



Discipling Disciple

# **Session 4: Jesus Transfigured – Mt 17:1-20**



# CHRIST CENTRAL

## Part 1(looking back: Hospitality/Catching up/Review/)

identity

worship

community

Spend time catching up with everyone's week – consider that eating food together can be a good context of building friendship and trust in the group.

After everyone has shared a bit, ask how everyone found crafting and telling the story.

This is the time for caring for those in your group, hearing about what's going on in their lives, asking questions, listening, and praying.

### **Prayer and worship**

Spend some time at the beginning in worship – this can be singing together, or it can be declaring truths about God, each person reading a verse or psalm from scripture etc.

This sets the tone for all that follows – we are engaging with the living God - not learning a syllabus.

## Part 2 (story)

identity

mission

worship

**(Matthew 17:1-20)**

### **Story Crafting Through the Week**

Part of Discipling Disciple stage will involve participants learning how to dive deep into the scriptures and craft the story for themselves. This will involve them learning a devotional story crafting process which they can follow through the week. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Session, the group leader will explain and model this process with the group so each participant is equipped to take into their week.

### **Day 1 & 2– Finding the Central Image of the Story**

**Day 1** - Read the story in the scripture 3 times in 3 different translations. (e.g ESV, NIV, NLT)

**Day 2** - Speak out the scripture, and record it on your phone, then listen to the story 3 times.

Meditate on the story and note down what you think is the main point or the main image of the story.

### **Day 3 – Experiencing the Story**

After reading and listening to the story and meditating on the main point or image, the next day will be given to walking through the story slowly, listening to the recorded story and putting yourself in the shoes of Peter/the disciples, contemplating on the emotions and experience of that character through the narrative. For example, in the story of Jesus calling Peter, you will imagine yourself as Peter, who has been fishing all night and caught nothing, hearing Jesus teach from his boat, obey his command to throw his net on the other side of the boat, receiving the huge catch of fish, kneeling at the feet of Jesus.

As you are doing that, you are asking yourself the questions

- i) How is Peter feeling at this moment?



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- ii) How would you feel if that was you?

This process should be done prayerfully in conversation and communion with the Holy Spirit asking Him to guide you and to reveal things to your heart and mind. You will want to note down any things that come to light for you.

### Day 4 – Research the Story

At this point, after reading and internalising the story we can begin to ask questions concerning the contextual/literary gaps in our comprehension of the story which we can research with the help of study notes/commentaries etc.

These materials will provide some studies notes on some of the main points where a bit of information relating to (language meaning/ phrasing/ literary context and design patterns/geography/historical context etc.) can serve to really aid one's comprehension of the story as a whole. We have also provided a list of commentaries that have been used in the crafting of these stories and their accompanying notes to go deeper with.

### Day 5 – Group Session

#### **Read the Scripture, Act out the story, Re-tell the story, Questions.**

The hope is that when the group gathers, through this crafting process each participant has engaged with story at a deep level. It is helpful to complete this process together, so the middle section of the session will include telling the story and then getting the group to act out the story. (This may feel odd for a few, but even if all the group does is physically act out the movements of the story, engaging the whole body really helps internalise the story). After acting out the story, it is helpful then for each person to retell the story before moving in to the questions section.

- i) **Ask each person to read the passage in a different version (E.G ESV, NLT, NIV)**
- i) **Act out the Story** - Talk about the characters in the story and choose them. If you know anything about the characters, talk about the person.
  - a. Determine where the scenes will be acted out and the spacing of the story.
  - b. Act out the story with one person narrating.
  - c. Act out the story at least one more time, with people switching parts. This time, stop at crucial points in the story, and certainly at the main action(s) of the story that illustrate the main point of the story. Each time you stop consider how each of the characters must have felt. Describe the scene to each other a bit more, describing what everyone in the scene is doing.
  - d. If you forget parts of the story, the entire group can work together to remember what happened next, or what was said.
- ii) **Ask the questions**
  - 1. What do you like about this story/What stood out to you?
  - 2. What bothered you about this story?
  - 3. What does this story show you about God?
  - 4. What does this story show you about people?

### **Part 3 (application and commission)**

**identity**

**worship**

**mission**

Ask the remaining questions:

5. If this story is true, what does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story? What is God showing you? What does this story show us about what it means to be a follower of Jesus? How will you respond? (it is really important to give time in this section for reflection and response. Don't settle for superficial answers, hopefully as you model honesty and vulnerability this will be imbibed by the group. However, you may want to help people go deeper, by asking some follow on questions. Don't be afraid to do so.)
6. Who are you able to tell this story to?

**iii) Now, Get each person to tell the story they have crafted**

Encourage everyone in the group to think of people in their life whom they could retell the story to; mention that at the next session we will recap the story and ask who remembered to tell the story. Again it is helpful to emphasise the reason for going and telling the story ourselves is that it is the best way for us to remember the story and we are learning these stories to share the gospel with others.

### **Responding in Prayer and Worship**

Make sure time is guarded to pray and worship (at least 20 mins). This time is key for responding to God after a deep dive into his word. This should be led sensitively, being aware of who is in the room and what has come out in each session.

This time can be led in a variety of ways,

- i) Listening to worship music
- ii) Singing
- iii) Sharing the Lord's Supper
- iv) Silence
- v) Each person sharing a psalm or a verse of scripture
- vi) Each person thanking God
- vii) Praying for one another: bringing words of encouragement and prophecy



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### A Note on Storying

In our discipleship materials, we have chosen to craft the stories of scripture into an oral format to be learnt, internalised and re-told. This process is done carefully and seeks to faithfully represent the heart, meaning and narrative of the biblical text in spoken form. We have done this for the following reasons;

- 1.) The spoken story format requires those in the group to internalise the scripture to some degree. We believe that scripture tells God's unified story that leads to the person of Jesus. God invites us to encounter and respond to him through the hearing, believing and living out in accordance with the truth of his story and the good news that it tells. The process of learning and retelling the story requires and allows the scripture to 'live within us', to shape and guide us, to convict and challenge, to comfort and encourage us. Storying is not the only way this can happen of course, but we have found it to be an especially helpful and intuitive way of forming our worldview to that of Jesus Christ through the internalising the story that reveals him.
- 2.) Once this story is learnt and internalised, those in the group have it to share with others. This can be especially engaging when sharing with people with who don't know Jesus, and even more so in age of authenticity. By sharing a story that is 'living within you', you are imparting to someone something that has changed and/or encouraged you, and therefore it comes with more weight and significance.

### How to lead a group in internalizing and retelling the story

These are a few creative ways that people can delve into the Story. Use discernment as to what would best help your group and what they'd be comfortable with.

1. Retell the story: as a group, each person tells as much as they can remember and passes on to someone else. Or.... split up the group in pairs, get each pair to tell the story to each other
2. Scenes: Ask the group to think of the story in scenes like a movie, ask each person what is scene 1, 2 etc. Try and see if you can get people to visualise each scene, the geography, the movements, which characters are doing what etc. This will help internalise the story.
3. Feeling the emotions of the story a. Retell the story in sections, or re-read the story in sections b. For each section, talk about the feelings of each character in that section...
4. Being a character in the story: ask each person which character they are in the story, as well as helping to remember the story, this will also help your group engage personally with the story from God's word.
5. Art a. Draw a picture of the key theme or key feeling in the story/passage.
6. Music a. Listen to a song related to the key theme of the passage and draw your feelings about it/or about God. (Art and Music are especially helpful mediums for people who may struggle with oral learning, and appreciate creative outlets)
7. Act out the story: Get everyone to act out the story as a group



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### Day 4 Study Notes for Session 4 – to be sent out to the group

#### Why do Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus when he is transfigured?

For us who are not deeply tuned in to the story of the Hebrew Scriptures, The appearance of these two key characters with Jesus may seem strange if not downright confusing. Why are they there?

However for a Jewish audience (which Matthew's readers predominantly were) The appearance of Elijah and Moses with Jesus on the mountain is full of hyperlinks back to the stories and hopes of the Old Testament, which Jesus now is bringing to fulfilment.

Firstly, both Moses and Elijah carry significant weight in Jewish Tradition as the two key prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and actually together can personify the whole narrative of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets(Elijah).

Secondly, Both Prophets experience supernatural ends to their earthly life – Elijah ascends straight up to heaven in chariots of fire and much mystery surrounds the death of Moses on Mt Nebo (Duet 34:5-6 records that Moses died on the mountain with God, but no one knows where he is buried). Furthermore, Both the return Prophets are linked with the Jewish hope for an age of God's coming kingdom established by the messianic king – Elijah is promised to return to the people(Malachi 4:5) which is why some people thought that Jesus was Elijah in the previous story. Moses is himself not prophesied to return, however it is written a prophet like Moses will play a role in The Jewish hope for the future age(Duet 18:15-19).

Thirdly, both Moses and Elijah experience the Glory of God on the mountain of Sinai(Exodus 24:15-18; 33:18-23 – 1 Kings 8: 10 -11) Now they both experience God's Glory revealed in the shining and transfigured Jesus.

Fourthly, Matthew in his Gospel is continuing to show Jesus as 'The Greater Moses' and the fulfiller of the OT law and the OT story. Like Moses – as a baby, Jesus life is threatened by a tyrannical ruler. Like Moses – Jesus goes into Egypt and out again. Like Moses – Jesus goes through the waters to be tested in the wilderness for forty days matching the forty years for Moses, and then delivers his teaching on the mount.

A key difference in this story however, is that Moses goes up the mountain to receive revelation from God and as a result his face shines – Jesus on the other hand is the shining, radiant revelation of God himself. All of these echoes and parallels serve to show that Jesus is God's promised king as anticipated by these two figures. However, The Father's voice declares that Jesus is still in a different category, He alone carries is final and authoritative revelation of who God is. In the presence of Moses and Elijah, and of the disciples, God declares '*This* is my beloved son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.' In other words God is lifting Jesus up as the one who fully, and finally represents everything that he is as God. Wow.



## Why is Jesus Shining?

The visual transformation of Jesus, with his face radiant as the sun and his clothes white as light, is not so much an alteration of the incarnate son but rather as R.T France describes 'it is the same Jesus, but now with an awesome brightness...the true nature of God's beloved son can now be seen...Here on the mountain we have at least a foretaste of the coming of the Son of Man "in his Father's glory with his angels."'¹

In contrast to the shining of Moses on the mountain, which is a resultant effect of encountering the Glory of God. Jesus shines not as an effect of being near God's Glory rather Jesus shines as the revealed glory of God, his radiance is not derivative but essential. It is the disciples therefore who are in the place of Moses, witnessing the Glory on the mountain.

## Where is the Mountain?

Matthew tells us that the mountain they climb is specifically high. We also know the last region they were in 6 days ago was Caesarea Philippi in the far north. The traditional site is Mt. Tabor in southern Galilee, however this mount is particularly high (588m) compared Mount Hermon (2826m) which lies north east of Caesarea Philippi. However, due to the fact that at the bottom of the mountain Jesus and the three disciples encounter a Jewish crowd would suggest a location further south. There are mountains that could fit the bill, of both being fairly high and in Galilee, e.g Mt Meron (1208m). The point of taking the disciples up a high mountain is to be alone with them, away from the crowds.

## Why couldn't the disciples cast out the demon?

The answer that Jesus gives in Matthew's account is simply because of their *Oligopistia* – little faith. This is the same characteristic of Peter's that Jesus highlights after he doubts and hesitates whilst walking on the water in ch 14v 31. Donald Hagner in his commentary on Matthew argues that the disciples failed in their exorcism because of a small amount faith which is what Jesus chastises – this however doesn't make sense because Jesus immediately says if you have faith as small as a mustard seed nothing will be impossible for you. In light of this, R.T France makes the case that Jesus rebukes his disciples for a faith that is lacking and inauthentic. He writes because of the 'proverbial smallness of the mustard seed; anything less than a mustard seed would be no faith at all. Faith is not a measurable commodity, but a relationship, and what achieves results through prayer is not a superior 'quantity' of faith but the unlimited power of God on which faith, any faith, can draw. The disciples, Jesus implies, had failed to bring any faith at all to bear on this situation.'²

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¹ R.T France, Gospel of Matthew NICNT, p643

² *ibid*



## CHRIST **CENTRAL**

### Feedback from Group Leader

In our vision for discipleship, we have identified 4 key ingredients to healthy and growing disciples. As you are leading your group, for each session, make some notes under each heading for how the group is faring in each of these areas.

**identity**

**worship**

**community**

**mission**