

# Open Bible Stories — The Transfiguration

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## Introduction

### Key Idea

The story of the transfiguration teaches us about the nature of Christ and the power of his resurrection.

### Core Belief Verse

*"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 1:3*

### God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife, and she bore twins Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from slavery.

God judged the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people, who covered

their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

God tested Israel in a series of wilderness wanderings and

eventually brought his people into the promised land of Canaan.

God raised up deliverers to lead Israel and rescue them from their enemies.

God formed Israel into a kingdom. He made a covenant with King David and promised to send a king that

would rule his people forever.

Many of Israel's kings were evil, and the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

God sent prophets to warn his people of God's judgment and call them to repent.

When Israel did not repent, God sent his people into exile. After many years, he brought them back to the land.

Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send his Messiah to deliver his people from their sin.

After many years, the prophet John was born. He would prepare people for the coming Messiah.

At the perfect time, God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin Mary.

When John and Jesus grew up, John baptized Jesus as a sign that Jesus was God's beloved Son.

Jesus endured all manner of temptation without ever sinning.

When he was thirty years old, he launched a public ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing.

He taught his disciples about the life of compassion, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

Jesus performed many miracles: he fed a crowd of five thousand, he walked on water, he healed the sick, and he cast out demons.

He proclaimed to people the nature of real faith, God's kingdom, and how fallen humans can be restored in

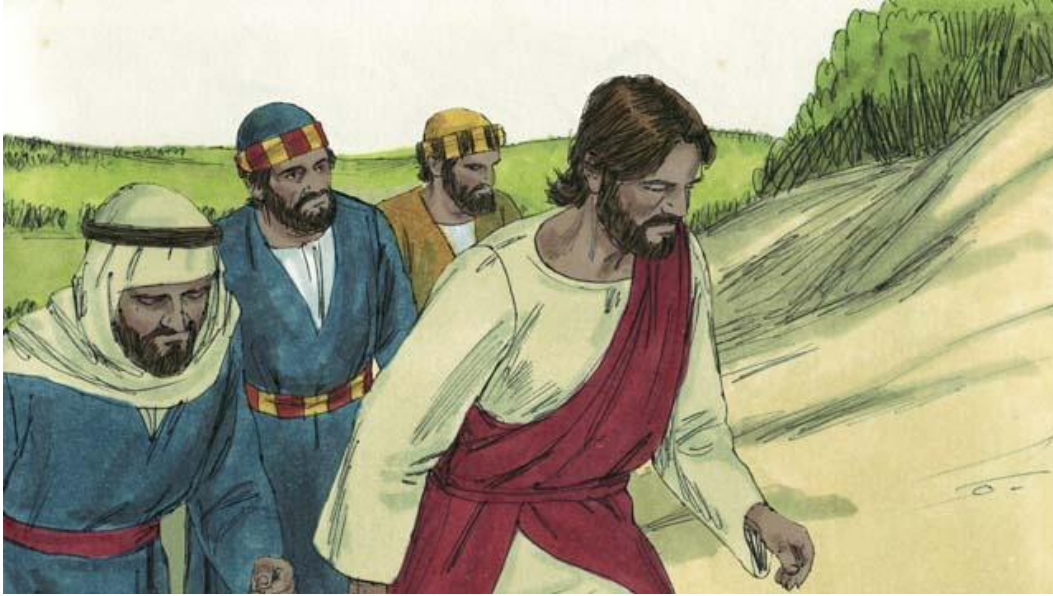
relationship with God.

Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus revealed his power and glory to his disciples.

## **The Story: The Transfiguration**

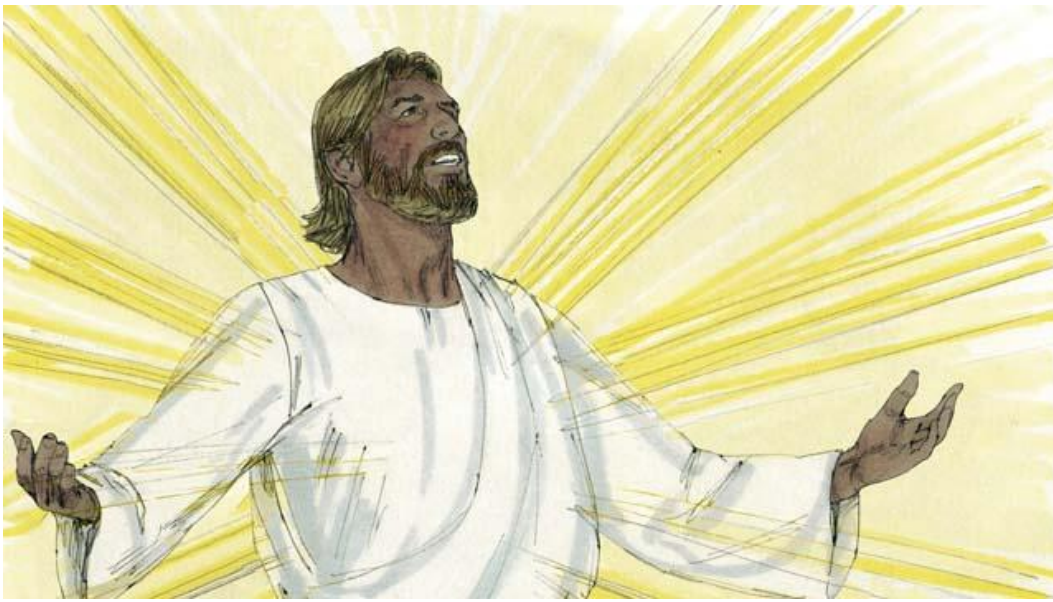
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36-01



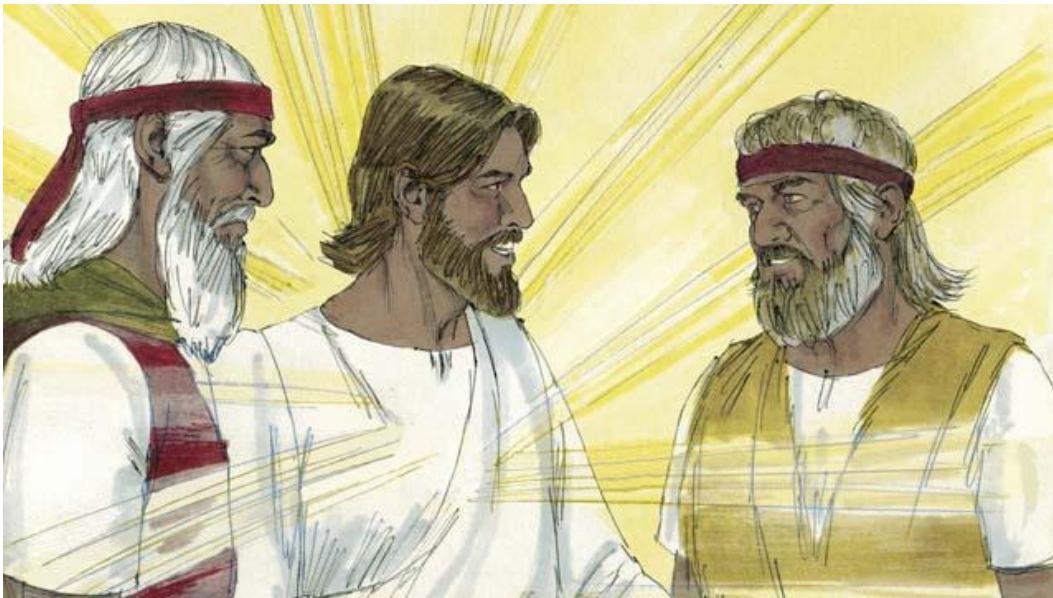
One day, Jesus took three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John, with him. (The disciple named John was not the same person who baptized Jesus.) They went up on a high mountain by themselves to pray.

36-02



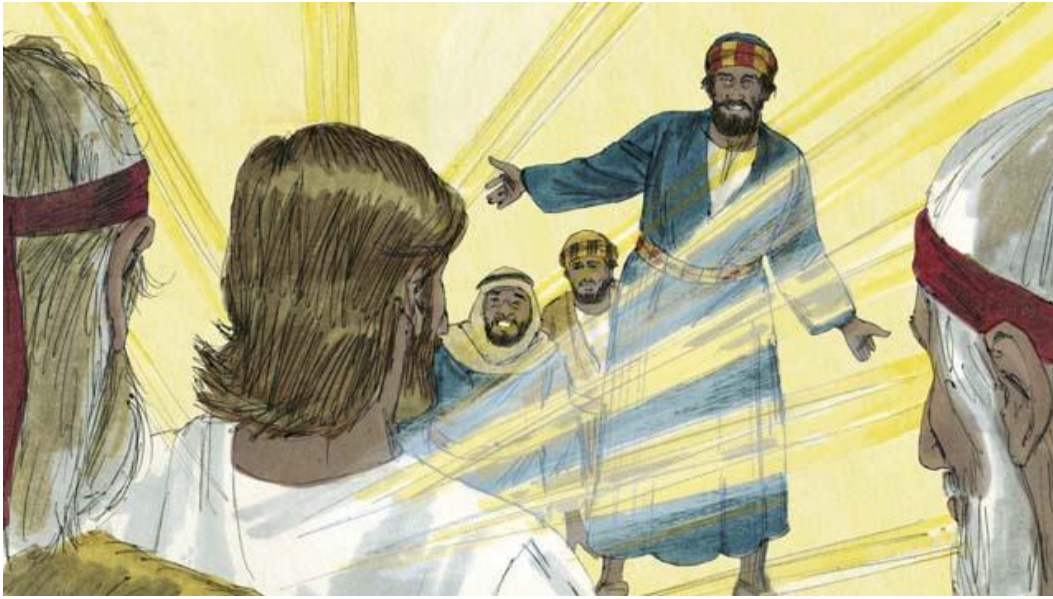
As Jesus was praying, his face became as bright as the sun. His clothes became as white as light, whiter than anyone on earth could make them.

36-03



Then Moses and the prophet Elijah appeared. These men had lived on the earth hundreds of years before this. They talked with Jesus about his death because he would soon die in Jerusalem.

36-04



As Moses and Elijah were talking with Jesus, Peter said to Jesus, "It is good for us to be here. Let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But Peter did not know what he was saying.

36-05



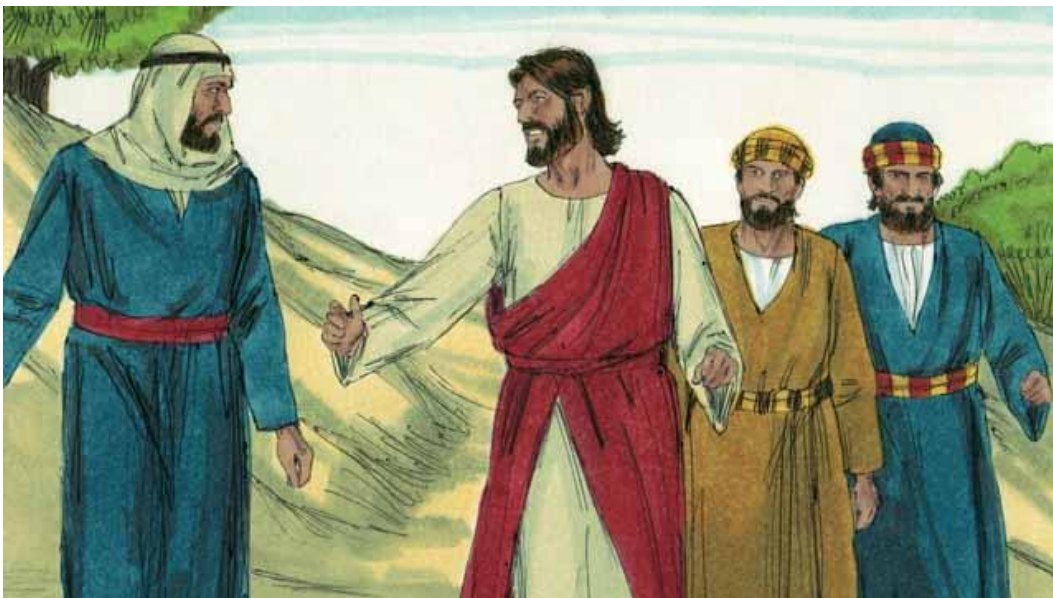
As Peter was talking, a bright cloud came down and surrounded them. Then they heard a voice coming from the cloud. It said, "This is my Son whom I love. I am pleased with him. Listen to him." The three disciples were terrified and fell to the ground.

36-06



Then Jesus touched them and said, "Do not be afraid. Get up." When they looked around, the only one still there was Jesus.

36-07



Jesus and the three disciples went back down the mountain. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not tell anyone yet about what happened here. I will soon die and then come back to life. After that, you may tell people."

*A Bible story from: Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36*

## Community Study: Paying Attention—Maintaining Focus on God's Calling

- **Key Idea:** removing distractions from God's work
- **Key Passage:** Hebrews 12:1-3
- **Main Session:** OBS 36 (The Transfiguration)

### Recite the Core Belief Verse (3-5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage.

Read the verse out loud as a

community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

14 The Word became flesh and lived among us. We have seen his glory, glory as of the one and only

who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

OR

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God 1 Corinthians

10:31

### Identify Distractions (5-10 minutes)

We all face distractions that can take our attention away from God's work. Identify distractions that cause

you to lose focus on God's work. As a community, discuss these distractions together.

I can easily get distracted from God's work for these reasons...

### Read the Passage (3-5 minutes)

Jesus is the perfect example of remaining focused to accomplish God's work. He even endured great

suffering to accomplish the work of salvation. As a community, read the following Bible passage together

to understand how Jesus teaches us to remain focused on God's work.

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a large cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every

weight and easily entangling sin. Let us patiently run the race that is placed before us. 2 Let us pay

attention to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of the faith. For the joy that was placed before him, he

endured the cross, despised its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 So

think about him, the one who has endured such opposition from sinners against himself, so that you

do not become weary in your hearts and give up. Hebrews 12:1-3

**Discuss the Passage** (10-15 minutes)

God wants us to remove distractions and remain focused on his work. This passage highlights Jesus'

perfect example of doing this. As a community, use the following questions to discuss the teaching of the

biblical passage.

1. How did Jesus remain focused to accomplish God's work? How is this an example to us?

2. How does this passage call us to stay focused on God's work?

## **Movement 1: Understand the Story**

*Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.*

## Observation Questions

*36-01*

Who did Jesus take with him up the mountain?

He took three of his disciples---Peter, James, and John.

Why did Jesus bring them up on the mountain?

They went up on a high mountain by themselves to pray.

*36-02*

What change happened to Jesus as he was praying?

His face became as bright as the sun, and his clothes became as white as light.

How white did his clothes become?

They became as white as light, whiter than anyone on earth could make them.

*36-03*

Who were the two men who appeared with Jesus?

Moses and the prophet Elijah appeared.

Why was it miraculous that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus?

They both lived hundreds of years before this.

What were Moses and Elijah discussing with Jesus?

They talked about Jesus' death.

Where was Jesus going to die?

He was going to die in Jerusalem.

*36-04*

What did Peter think about Moses and Elijah appearing on the mountain?

Peter said it was good that they were there when Moses and Elijah appeared.

What did Peter suggest they do for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah?

He wanted to make three shelters, one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

What was wrong with what Peter said?

Peter did not really know what he was saying.

*36-05*

What happened as Peter was talking?

A bright cloud came down and surrounded them, and they heard a voice speak from the cloud.

What did the voice from the bright cloud say to the disciples?

It said, "This is my Son whom I love. I am pleased with him. Listen to him."

How did the three disciples respond to this voice?

The three disciples were terrified and fell to the ground.

*36-06*

What did Jesus do to his three disciples?

Jesus touched them, told them not to be afraid, and instructed them to get up.

What did the disciples see when they looked around?

When they looked around, the only one still there was Jesus.

*36-07*

What did Jesus tell the disciples to do about what they had seen as they went down the mountain?

He told them not to tell anyone about what happened on the mountain until he died and returned to life.

When did Jesus tell his disciples they could speak about what happened on the mountain?

Jesus told his disciples they could speak about what happened on the mountain after Jesus rose from the dead.

## **Movement 2: Theological Questions**

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### **What Does This Story Teach Us?**

1. How should we understand who Jesus is and what he came on earth to do? What does Jesus' transfiguration (i.e., his changing of appearance) tell us about his person and work?

2. What does it mean to be a faithful follower of Jesus? How does the disciples' experience on the mountain teach us about the nature of discipleship?

## **Movement 3: Live It Out**

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### **Personal Implications & Applications From The Story**

*Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.*

1. When have you experienced meaningful times of prayer when you felt close to God and God's people?
2. How do you think you would have responded if you saw the events up on the mountain?
3. What misunderstandings of Jesus need to be corrected in your own belief/thinking?
4. Think about this week. Where does "The Transfiguration" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?
5. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now: The story of the transfiguration teaches us about the nature of Christ and the power of his resurrection.

## **Movement 4: Retell the Story**

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*Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.*

1. Can someone retell "The Transfiguration" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?
4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

### **Church Ministry**

**Ministry Preparation:** Take time to consider how you could minister this story to others. Record some ministry ideas below.

**Ministry Implementation:** Minister this story to a group of believers as you had planned. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching/lesson or lead a discussion of this story with other believers. Record your ministry plan below.

**Ministry Reflection:** Think about what you learned from ministering this story to other believers. Reflect on your experience below.

## **Movement 5: Share It**

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*Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.*

1. Who is one specific person you will share "The Transfiguration" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

### **Mission Engagement**

**Witness Preparation:** Take time to consider how you will witness this narrative to unbelievers. Record some ideas below.

**Witness Implementation:** Share this story with an unbeliever. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching/lesson or lead a discussion of this story with unbelievers. Record your witness plan below.

**Witness Reflection:** Think about what you learned from ministering this story to unbelievers. Reflect on your experience below.