience that took place at the mountaintop, Peter longed to stay in the glory of Jesus' forever. His passion and excitement over Christ led him to literally want to pitch a tent, to bask in God's glory.

**Describe your desires to bask in, or stay on, a "mountaintop experience" you've had.**

**Why is "leaving the mountaintop" hard, yet necessary?**

Jesus most likely took Peter, James, and John with Him to the mountaintop because in Jewish culture at least two witnesses were needed to validate a person's testimony. Having three men there with Him meant they could all serve as witnesses to His true identity and the events that took place on the mountaintop. This would be important in the days that followed Jesus' resurrection. Although Peter was excited, Jesus reminded Peter that he had to come down from the mountain. We cannot stay in mountaintop experiences forever—we have to go down in the everyday mud and mire and live our lives—we've got Kingdom work to do.

**What was familiar about the "voice from the cloud" (v. 5)?**

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATTHEW 17:7-9.

**What is significant about the order of events in this passage? What would soon happen to Jesus after this experience?**

**How does time with the Father prepare people to face challenges?**

Soon enough, Jesus would go to the cross to die for the sins of the world. On this mountaintop, Jesus was preparing to face the brutality of the cross. He knew the value of spending time with God, seeking strength, and gaining boldness. Time with God, reading His Word, praying, and seeking His guidance give us strength, boldness, and courage for what is to come. While we are not outwardly transfigured like Jesus was, we can be inwardly transformed.

**Why were the disciples told to keep quiet about this experience until after the resurrection?**

Jesus may have instructed them to keep quiet in order to avoid any man-made hindrances to the plan that the Father had laid out for Him. The testimony of this event would be another proof to share about Jesus' identity after the resurrection. Jesus had made sure that there were an adequate number of witnesses to validate each other's testimonies about the event.

God is always preparing us for what He has planned to do in our lives. This mountaintop experience was a gracious way to prepare the inner circle of disciples to carry on after Jesus' death and resurrection. They could move forward with full confidence that Jesus is God's unique Son. They could draw strength from the memory of hearing God the Father speak to them, and they could serve as witnesses to the transfiguration of Jesus on the mountaintop.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What in your life have you allowed to keep you from seeing Jesus as He really is?**

**Everything in the Bible points to Jesus. What events in the Bible that don't mention Jesus, point to Jesus?**

**What would it look like for you to stop interpreting God's feelings for you based on what is happening to you?**

**Do you really think God can change our country? Our city? Are you willing to go "In for 10"? Explain.**

## PRAYER

Thank God that He wants to reach your country and your community with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Invite Him to help you see Jesus who He really is and stop interpreting His feelings for you based on your circumstances so that you might selflessly live on mission to glorify God and reach the lost.

# COMMENTARY

## | MATTHEW 17:1-9

17:1-6 The reference to six days indicates the rapidity of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise in Mt 16:28, but it also may draw a parallel between Jesus' transfiguration and God's revelation of Himself to Moses in Ex 24:13-18. Other parallels include the reference to a cloud, a brilliant light, a mountain, and the separation of a small number of men from the larger group. Moses' face shone brilliantly after he met with God (Ex 34:29-35), so Jesus' transfiguration serves to identify Him as the new Moses. This seems confirmed by the words listen to Him which echo Dt 18:15, a text from the prophet-like-Moses prophecy (Dt 18:15-19). However, the description of Jesus transcends OT descriptions of the glorified Moses. In Ex 34:29-35, only Moses' face was radiant and this radiance was concealed by his veil. Jesus' face had radiance too glorious to conceal and even His clothes became as white as the light. The description of Jesus parallels the description of the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:9-10 and shows that Jesus possessed the glory of His Father (Mt 16:27).

The presence of Moses and Elijah indicates that the necessary conditions for Messiah's coming had been fulfilled (v. 10; Dt 18:15-19; Mal 4:5). Peter's request to build tabernacles unjustly suggested equal treatment for Jesus and His guests. The Father's voice from heaven showed Jesus' superiority to Moses and Elijah. Jesus is God's beloved Son, the object of His delight, and the focus of true disciples. God spoke from heaven only twice in Matthew, both times to express His love for Jesus and His delight in His works (v. 5; 3:17). The disciples' reaction is understandable, for the OT shows that direct encounters with God inspire fright (e.g., Isa 6:1-5).

17:9 The disciples could report the transfiguration only after the resurrection when the nature of Jesus' messianic reign became clear. This is Jesus' third mention of His resurrection in this Gospel.