

Transfiguration Sunday Discussion Guide_____

Week of February 23, 2020

Open your Life Group with prayer. A sample opening prayer is printed below:

God of majesty and might, you have blessed us with revelations of your glory. Give us the gift of faith, that we may hear your voice for ourselves and see Jesus Christ revealed to us that we may stand on our own without fear. Amen.

Spend whatever time is needed for any of the members to share needs or concerns. Go through the discipleship questions your group has decided to use. If you have time then:

Have someone read Exodus 24:12-18 and 2 Peter 1:16-21.

1. *Based on Bill Gaultiere's Ignatian Meditation Guides on Matthew 17:1-9* — This first exercise will be a period of meditation using the passage from Matthew 17:1-9. This exercise asks you to use your imagination to enter into the story, sensing and feeling what is going on. This isn't a time to critically analyze the passage. This is a time to experience yourself as a character in the story. Make sure there is one person who is willing to slowly read the passage before asking your Life Group to settle into a comfortable position. They can have their eyes closed or open. Everyone is encouraged to take slow and deep breaths. After a moment of quiet, begin by introducing the setting:

Introduction: Six days after Peter's great confession that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God" Jesus shows them his glory. Furthermore, Jesus has a mystical conversation with Moses and Elijah in a heavenly cloud. Surely they are discussing Jesus going to the cross soon, as Matthew tells us that after Peter's confession the Lord began explaining his upcoming sufferings to them. Seeing the glory of the Son of God helps us to listen to him carefully and to follow him faithfully, as our Father God asks.

Imagine yourself in the Gospel of Matthew...

Six days later, three of them saw that glory. Jesus takes Peter and the brothers, James and John, and leads them up a high mountain. His appearance changes before them, right before their eyes. His face shines like sunlight bathing them in its warmth and his clothes become dazzling like light. Through the brightness, they realize that Moses and Elijah are also there, talking with Jesus.

Peter breaks in, “Master, how good it is for us to be here! If you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah — While Peter is still speaking, suddenly, a bright cloud envelopes them, and resounding from deep in the cloud, a voice echoes “This is my Son, marked by my love, the focus of my delight. Listen to him.”

Hearing the echoing rumble, the disciples fall flat on their faces, scared to death. Shielding their faces from the brightness.

One by one, the disciples feel a firm but gentle weight on their shoulder and they hear Jesus’ voice, “Don’t be afraid.” When they open their eyes and look around, all they see is Jesus, only Jesus as they knew him.

Coming down the mountain, Jesus orders them, “Don’t tell anyone about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” — Matthew 17:1-9 (Modified from The Message).

First Reading Reflection Question: What did you see, touch, feel, and hear? What part of the story are you drawn to? Which character do you identify with? Or are you a bystander?

After discussing the first reading reflections, there will be a second reading. This time, experience the story in the role of the character God led you to (for example: you could have identified as the terrified disciple, or even a bystander as in the stillness of the mountain around Jesus and his disciples).

Begin the second reading...

Six days later, three of them saw that glory. Jesus takes Peter and the brothers, James and John, and leads them up a high mountain. His appearance changes before them, right before their eyes. His face shines like sunlight bathing them in its warmth and his clothes become dazzling like light. Through the brightness, they realize that Moses and Elijah are also there, talking with Jesus.

You break in the conversation amongst Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. You do not have to tell your group now, but what do you say to Jesus? What do you feel?

While you are speaking, suddenly, a bright cloud envelopes around you, and resounding from deep in the cloud, a voice echoes “This is my Son, marked by my love, the focus of my delight. Listen to him.” What is God saying to you? How does this relate to something in your life today? How do you react?

In the midst of your reaction, you suddenly feel a firm but gentle presence beside you. And you hear Jesus' voice, "Don't be afraid." The brightness is no longer there, but only Jesus and the stillness of the mountain around you. What do you feel? How has this meditation exercise changed your understanding of this passage?

2. What happens to Jesus during the Transfiguration?
3. Why did Moses and Elijah appear? What is the importance of their appearance with Jesus?
4. Why does Jesus instruct the disciples to keep quiet about what they had seen "until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead" (Matt. 17:9)?
5. Last week, you were asked to discuss how love is the fulfillment of the commandments. Recap this discussion. How does this Transfiguration passage fit into the understanding of love as the fulfillment of the commandments?
6. If you decided to form a new habit rather than follow a "New Year's Resolution," how is that going? If it is going well, share what has helped you keep this new habit. If it isn't going well, how can the people in your Life Group support you? How can you give yourself grace in your process of building new habits?

Announcements:

- Tuesday, Feb 25 @ 5:30 PM – Shrove Pancake Supper hosted by Little People Loving and Learning Preschool. All are welcome to come join this feast in the Fellowship Hall!
- Wednesday, Feb 26 @ Noon & 7 PM – Ash Wednesday Service. A Prayer Labyrinth will be available in the Fellowship Hall from Wednesday – Saturday, Feb 29.
- Sunday, Mar 1 @ 12:30 PM – Family Ministry Chili Cook-Off! All are invited. Bring your best chili and showcase your skills to the rest of the church family. There will be a competition for the best chili in the following categories: spicy, unique, or vegetarian. Not a chili cook? Bring your favorite corn bread or dessert.
- Saturday, Mar 7 @ 10 AM – ZOE Empowers Breakfast with Barbara Matsanga of Zimbabwe. All are invited to this free breakfast in the Fellowship Hall to meet and learn from Barbara Matsanga, the country director of ZOE Empowers Zimbabwe. Come and hear about all the amazing things God is up to!

Potential Areas of Service:

- Bring a neighbor, friend, and/or coworker to one of the services or events in March!