

Astounding Glory

A voice from heaven is heard again as the Season after the Epiphany draws to a close. What was spoken at the river (Luke 3:22) is proclaimed on the mountaintop: "This is my Son, the Chosen; listen to him" (9:35). With disciples of all times and places, we are called through Christ to a new way of life. As we follow, we join in the celebration of God's glory.

Focus Scripture: Luke 9:28–36, (37–43)

Peter, James, and John journey with Jesus to a mountainside for prayer. The name and location of this mountain are not certain. As Jesus is praying, the appearance of his face changes and his clothes become dazzling white. This change in appearance is commonly referred to as Jesus' *transfiguration*, and this Sunday in the church year is named Transfiguration Sunday.

Moses and Elijah appear to talk with Jesus about his upcoming death. The words used for this refer to Jesus' "departure," from a Greek word that may also be translated as "exodus." Among the Jewish readers of this gospel, "exodus" would be a powerful symbol of the journey Jesus would take through the events of his final days in Jerusalem.

Moses and Elijah are two of the greatest Jewish heroes. Some Christian scholars suggest that in the transfiguration event, Moses represents the Law and Elijah the prophets. Both Moses and Elijah were called to lead God's people in a new direction. Jesus shares this prophetic call with them. In seeing Moses, Elijah, and Jesus together, the disciples catch a glimpse of life in the reign of God to come.

The disciples do not hear the exchange between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah because they are asleep. When they awaken, they see Moses and Elijah begin to depart. Eager to capture the glory of God revealed in this place, Peter suggests building a dwelling for each one.

A cloud overshadows as Peter speaks, and the voice from the cloud proclaims that Jesus is God's "chosen" or "beloved." The voice tells the disciples to listen to Jesus. When the cloud lifts, Jesus is alone with the disciples. The gospel writer reports that the disciples keep quiet about the transfiguration "in those days," suggesting that they told the story after Jesus' resurrection.

As Jesus and the disciples come down from the mountain, they encounter tension. In verses 37–43, there is an account of how the other disciples failed to heal a child. As Jesus restores wholeness to the child, it is reported that "all were astounded at the greatness of God." Jesus' identity has been revealed to this group as well as those present on the mountain, though misunderstanding will persist among the disciples.

Images of God's glory and human response are also found in the additional readings. As reported in **Exodus 34:29–35**, Moses' face shone with the reflected glory of God after receiving the Ten Commandments. Moses' brother Aaron and all the people saw this shining face and knew that God's word was with Moses. The glory and holiness of God is celebrated in **Psalms 99**. God's righteousness shines through as the story of God's people is recounted. The psalmist declares that God brings justice, and calls for our worship in response. Paul contrasts the glory of Moses with the glory of Christ in **2 Corinthians 3:12–4:2**. In Christ we see the full glory of God. Because of Christ, God's glory is ours, too.

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Writers, artists, preachers, poets, and musicians wrestle with ways to express God's glory among us. As we turn toward the Season of Lent, Jesus is turning from the moment of transfiguration glory toward the time when God's glorious power and presence will be revealed in a new and surprising way. When have you experienced the awesomeness or mystery of God's power? What does it mean in our lives – as individuals and as the church – to be open to the many ways God's presence is revealed?



February 14, 2010

Focus Scripture
Luke 9:28–36,
(37–43)

Additional Scriptures
Exodus 34:29–35
Psalms 99
2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2

God of glory and majesty, bathe us in the bright fire of your transforming love. Gift us with Spirit, that we may live boldly each day as children of your realm. Amen.

If you have Internet access, visit www.spiritseasons.com to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

The Focus for Ages 5–12



If this is your last session together as a group, review the “Ideas for Endings” in the booklet *From Start to Finish* available as a free downloadable document from the Library of the Seasons websites or in a folder on *SeasonsDisk*.

The Transfiguration story is awesome and mysterious for adults. It is tempting to set it aside rather than tell it to children. But remember how children of all ages are attracted to mystery stories and how they find wonder and awe in so many things that adults ignore as commonplace. For their sake, let them hear and ponder this story with all its mystery and wonder. After all, given the cartoons and movies they enjoy, few of them will have difficulty imagining a dazzling light surrounding or even coming from a human figure. This is a story in which their imaginations can be set loose.

While some children, especially the older children in your group, may appear bored when they discover this is a story they “already know,” encourage them to ponder the story and ask new questions of it. Just as adults can discover something new each time they encounter God’s word, so can the children.

Pray that the children in your group will discover how their imaginations are a gift from God to help them discover more about God and Jesus Christ.

February 14, 2010



Materials needed

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Luke 9:28–36, (37–43) and the biblical background material (p. 91). What tickles your imagination in this story?
- ❑ Bring *basic supply kit* (see p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Music CD, vol. 8* and *CD player*. *Seasons.mp3 Downloads* are available for purchase at www.spiritseasons.com.
- ❑ Bring songs “*Spirit Come*,” “*Oh, God Today Has a Human Face*,” “*May Peace Be with You*” (pp. 4–5, 2–3, and 5 in *Music Section*; also #23, #6, and #24 on *Seasons Music CD*).

Gather

- ❑ Prepare worship table with *white cloth* for Transfiguration Sunday, *Christ candle*, *matches*, *offering basket*, and *Bible*. Place a *bookmark* in the Bible at Luke.
- ❑ Bring *flashlights*, *mirrors*, *prisms*, and other *shiny surfaces* as well as *some that do not reflect*.

Engage

- ❑ Prepare to tell story on *today’s resource sheet* “*On the Mountain*.”
- ❑ For dramatic poses group, bring *today’s resource sheet* “*On the Mountain*” and *prisms* or *large silver disks* (such as CDs).

- ❑ For Bible research group, bring *copies of today’s resource sheet* “*A Closer Look*” and *directions*.

Respond

Gather or make the materials for the zones selected.

- ❑ **Art zone:** *square tiles* or *wooden blocks* (approximately 20 cm/8 in), *reflective materials* (small mirrors, large sequins), *adhesive*, and *tealights*
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** *copies of today’s resource sheet* “*Picture It*,” *fine-tip coloured markers* or *coloured pencils*, and *directions*
- ❑ **Community zone:** *poster* “*Intercession*” and *newsprint*
- ❑ **Music zone:** *song* “*You Are Holy/Hamba Nathi*” (p. 12 in *Music Section*; also #21 on *Seasons Music CD*)
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** *red cellophane* (not pink) and *construction paper* or *plain note cards*
For each card, fold the construction paper in half. Cut a heart-shaped window in the front of the card. Cut cellophane squares, large enough to cover the heart shape.

Bless

- ❑ Bring *song* “*You Are Holy/Hamba Nathi*” (p. 12 in *Music Section*; also #21 on *Seasons Music CD*).



Astounding Glory

Scripture

Luke 9:28–36,
(37–43)

FOCUS To wonder about seeing the glory of God shining in Jesus.

GATHER

Welcome Greet the children as they arrive. Invite them to put their offerings in the basket on the worship table.

Call to gather Play “Spirit Come” (pp. 4–5 in *Music Section*, also #23 on *Seasons Music CD*). Invite the children to gather at the worship table. Light the Christ candle.

Opening ritual

Call to worship and learn Invite the children to repeat each line of the following call after you:

The Season of Christmas is over.

Epiphany Day has passed.

We have learned much about Jesus, and

The teachings and acts of love

That we carry on today.

Light or help a child light the Christ candle.

Prayer Ask a child to hold the offering basket during the prayer. Pray the following prayer, or one of your own:

**God of hope, peace, joy, and love,
we praise you for all that you have done
for us.**

**We bring our gifts to show our love
and we come to learn about you, about
Jesus, and the Bible. Amen.**

Put out the candle as a sign that the Gather ritual is concluded.

Connect with the focus

Reflections Provide flashlights, mirrors, prisms, and other shiny surfaces as well as some surfaces that will not reflect for the children to experiment with. After they have done this, ask:

■ **Which of these surfaces reflect the light or reflect what is around them?**

Suggest that they remember what these shiny surfaces are like as they hear the story about Jesus for this session.

2

ENGAGE

Prepare for the Bible story

More from Luke Have a child get the Bible from the worship table and open it to the bookmark at Luke. Invite the children to recall some stories they have heard from Luke, ending with the story from the previous session when Jesus sent the fishers to the deep water for a great catch of fish. Have a child find chapter 5, where the story for the previous session is found. Then have another child turn to chapter 9, where the story for this session is found.

The Bible story

Shining Jesus Remind the children of the shiny surfaces they explored earlier. Then tell the story on today’s resource sheet “On the Mountain,” based on **Luke 9:28–36, (37–43)**.

Explore the story further

To enable the children to explore the story further,

according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.

Dramatic poses group In this activity, the children have the opportunity to focus on points of the story that draw forth awe and wonder. Give each child one of the reflective surfaces from Gather, or have a prism or large silver disk (even a CD will work) for each child. Suggest that they move the object about a bit to see the reflection shimmer and pretend they are Peter, James, or John. Review the story on today’s resource sheet “On the Mountain” by naming the moments in it below. Pause after each one for the children to look at the reflective surface and think about how they would stand or sit at this moment in the story. Ask them to show what they decided. You may want to encourage their dramatic flair.

■ **Jesus invites you (Peter, James, and John) to go up the mountain to pray.**

- **A dazzling light wakes you up.**
- **You see the light of God's glory around Jesus, Moses, and Elijah.**
- **You want to do something special for this awesome moment.**
- **You hear a voice say, "This is my beloved, my chosen one. Listen to him."**

Bible research group The children in this group will discover more about the background for this story. Provide Bibles, pencils, copies of today's resource sheet "A Closer Look," and these directions:

- 1 Take a Bible, a pencil, and a copy of "A Closer Look."
- 2 Find Luke 9:28 in your Bible and read verses 28–36.
- 3 With a partner or as a group, answer the questions on "A Closer Look."



The Bible story and us

Play "Oh, God Today Has a Human Face" (pp. 2–3 in *Music Section*, also #6 on *Seasons Music CD*) as the signal for the children to come together. Ask the Bible research group to report on what they discovered.

3

RESPOND

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Art zone: Transfiguration candlesticks** The children can make Transfiguration candlesticks so they can celebrate this special day at home with their families. The candlestick will reflect the flame as they sit around the table. Each child will need a ceramic tile or wood square (approximately 20 cm/8 in). Provide the appropriate adhesive for the tile or wood. Cover the surface with reflective materials, such as small mirrors, large sequins, or some other reflective material that will not burn. Then place one or two tealights on the tile or square.

Suggest to the children that they place this Transfiguration candlestick in the middle of the dining table at home. Remind the children that they should not light the candles unless an adult is supervising them and that candles should never be left burning unattended.

- **Quiet zone: Mystery picture** The story of the Transfiguration holds much mystery. The children can play with this mystery in discovering a picture about the Transfiguration. Provide copies of today's resource sheet "Picture It," fine-tip markers or coloured pencils, and these directions:

- 1 Take a copy of "Picture It."
- 2 Follow the directions at the top of the page.
- 3 When you have completed the picture, think about the "Think Spot" question or talk about it with others in this zone.

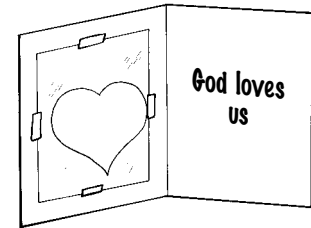


- **Community zone: Group poem** To encourage the children to express the awe they find in the story of the Transfiguration, help them write a group poem. Place the poster *Intercession* on a table and scatter small mirrors or sequins over it, but do not obscure the silver bowl. Invite the children to look at the poster as they remember the story of the Transfiguration. Ask:

■ **What is "awesome"?**

Have the children write their answers on strips of paper in this form: Awesome is... Arrange their sentences to create a poem. Tape them to newsprint so they can read it in Bless.

- ❑ **Music zone: Song about holiness** The children may be familiar with the song “You Are Holy/Hamba Nathi” (p. 12 in *Music Section*; also #21 on *Seasons Music CD*) as it was included on December 27 and January 3. For this session, it has new meaning with the Transfiguration story. Sing it together. Invite the children to substitute other words for “holy,” such as “awesome.”
- ❑ **Outreach zone: Mystery messages** What happened on the mountain is impossible to explain. It is a mystery. In this zone, the children will create mysterious messages for others. Give each child a prepared card. Show them how orange and yellow marks seem to disappear under the red cellophane. Provide yellow and orange markers for them to write messages on the inside of the cards. Tape a piece of red cellophane to the back of the front of the card so it covers the opening. Now the message disappears until the card is opened.



Gather Play “Oh, God Today Has a Human Face” (pp. 2–3 in *Music Section*; also #6 on *Seasons Music CD*) as the signal to gather at the worship table. Light the candle, or have a child light it.

Review the story by having the community group read their poem or looking at the poster *Intercession* and talking about the awe in the Transfiguration story.

Song Play “You Are Holy/Hamba Nathi” (p. 12 in *Music Section*; also #21 on *Seasons Music CD*).

Invite the children from the music zone to sing it and then everyone can sing it with them.

Pray this prayer, or one of your own:

Caring God,
thank you for your love
and the message of good news
that Jesus brought to us. Amen.

Blessing To each child, say, “(Child’s name), remember the awe and wonder of Jesus this week.”



Think about what happened during this session. When did a child glow with the knowledge of the glory of God?

Please take time to complete the evaluation at the end of this guide and send it to the publisher, or the online evaluation at www.spiritseasons.com. We depend upon your help to improve *Seasons of the Spirit*. Thank you.



ON THE MOUNTAIN

based on Luke 9:28–36

Tell the story with a voice
filled with awe
and wonder.

Since Jesus invited the fishers to follow him, so much has happened. They journeyed with Jesus around the countryside. Jesus taught crowds of people, telling them the good news of God's love and way. Jesus healed people of all kinds of diseases. Jesus told stories about planting seeds and good shepherds. The people Jesus healed and taught told other people about Jesus. More and more people came to hear him or to be healed by him.

But on this day, after many days of teaching, Jesus asked Peter, James, and John, three of his closest friends, to go up on a mountain to pray. Usually, Jesus went off to be alone when he prayed and talked with God. The friends were a bit surprised at Jesus' invitation. Of course, they agreed to go.

Peter, James, and John sat on the big rocks at the top of the mountain. They prayed with Jesus. While Jesus was praying, something

awesome happened. His face changed so that he looked different. It is hard to describe how Jesus changed. Maybe Jesus' face shone like the sun. Maybe his face seemed to be full of God's glory. Besides that, his clothes became dazzling white, a white that almost blinded their eyes.

Then two men appeared, the prophets Moses and Elijah. They also seemed to be full of God's glory. They talked with Jesus about what was ahead for him in Jerusalem.

Peter, James, and John were missing all this wonderment because they had fallen asleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus with Moses and Elijah. They also saw the wonder of God's glory around them and Jesus.

As Moses and Elijah left, Peter said to Jesus, "Let us build booths, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But at that very moment, a dark cloud came over the mountain and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved, my chosen one. Listen to him."

Then it was very quiet, as quiet as could be. Peter, James, and John were just as quiet about what they seen. For a long, long time they didn't tell anyone what they had seen and heard, but they did not forget it.



A CLOSER LOOK

Sometimes, we read our Bibles to help answer our questions about God, Jesus, and life in general. Sometimes, when we read our Bibles, we come up with more questions. That's part of what makes learning about the Bible so interesting.

Who

Who are these people?

- Peter, John, and James (See **Luke 6:12–16.**)
- Moses (See **Exodus 34:29–35.**)
- Elijah (See **Malachi 4:5–6.**)

What

What is a tabernacle?

(See **Deuteronomy 16:13–15.** Is there a footnote in your Bible explaining that another translation for booths is tabernacle?)

The Festival of Booths, also known as Succoth, is still celebrated by Jews today.

Where

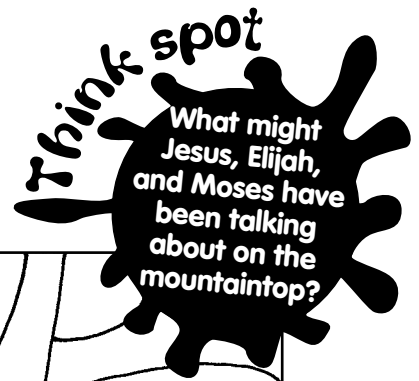
Why would Jesus go up on a mountain to pray?

Because in Jewish tradition, mountains are a common place to speak to God. What other special conversations happened on mountains? (See **Exodus 19:16–25** and **1 Kings 19:9–13a.**)



PICTURE IT

Decorate the picture by using one colour for each number. Watch the mystery picture appear.



What might Jesus, Elijah, and Moses have been talking about on the mountaintop?

