

Middle/High School Sunday School Lessons by

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Year 4: Session 7 – Transformation

Class 19: Mark 9:1-8 – Transfiguration

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Read and discuss the Transfiguration story
- Illustrate the concept of “insight”
- Focus on how paying attention to God is a life-changing choice – and what exactly is being changed

Materials needed:

1. Video clip (available on rfour.org) from *How To Make Wooden Pliers*
2. Electronics that show the video clip

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- One of the things we do every class is ask and answer the opening question at the beginning of class – because it helps us 1. Learn more about each other and 2. Helps “warm us up” for some of the ideas in the upcoming lesson. So we’re going to do that now.
- So here’s the opening question for today’s class. I [the teacher] will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer, I will answer first.
- Once I answer the question, we’ll go around the circle and each of us will answer.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- *Here’s this week’s question:* What’s something you tend to do when you are nervous?

INTRO

- Together, as a class, we read about 25 Bible stories a school year
- Over the course of 4 years of being together, we’ll read 100 stories or so
- The overall intent of these classes / discussion is that by reading these stories and talking about how the characters do or do not interact with God we will 1.) Be able to better see and understand who God is so that we can 2.) Better decide how and why we’d want to be in relationship with God
- In the new session that we’re starting today, we’ll be looking at three stories that help us think about (and see) how paying attention to God changes us / transforms us

- In fact, the story that we'll read today is usually referred to as "The Transfiguration" which means "to be transformed."
- In the Transfiguration story, we'll see that one of the things that paying attention to God does is that our ability to "see" *improves*
- When I say "see" – I don't mean 20/20 vision – I mean what we mean when we say, "Oh, I see what you're saying." I'm talking about insight, comprehension, "ah-ha" moments

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY

- So to help us get started today, we're going to start with an activity where we might have an ah-ha moment
- We're going to do this by solving some "1 minute mysteries"
- The way this works is that I'm going to tell you the result of something that happened.
- You, then, have to *correctly* figure out why that thing happened.
- The way you figure it out, as a class, is to ask me questions that can be answered with a yes or a no.
- In fact, that's mostly all I'll tell you "Yes" or "No"
- However, sometimes there is not always a good way to answer your question; in those cases, I'll tell you so and then let you know if your question is relevant or not to the answer.
- There is no limit to how many questions you can ask

DO 1-Minute Mysteries ACTIVITY

Note to teachers: You will most likely have to give hints to help the students ask the right questions

Q: In the middle of a yard, there is a pipe, a carrot and pile of pebbles. Why?

(A: They are the remains of a melted snowman)

Q: A couple will build a square house. In each wall, they'll have a window. Each window, though, will face north. How will they do this?

(A: they'll build the house on the south pole)

Q: A man pushes a car up to a hotel and realizes he's bankrupt. Why? What's happening?

(A: The man is playing a game of monopoly)

For end of class, if time

Q: A man is sitting in bed. He can't sleep even though he's very tired. He makes a phone call, says nothing, hangs up and falls asleep quickly. Why?

(A: The man is at a hotel. The person next door is snoring so loudly that the man cannot sleep. So the man calls the snoring person's room. The snoring person wakes up to answer the phone. The man hangs up and falls asleep before the snoring person falls back to sleep)

Q: A horse jumps over a tower and lands on a man, the man then disappears. Why?

(A: a chess game is happening. The knight jumped a rook and took a pawn or bishop)

TELL / TRANSITION to SCRIPTURE

- As you figured out the answers to the mysteries, was it a slow realization or did you suddenly understand what it was?
- Insight is when we see or understand something that we didn't see or understand right away, similar to what we may have experienced just now as we realized the answers to the 1 minute mysteries
- In cartoons, insight is sometimes portrayed as a lightbulb turning on above the character's head
- In today's scripture story, listen for occurrences of what you think are insights and/or "ah-ha" moments

READ Mark 9:1-8 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

1 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

2 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them

Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 6 He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" 8 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

ASK

- So...what were some insights or ah-ha moments that you think characters were having in this story?
- What does Jesus in verse 1 say some will see? (the kingdom of God – that's what we call "foreshadowing" in the literary world)
- In verse 2, where do Jesus, Peter, James and John go? (up a mountain)
- Why do you think they did that – what was the purpose of going up the mountain? (the passage doesn't say – but going up a mountain is Biblical code for "to do some heavy-duty praying")
- v2 - What happens while they're on top of the mountain and praying? (Jesus is transfigured – which means "to be changed in a physical way" -- the word sometimes has a connotation of "beauty to it" as well)
- v3 – In what way is Jesus' appearance changed? (his clothes become dazzling white and NOT because he's really good at laundry)
- v4 – Once Jesus' clothes are super-bright, who can be seen? (Elijah and Moses)
- v5 – What does Peter then think should happen? (they should build dwellings / houses and stay there)
- v6 – What does the verse say Peter did not know to do? (He didn't know what to say)
- And, yet, did he still speak? (yes)
- So this would be Peter's answer to our opening question. When he gets nervous, he says things he probably didn't mean to say. Has this ever happened to you, where, when you're nervous, you say things you didn't mean to say?
- v7 – then what happens? (A cloud shows up and speaks!)
- Who do you think that voice is meant to belong to? (God)
- v7 – What does that voice say about Jesus? (that Jesus belongs to God, is God's son)
- v7 – what does that voice then tell Peter (and the rest) to do? (To listen to Jesus)
- v8 – And then what happens? (Then things go back to normal)
- So, in summary, what things did Peter, James and John see once they and Jesus were praying (they saw Jesus light up, saw Elijah and Moses, saw a light-filled cloud that talked).

TELL

About being transformed

- One of the things that is essential to keep in mind when talking about Jesus and his invitation to follow him is that it is an invitation that, if received and acted upon, is transformative
- Following Jesus *changes* us because following Jesus teaches us how to be in contact with the divine
- Being in contact with the divine does not leave you as you were
- Which is what happens in today's story, right?
- Jesus prays and in so doing, Jesus is changed
- In that prayer time, then, let's look at *how* Jesus is changed
 - His clothing is changed. And though this might be the most noticeable thing in the story, it's probably mostly symbolic.
 - The story isn't telling us that we'll get new threads when we pay attention to God, but rather, that paying attention to God *enlightens* us. Meaning: We see / understand things differently / more clearly than before.
 - Also, in this moment of enlightenment, Jesus is able to see Moses and Elijah
 - And though the figures of Moses and Elijah could've actually been there and visible (with nametags, no less), this is probably a way for Jesus to understand that what he is doing is not new. That other leaders of his people have experienced and walked a similar route.
 - Jesus is also supported / bolstered in his prayer time due to his identity being supported – he hears that he belongs to God – that he is a child of God AND that he has something to share that others should listen to

About the results of being transformed

- Maybe you've heard the term, "All hell broke loose"?
- We use that term when things go crazy (in a bad way) and nothing makes sense
- Well in today's story, we see the opposite happen – we see, "All of heaven breaking loose."
- Which is the very thing Jesus is referring to in verse 1 when he says, "And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." "
- In other words, Jesus becomes this portal, this nexus where the world and the divine intersect
- And when that happens, the person, the portal, is able to do things that s/he wasn't able to do previously

TRANSITION to MOVIE CLIP

- To help us think about how transformation makes something more adept at being able to perform certain tasks, we're going to watch the following video of a carpenter work with a block of wood
- More specifically, the carpenter takes a block of wood and turns it into a set of pliers
- I've watched it a bunch of times and it still doesn't make any sense to me. It's like "all craftsmanship broke loose"
- Let's see if it makes any sense to you

WATCH MOVIE CLIP

ASK / TELL

- Did any of those cuts make any sense to you? (the last one does, but that's it for me)
- And, though it is the same wood that the craftsman started with, it's also very different at the end than it was at the beginning, right?

- The same is true of us with God
- As we pay attention to God and interact with God, we are changed.
- We receive insight and understanding that changes how we think and what we decide and how we act
- In these ways, God is like this woodworker, who shapes us, sometimes in ways that don't even understand right away or see right away
- But -- and this is important! – God will not force us to be shaped by God. We have to choose to be shaped by God.
- Jesus is the best example we have of
 - 1. What choosing to let God reshape us looks like (as in – what we can expect) and
 - 2. What happens after we make the decision to let God shape us / work with us
- So yes, being in contact with God can be scary, it may not even make all that much sense as we stay in contact with God, but as we stay in contact with God, we are then changed/transformed in ways that help us to better be God's gift to others, just like Jesus was.

CLOSING PRAYER