



## GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 7

### CONVERSATION STARTER

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If you could change any one quality or aspect of yourself, what would it be and why?

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

*Matthew 17:1-13*

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In the Bible, [mountaintops](#) are places we go to experience God. Tim Mackie points out how, in Matthew's Gospel, there are actually *seven* mountaintop experiences, and that the fourth mountain (at the center) is Jesus' Transfiguration. This makes it crucial to the message Matthew wants his readers to understand about who Jesus is.

On top of the mountain, we're told, "He was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light." This is a direct callback to [Moses' face shining](#) after encountering God's presence. With Moses, this took place after he interceded for the people because of their sin with the golden calf; Moses then delivered two new tablets of God's commandments to the people. Could this be a reminder that Jesus is our great intercessor, even more so than Moses? Jesus has given the people the Law once more and will go on to Jerusalem to fulfill the role of mediator to rescue them from their sin and wickedness.

NT Wright points out how this scene offers a parallel to the mountain of Calvary Jesus is now marching toward:

"Here, on a mountain, is Jesus, revealed in glory; there, on a hill outside Jerusalem, is Jesus, revealed in shame. Here his clothes are shining white; there, they have been stripped off, and soldiers have gambled for them. Here he is flanked by Moses and Elijah, two of Israel's greatest heroes, representing the law and the prophets; there, he is flanked by two brigands, representing the level to which Israel had sunk in rebellion against God. Here, a bright cloud overshadows the scene; there, darkness comes upon

the land. Here Peter blurts out how wonderful it all is; there, he is hiding in shame after denying he even knows Jesus. Here a voice from God himself declares that this is his wonderful son; there, a pagan soldier declares, in surprise, that this really was God's son."

Peter is captivated by the scene playing out before his eyes. He wants to set up tents and *dwell* there with Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Peter is being more clever and faithful here than we realize. Right after Moses' face shines, the Exodus story moves on to talk about the building of the tabernacle (tent, or dwelling)—*the* place where God's presence would take up residence with His people, the place where heaven and earth collide. Peter is saying, "*I know what comes next! You're going to stay with us, God! Let me help you build the tent!*"

And in the midst of this ironically profound declaration by Peter, God's voice thunders over the mountain: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." Marty Solomon points out how, in this one proclamation, God quotes each part of the Hebrew Bible (Torah/law, Nevi'im/prophets, and Ketuvim/writings).

- "This is my beloved Son"—from [Psalm 2:7](#) (the Writings).
- "With whom I am well pleased"—from [Isaiah 42:1](#) (the Prophets).
- "Listen to him"—from [Deuteronomy 18:15](#) (the Law).

It's almost as if God is confirming Peter's words and taking them one step further. *You have no idea how right you are, Peter! I am going to stay with you, and we're about to build the biggest, best dwelling place for My presence—and you will get to help!*

Peter does get to build a "tent" for God. Only it won't be a tent on top of a mountain where God's presence is limited to a single structure. Peter is going to build a dwelling place for God in the form of a *church*, a new kind of kingdom—people, a community that will take God's presence into every corner of the world. Peter is the *rock* upon which Jesus will build his church.

You and I get to be part of this same story. Jesus is the glorious king who has rescued us and created a new community where God's presence meets earth through each and every one of us. We are a walking, talking dwelling place of God, and if that's true of you, what could you possibly have to fear?

"And best of all, God is with us."

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. How has this week's reading added color to what you think about Jesus?
3. In the Bible, people experience God's presence with them on the mountaintop. Where do *you* go to be with God and be reminded of God's presence with you?
4. Read Matthew 18:1-6 together. What are some of the ways our culture pushes us to be "great"? What do you think Jesus means when he talks about how greatness really means becoming like children?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

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Throughout Lent, we will be pulling these practices from our [Lenten Practice Guide](#). These practices invite you to either give something up or take something on, with the hope of simplifying our lives, standing in solidarity with those who are suffering, and becoming people who love God and others well. Our prayer is that God would meet you in the midst of these new rhythms so that you would experience in real, tangible ways the transforming love of Jesus Christ and the hope of the Resurrection.

### **Week One: Technology Detox**

Identify the different types of technology, or "screens," you turn to regularly for entertainment—your favorite social media platform, gaming console, TV, etc. Pick one to abstain from for the entire week. At the end of the week, reflect on your experience:

- *What did you find yourself reaching for instead of screens?*
- *Was this a more fulfilling use of your time?*