

# Sense of the Sacred

In the Season after the Epiphany, the church explores signs of God's glory shining in the world. Mark describes Jesus' transfiguration and, with the disciples, we sense the sacred moment; we will see things in a new way from this time forward. We catch Elisha's vision of the sacred as Elijah is caught up to heaven. With Paul and the psalmist, we give thanks that God's light shines forth through us.

## Focus Scripture: Mark 9:2-9

The Season after the Epiphany ends with the story of Jesus' transfiguration. This revealing of Jesus' glory is a turning point, marking the end of Jesus' ministry in Galilee and the beginning of the journey towards Jerusalem and the fate that awaits Jesus there. Just before today's reading, Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah. But Peter does not understand Jesus' teaching about the kind of Messiah Jesus has come to be.

Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up on a mountain. While there, Jesus' appearance is transfigured – Jesus shines. The disciples see Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. This event has echoes of Hebrew Scriptures. Moses' face was transfigured on Mount Sinai when he was in God's presence and received the Law. Elijah also experienced God's presence on Sinai. Elijah's return will announce the coming of the Messiah. For Mark, Jesus fulfills the work of the Law and the prophets.

Jesus' shining garments mark him as one who has triumphed through martyrdom. Jesus' changed appearance – a "metamorphosis" – reflects his nature as both divine and human, and anticipates Jesus' changed appearance at the Resurrection.

Peter grasps a sense of the sacred, and wants to preserve it; he offers to build three tents. The word used for "tent" can mean "tabernacle," the same word used in John 1:14 to describe the incarnate Jesus "dwelling" among us. This word also connects with the Exodus story of the tent in the wilderness, and the Ark where God's glory dwells.

A cloud, a sign of God's presence, comes over the mountain. From it, a voice repeats the words from Jesus' baptism: "This is my Son, the Beloved." In Mark's account of Jesus' baptism, only Jesus hears the voice from

heaven. Here the disciples hear the voice telling them to listen to Jesus.

This time must have been a terrifying and amazing experience for the three disciples, but Jesus cautions them not to tell anyone about it. We have seen this before in Mark's gospel. It is not yet time for the disciples to proclaim the good news. The meaning of Jesus' messiahship is to remain a secret for the time being. As we move into the Season of Lent, we feel the tension building as Jesus' ministry continues.

It is in the seeing and understanding that God's messenger is known. In **2 Kings 2:1-12**, the prophet Elijah is carried up to heaven, and Elisha glimpses the sacred and comes to a fuller understanding of who Elijah is. Elisha receives a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, and is thus known as a prophet in the true succession.

The awe-inspiring image of God's majesty and our response to it are central in the other texts. In **Psalm 50:1-6**, God's majesty and power shine forth from Zion. God calls and judges, gathering the faithful. Paul, in **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**, speaks in images of light and darkness, of blindness and sight. Just as Moses veiled his face when it shone with reflected glory, so the gospel of Christ is veiled and hidden from those who do not believe. As we live in faith, God's love shines in our hearts. As did the disciples on the mountain, we see God's glory in Jesus the Christ.

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"Epiphany" means "showing forth." During this season, we have explored many ways in which God's glory is revealed in the life and work of Jesus and the disciples. Where and when have you sensed the sacred or caught glimpses of God's presence? How do such moments define your life as a disciple and a church?



February 22, 2009

Focus Scripture  
Mark 9:2-9

Additional Scriptures  
2 Kings 2:1-12  
Psalm 50:1-6  
2 Corinthians 4:3-6

**Holy God, we see your glory in the face of Jesus the Christ. Grant that, as we look on Christ, we may be transformed and be strengthened to follow your call to serve in the world. Amen.**

If you have Internet access, visit [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com) to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

## The Focus for Ages 5–12

The concept of listening to Jesus today may be difficult for many children in this age range. The listening to Jesus option in Engage will give those children a way to think about how they can listen to Jesus. In any case, their vivid imaginations will take them into this story with its wonder and mystery. Older children who are more curious about the appearance of Elijah and Moses have the option of learning more about these important figures in the Hebrew Scriptures.

The way children can pay attention to the message to listen to Jesus is to hear the stories of Jesus and to follow the teachings of Jesus. These options are available to them in the Respond zones as they review the teachings in the art zone and the stories from Mark in the game zone.

Pray that the children will join the disciples in their amazement at what has happened and enlarge their understanding of who Jesus is.

February 22, 2009

PREPARE

### Materials needed

#### Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Mark 9:2–9, and biblical background material (p. 99). What details in the story caught your attention?
- ❑ Bring *basic supply kit* (see p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Music CD, vol. 7* and *CD player*.
- ❑ Bring songs "May You Find Peace" and "I've Got a Voice," (pp. 12 and 8–9 in *Music Section*, also #19 and #13 on *Seasons Music CD*).

#### Gather

- ❑ Prepare worship table with *white cloth* for Transfiguration Sunday, *offering basket*, and *Bible*.
- ❑ Bring *floating candle or tea light in foil tart tin, matches, water pitcher, and bowl*.
- ❑ Bring *objects that suggest listening*, such as *CD, mp3 player, earphones, and earplugs*, and *poster "Woman Listening."*

#### Engage

- ❑ Prepare to tell story on *today's resource sheet "A Mountaintop Experience."*
- ❑ Bring *paper water drop, paper fish, scroll, and strip of cloth* from previous session.
- ❑ For who's who group, bring *copies of today's resource sheet "Transfiguration Characters," long sheet of paper, and directions*.

#### Respond

Gather or make the materials for the zones selected.

- ❑ **Art zone:** *card stock/heavy paper*
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** *directions*
- ❑ **Music zone:** *songs "May You Find Peace" and "Invocation" (pp. 12 and 1 in Music Section, also #19 and #5 on Seasons Music CD)*
- ❑ **Review zone:** *copies of today's resource sheet "Stories of Jesus Game"*
- ❑ **Outreach zone:** *supplies for preparing treats, airtight containers, and greeting cards*



# Sense of the Sacred

Scripture

Mark 9:2–9

**FOCUS** To pay attention to the message from God to listen to Jesus.

## GATHER

**Welcome** Greet the children as they arrive and welcome any visitors.

**Call to gather** Play “May You Find Peace” (p. 12 in *Music Section*, also #19 on *Seasons Music CD*). Invite the children to gather at the worship table. Point out the white cloth on the worship table, which is the colour for Transfiguration Sunday.

### Opening ritual

**Leader:** Come, let us remember God’s love poured over all creation and us. (*Pour water into bowl.*)

Let us remember the light of God’s love that Jesus brought to our world. (*Place candle gently in the water and light it.*)

God’s love shines out for you and me.

**Children:** (*Invite the children to repeat this line after you.*) God’s love shines out for all to see.

**Sing** together or have the children listen to “May You Find Peace.”

**Prayer and offering** Pray this prayer or one of your own:

Loving God, we come here again to think and learn more about you and how to follow Jesus. Amen.

After the prayer, extinguish the candle as a sign that the Gather ritual has ended.

### Connect with the focus

**Ways to listen** Place the items that suggest listening that you have gathered so the children can see them. Set the poster *Woman Listening* nearby. Invite the children to look at the grouping and think about what they have in common, but not to say anything. After a moment, ask:

#### ■ What is alike about all these things?

As the children talk about this, point out the poster and its title. Suggest that they listen for a word about listening in the Bible story today.

## 2 ENGAGE

**Prepare for the Bible story**  
**Mark’s stories about Jesus** Invite a child to get the Bible from the worship table. Open it to the gospel of Mark. Show the children the paper water drop as a symbol of the baptism of Jesus, the first story they heard from Mark. To help them recall the call to Simon, Andrew, James, and John to follow Jesus, hold up a paper fish. A scroll will remind them that Jesus read from the Scripture and taught in the synagogue in Capernaum where he healed the troubled man. Invite the children to join you in the sign for “serve” (p. 89) from the story about Jesus healing Simon’s mother-in-law and praying alone. Show them a strip of cloth used for the drama with the person with leprosy from the previous session. Show the children where these stories are found in **Mark 1:4–45**.

### The Bible story

**A special day** Turn to **Mark 9** to show the children

where the story for this session is found. Explain that this is some time after the story about Jesus healing the person with leprosy. By now, Jesus has invited others to be followers and twelve of these people are special followers. But in this story, he selects just three of them to take part in something special. Tell the story based on **Mark 9:2–9** on today’s resource sheet “A Mountaintop Experience.” After the story, ask:

#### ■ Which followers did Jesus take with him up the mountain?

#### ■ What do you know about the two people who appeared with Jesus?

Some children may recognize the name of Moses or Elijah, but know little about them. Congratulate any who recognize these names and help them recall any stories they may have heard about them. Both men are important figures in the story of Israel. Ask:

- **Whose voice did the followers hear?**
- **What about listening did you hear in the story?**

**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.


**Listening to Jesus group** This group will explore how they can act on God’s words to Peter, James, and John. Ask:

- **How can we listen to Jesus today?**

Have the children take turns to act out ways they can listen to Jesus for the rest of the group to guess. Some ideas are: listening to Bible stories, listening to the words of hymns and songs, listening to people who love Jesus, listening to sermons, and listening to the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit deep inside us. Or print these ideas on papers for the children to draw and then act out. Also encourage them to think of their own ideas.

**Who’s who group** Some children may want to know more about the figures in this story.

Provide copies of today’s resource sheet “Transfiguration Characters,” Bibles, a long sheet of paper, pencils or markers, and these directions:

- 1 Take a Bible and a copy of “Transfiguration Characters.”
  - 2 Find and read Mark 9:2–9 in your Bible.
  - 3 Then read “Transfiguration Characters.”
  - 4 Make a timeline showing when each group of characters in the story lived.
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**The Bible story and us**

**Play** “I’ve Got a Voice” (pp. 8–9 in *Music Section*, also #13 on *Seasons Music CD*) as the signal for everyone to gather at the worship table or some other designated area. Invite the who’s who group to show their timeline and tell what they learned about Moses and Elijah. Then ask the listening to Jesus group to name ways we can listen to Jesus today.

**3 RESPOND**

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

- **Art zone: Ladder mobile** One way we listen to Jesus is to pay attention to what Jesus taught and to do what Jesus says. Print these teachings from Jesus on newsprint: Feed the hungry. Love everyone. Give water to the thirsty. Listen to the children. Take care of the sick. Forgive others. Have the children select something Jesus taught to illustrate. Provide drawing paper and crayons or markers. As they finish, tape the illustrations together to form a long vertical strip of pictures. If you wish, separate them with strips of coloured paper. Attach the row of pictures to the top of a doorway or window frame so they will move as people walk by. If possible, display them somewhere in the church building where others will see them.
- **Quiet zone: Guided meditation** The disciples with Jesus on the mountain had an amazing experience and understood Jesus



in a new way. They also heard God speak. In order for us to hear God, we have to be quiet. In a quiet corner of the space, display these directions so the children are facing away from other activities:


Peter, James, and John heard the voice of God. We may not hear God’s voice, but we can be quiet and let ourselves think about God.

Close your eyes and sit quietly for a few moments. Listen to your breathing and your heartbeat.

Then think about this question: What good thing does God want to tell me today?

After a few moments, think about this question: How does God want me to show God’s love today?

When you are ready, talk with others in this zone about your thoughts.



To include younger children, station a leader in this zone to lead the meditation.

❑ **Music zone: Special thoughts** Invite the children to think about the Bible story as you read the lyrics to the song “May You Find Peace” (p. 12 in *Music Section*, also #19 on *Seasons Music CD*). Ask:

■ **How did Peter, James, and John find peace on the mountaintop? Hope? Joy? Love? Rest?**

Then sing the song together. Follow a similar pattern with the song “Invocation” (p. 1 in *Music Section*, also #5 on *Seasons Music CD*). The children probably know both songs by now.

❑ **Review zone: Stories of Jesus game** This option will help the children recall the stories about Jesus from Mark they have explored during recent weeks. Provide several copies of the cards on today’s resource sheet “Stories of Jesus Game.” Invite the children to create games with them. They might make up a matching

game and when a player makes a match, the player must identify the story symbol on the matching cards. Or they make play a game similar to “Old Maid.” Remove one card with the name of Jesus on it. To end up with the Jesus card is a plus, not a penalty.

❑ **Outreach zone: Food gift** The story of the Transfiguration reminds us to listen to Jesus and to follow all that Jesus taught. One way for the children to follow Jesus is to take part in sharing food. Make sweet treats for a local food bank or shelter. Place the treats in airtight containers. Include a list of the ingredients and a greeting card signed by the children. If possible, arrange for the children to deliver the treats.

Note: If the food banks can only accept commercially prepared food, make the treats and share them with other learning groups.

# 4

**BLESS**

**Gather** Play “I’ve Got a Voice” (pp. 8–9 in *Music Section*, also #13 on *Seasons Music CD*) as the signal to gather at the worship table. Light the floating candle, or have a child light it.

**Review** the story by looking at the poster *Bethlehem’s Star* and ask:

■ **What about this poster reminds you of the Bible story today?**

**Prayer** Use the response from Gather as the preparation for prayer.

**Leader:** God’s love shines out for you and me.

**Children:** (*Invite the children to repeat this line after you.*) God’s love shines out for all to see.

**Leader or a child:** Wonderful God, as we leave this place, we think of you. Thank you for your love. Amen.

**Extinguish the candle.**

**Blessing** To each child, say, “(*Child’s name*), listen to Jesus and follow God’s way.”

# REFLECT

Think back over the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. What were some of the highlights? What signs of growth in understanding God and Jesus have you seen in the children?

Please complete the evaluation form at the back of this guide or online at [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com). Your comments help us improve *Seasons of the Spirit*.



# A Mountaintop Experience

(based on Mark 9:2-9)

A few simple gestures can help the children imagine themselves in the story.

Capernaum (KA-PER'-NA-UMM), Nazareth, Bethsaida (BETH-SEH'-E-DA), along the Sea of Galilee, in the villages of Caesarea Philippi (SEZ-A-REE'-A FILL'-IPP-EYE). Wherever Jesus went, Simon, Andrew, James, and John, along with others who were following Jesus went too. Crowds of people came from all over to be with Jesus.

One day, Jesus said to Simon (who was now called Peter), James, and John, "Come with me."

Jesus took them up a high mountain away from the other followers and the crowds that came to be with Jesus. They were all alone, Jesus and these three followers, on the top of this mountain. Peter, James, and John looked around. (*Shield your eyes and pretend to look far away.*) What a magnificent view!

As they were looking around, something surprising, no, something amazing, happened! Right before their eyes, Jesus' clothes began to shimmer and glow with the brightest light they had ever seen. Then, Elijah and Moses, prophets from the Hebrew Scriptures, were standing next to Jesus, talking with Jesus.

Peter, James, and John couldn't believe their eyes or their ears. "Teacher," said Peter, "being here with you is wonderful. Let us build three shelters, one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for you." Peter really didn't know what else to say, and truth be told, he was more than a little afraid.

Before Jesus answered Peter, a big cloud came down over the top of the mountain. A voice from the cloud called, "This is my Beloved. Listen to him."

When the cloud lifted, Moses and Elijah were gone. The bright, dazzling light on Jesus was gone. As they walked down the mountain together, Peter, James, and John didn't know what to say or ask. But they did know that Jesus was very special and that God had told them to listen to Jesus. Jesus told them not to tell the others what had happened. They did not, but they kept this story in their hearts for a long time.



# Transfiguration Characters

The story in Mark 9:2–9 presents a number of characters, including two who were from a different time than Jesus and his followers.



## Moses

Moses is a major figure in the earliest stories of the people of Israel. He was the leader whom God chose to lead the Hebrew people out of slavery. Moses was a great prophet, teacher, and leader. When God gave the people the Law that told them how to live, it was Moses who heard God's message and explained it to the people.

The stories about Moses took place long, long ago. In Christian tradition, he would have lived from somewhere between the 13th and 16th centuries BCE. This is so long ago that you can say, "Moses led the people long, long, *long* ago."

## Peter, James, and John

Peter, James, and John were fishers whom Jesus called from the Sea of Galilee to come with him. James and John were brothers. Since they were from Jesus' time, they lived in the early first century CE.

Like Jesus, Peter, James, and John were Jewish. They had grown up hearing ancient stories about Moses and Elijah. They journeyed with Jesus, worked with him, saw what he did, and knew him very well. Just before the story you heard today, Peter told Jesus that Peter believed Jesus was the Messiah, the one sent from God.

## Elijah

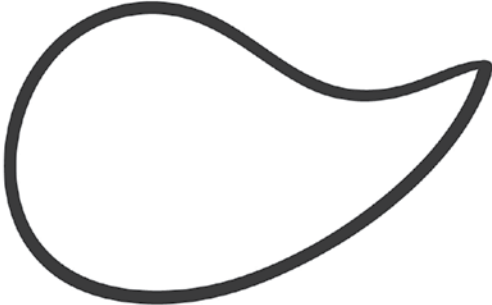
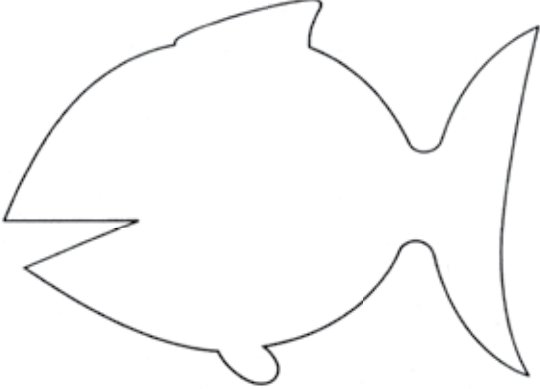
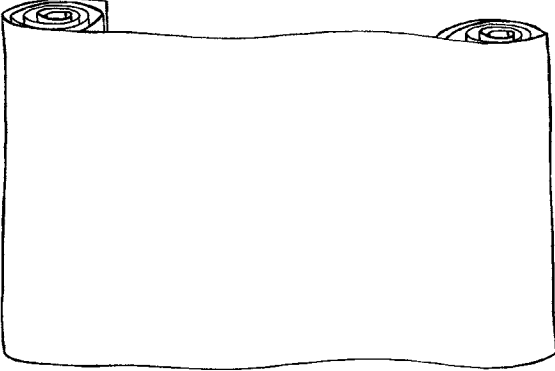
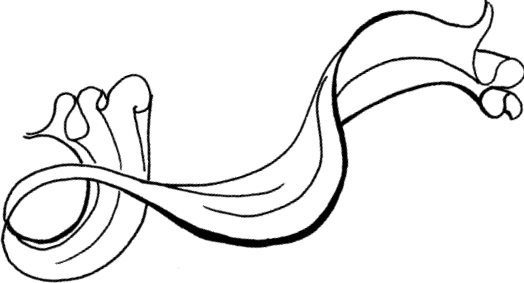
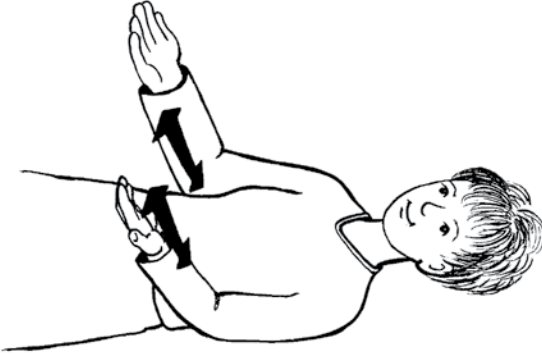
Elijah was a prophet of Israel in the ninth century BCE. The ninth century is 900 years before Jesus was born, so it is almost 3000 years ago. Elijah's stories are in the books of 1 and 2 Kings in the Bible. (Find 1 and 2 Kings in your Bible.)

According to the stories in the Bible, Elijah demonstrated some of God's power. He brought down fire from heaven and challenged corrupt kings and queens. The story of Elijah that has been handed down from generation to generation is that he did not die, but was carried into God's presence in a great whirlwind.

Now, create your own timeline showing when these characters lived.



# Stories of Jesus Game

	
	
	<p><b>Jesus</b></p>