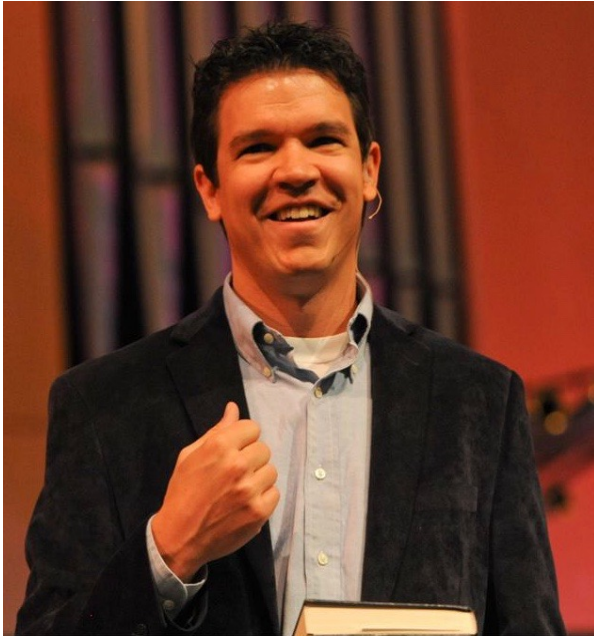


GAME CHANGER
Weekly Devotional
A ministry of Chapel Hill
chapelhillpc.org

WEEK 4

This guide pairs with Mark 9:2-8 and the sermon preached at Chapel Hill June 15 and 16.



Written by Larry Hackman

Executive Associate Pastor at Chapel Hill. Theology nerd who also loves big, dumb blockbuster movies, dinosaurs (no kidding, I *love* dinosaurs), and classical music. What do these things have in common? They all point, in their own way, back to a big, beautiful God.

LifeGroup Guide

Head

How does this image of Jesus transfigured point forward to the end times described in the book of Revelation? (Revelation 1:12-16).

Why does Peter want to make three tents? Use a Study Bible to understand the significance of Moses and Elijah.

What other places in Scripture do we hear the words “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him”? What is the significance of the repetition here? (Cf. Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1; Mark 1:11)

Heart

Imagine you were present at the transfiguration. How do you think you might have responded?

“This is my beloved son. Listen to Him.” This is how Jesus’ father spoke over him. What is your experience of the words spoken over you by your earthly parents? How is your experience of earthly parents similar or different to how your Heavenly Father thinks of you?

Hands

Jesus is seen frequently getting away to be with his Father. What ways could you pursue being with your heavenly Father?

What words do you say over your children and/or other loved ones in your life?

Our relationship with our parents often has broken elements. Today’s study may have brought up wounds that still need healing. Our Celebrate Recovery ministry provides a safe place to process and heal from these kinds of hurts. You are welcome on Wednesday nights at 5:45 pm at the church.

DAY 1 – Monday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:35; 6:31-32; 9:2; 14:32

Ask

Jesus is seen frequently getting away to be with his Father. What ways could you pursue being with your heavenly Father?

Reflect

It is remarkable that in a Gospel known for its breakneck pace (evidenced by how frequently the word “immediately” appears), Mark frequently records Jesus finding time to just get away. From the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to the very end, Jesus is dodging the crowds, climbing mountains, and stealing away into the wilderness, not for “me” time, but “we” time.

We associate prayer with piety and resolve, especially if we struggle with it, but the impression I get from these times for Jesus was that they were his restorative times. But if we only imagine prayer as talking, we miss that Jesus *rested* in these moments away. The implication was silence, and in any given conversation one party must be silent in order to hear the other party. In that sense, Jesus truly conversed with his Father when he rested.

It’s important to note that Jesus did not always retire alone. He would frequently take all, or just some, of his disciples with him. Perhaps he wanted to give them insight into how he prayed, and indeed we see several occasions where the disciples overhear his prayers. There is something incredibly generous in this, that Jesus would share his relationship with the Father. But I suppose that should not be surprising. That was his life’s mission after all.

This week, as we explore a Jesus revealed as glorious, and the words of his Father, I wonder if it behooves us to consider our own habits. As Jesus’ disciples many years later, do we continue to follow him into the quiet places? What opportunities do we give ourselves to listen? To speak?

DAY 2 – Tuesday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 9:2-3; Revelation 1:12-16

Ask

How does this image of Jesus transfigured point forward to the end times described in the book of Revelation?

Reflect

Living in the Pacific Northwest certainly gives you a different appreciation for the sun. Sunlight wasn't something I can remember giving any particular thought to when I lived in other parts of the United States, but here it's acknowledged as the gift it is, mostly because of how infrequently it shines for us. There are moments, however, when I feel like I'm emerging from my cave after a long darkness and the sun is just too bright, too intense for my feeble eyes. That's what sunglasses are for, I guess.

Jesus in the flesh is like looking at Jesus with sunglasses on. When we see Jesus transformed on the mount, we see no-holds-barred Jesus, searing our retinas. We see Jesus the Glorious One, in contrast to Jesus the Approachable One. We see Jesus look very much like he is described in Revelation 1, a vision of Jesus that is quite at odds with our typical Sunday-School, flowing-hair, blue-eyes, holding-a-lamb Jesus. And if we're honest, we see a Jesus who is kind of frightening to behold.

In truth, Jesus is both approachable and glorious, not one or the other. But Jesus makes himself approachable for our sakes, so that we can someday endure his terrible and glorious presence with no shame or fear. There will be a day when the whole world will see Jesus in glory, and they will either weep for joy or fear. We, along with the disciples, get a glimpse of this future on the mountain.

Today, take some time to take your imaginary sunglasses off, and think on Jesus as the Glorious One. Reflect on the passage in Revelation 1, allowing yourself to wonder what deeper meaning the different aspects of his description may reveal about who he is.

DAY 3 – Wednesday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 9:2-6; Luke 1:8-12; Isaiah 6:1-5

Ask

Imagine you were present at the transfiguration. How do you think you might have responded?

Reflect

There is something in the encounter with heavenly beings that strikes terror in the heart of human beings. Perhaps it is our basic fear of the unknown. It is not every day that one meets a person glowing with other-worldly fierceness. How do you know what will happen next in the presence of such power? That confusion and terror is understandable.

But I think there is more to understand about why there is fear in these kinds of encounters. When you look across the scope of Scripture and the different examples of people seeing God or an angel (or Jesus in his glory), what you see is that something is revealed. The most obvious thing that is revealed is the heavenly realm, or a citizen of it. But what is more subtly revealed is something about the person who is seeing all of this. And usually it's not something good.

When Isaiah sees the throne room of God, he says "Woe is me!" and acknowledges that his general sinfulness has been revealed. When Zechariah sees Gabriel in the temple his lack of faith is revealed. And when Peter sees Jesus in his full glory, he's revealed for the short-sighted goofball he is (more on that later).

What's going on here? C.S. Lewis put it this way, "The real test of being in the presence of God is, that you either forget about yourself altogether or see yourself as a small, dirty object." In other words, the bright light of heaven either invites us into embrace with God or to see our own brokenness. Either are valid reactions, because the light of heaven strips our soul naked.

As you imagine yourself at the transfiguration, imagine that you are stripped bare of pretense in the light of Christ's glory. Would you feel rapture, or would you feel shame? In your honest reflection, invite God to see your soul and do his work.

DAY 4 – Thursday

Daily devotional

Read

Exodus 24:12; 25:8-9; 1 Kings 19:10; Mark 8:31-33; 9:2-6

Ask

Why does Peter want to make three tents? Use a Study Bible to understand the significance of Moses and Elijah.

Reflect

It probably strikes us modern readers as odd that Peter would suggest that they build three tents. Tents, after all, evoke camping trips and sleeping bags for us. But Peter had the rich history of Israel in mind and the hospitality of Middle Eastern culture (which abides even to this day). For Peter, the offer to build a tent, or a *tabernacle* we might say, was an invitation to stay a little bit longer, with overtones of deep reverence. He had in mind the tabernacle of Yahweh, in which he dwelt in the midst of the people Israel. *Surely*, you can imagine Peter thinking, *God has come to dwell among his people again*.

That perspective was only heightened by the presence of Moses and Elijah. To an Israelite, these men represented the law and the prophets respectively (see Exodus 24:12 and 1 Kings 19:10 for salient examples of that). “The Law and the Prophets” was shorthand for the entirety of the Old Testament Scriptures, and there they were standing next to Jesus. That’s quite an endorsement.

But Peter didn’t quite understand what was going on. It was clear from an earlier tangle with Jesus that Peter didn’t expect Jesus to suffer. In fact, Peter expected Jesus to do what he was doing just there on the mount: appear in glory... and then take his rightful place as king.

The irony is that Jesus didn’t intend to stay, he intended to leave in a way that Peter just couldn’t swallow. In fact, the parallel transfiguration passage in Luke 9:31 says that what Moses and Elijah were talking about was his departure, literally his *exodus*. Both Moses and Elijah had their own unique exodus experiences; from Egypt, from this world. Most importantly, their experiences shared in common one important trait: suffering.

Peter, passionate but short-sighted, sincere but goofy, was missing something key about who Jesus is: his glory and his suffering are intertwined.

Imagine, given what you know of the stories of Moses and Elijah, what that mountain-top conversation may have been like.

DAY 5 – Friday
Daily devotional

Read

Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1; Mark 1:11; 9:2-7

Ask

What other places in Scripture do we hear the words “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him”? What is the significance of the repetition here?

Reflect

In seminary I was the assistant for a professor whom I dearly love. One thing that I found particularly remarkable about him was the way that he prayed. Typically, in public prayer, the expectation is to pray loud enough for others to hear. But not Professor Kang. He would pray in the most diminutive voice, almost a whisper. I regret that I’m hard of hearing, because I would have loved to have heard not only how he prayed, but what he prayed. But I tried my best to lean in and listen.

We listen to those we respect. And I mean that in the deepest sense. There are those people whom we don’t just hear what they say, we drink in their words because there is wisdom, love, and life embedded in every syllable. Their words are nourishment to our souls. Maybe you’ve not met that kind of person. I hope you have, because you then have some understanding of what it means to listen to the Son of God.

This is not like when I tell my son, “Listen to your mother.” That’s too benign. What the Father calls us to in listening to Jesus is a hungry kind of listening that acknowledges that we are starving for Jesus’ remarkable power, wisdom, humility, and love.

Take a moment to take stock of what your soul hungers for. Are there words of Jesus that speak to that? Listen.

DAY 6 – Saturday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 9:2-8; Romans 8:14-17

Ask

“This is my beloved son. Listen to Him.” This is how Jesus’ father spoke over him. What is your experience of the words spoken over you by your earthly parents? How is your experience of earthly parents similar or different to how your Heavenly Father thinks of you?

Reflect

Though my father passed away when I was 11, I am incredibly grateful that among my fuzzy memories of him are many words of affirmation. I remember distinctly at family gatherings how he would brag to my cousins about my nascent intellect. When my older brother would beat on me, he would warn him that I would someday be larger than him and return the favor. That turned out to not be true on both counts, but nonetheless at the time I felt the measure of his words as true and it filled me up. These little moments weren’t planned, but I clearly heard and received them.

Now as a father in my own right, I’m awed (and terrified) by the power of my words and very cognizant of the lasting effects my words and behavior could have on Reed. It is an unfortunate reality of our world that I will inevitably leave my own imprint of brokenness on Reed. We all know this too well from our own fathers. However good of a dad we may have, they will inevitably show their limits. Though I cherish the gift of my father’s words, I’m wounded by his unfortunate early departure, and I have felt keenly his absence.

So it’s no surprise that the glimpse of the Father’s love for his Son we see on the mount may awaken some yearning in us. Perhaps we’ve never been called “beloved.” Perhaps we were at one point, but feel the absence of those words now. Perhaps “beloved” from our earthly father comes with strings or baggage. But the Father’s love for the Son comes with none of that. His love is pure, lasting, and perfect.

No wonder, then, that one of my favorite passages of Scripture is from Romans 8, which reveals to us that the pure love of the Father is now for us too. We are adopted into the family of God. Our cry of yearning, “Abba, Father!” is answered. We, too, are beloved, and nothing shall separate us from that love. Nothing.

As you pray today, consider letting your prayer be simply “Abba, Father.” What, if any, yearning does that awaken in you?

DAY 7 – Sunday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 9:2-9; Romans 8:31-39

Ask

What words do you say over your children and/or other loved ones in your life?

Reflect

I mentioned yesterday that I was both awed and terrified of the power of words in my son's life. Part of that is a function of our age. As our understanding of human development becomes more sophisticated, we recognize the incredibly complex factors that shape us. Sometimes this awareness verges on deterministic, as though we are only and merely the results of our environment with no choice in how we grow or change in and of ourselves. That said, it seems that few people believe any longer that sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me. Words hurt.

And yet, knowing as much as we do, we can still be so careless with them. I don't necessarily mean by this what we do say, but by what we don't. An unspoken word may be true, but if it is not said then it is not agreed upon. We know how often bad things are spoken, but how often are good things left unsaid?

I recall one occasion when I met a friend's mentor. In the few short moments we had to chat, this man spoke over me his affirming observations of my character. I don't even recall specifically what he said, but whatever it was it was so profoundly affecting that I physiologically reacted to it. My skin flushed, my eyes darted. I felt vulnerable in the face of his encouragement, but I also knew my soul was relishing it. I didn't know I was so hungry for words like his.

I think about that encounter a lot, and the power a stranger's encouragement and insight had to move me. I'm grateful he said something. To be honest, I wish I was more like him. I wish I spoke more often the affirming things I think.

As you reflect on the Father and Son dynamic in the transfiguration, don't miss the power of the Father's affirmation. It is not only what is said, it is *that* it is said. And more than once (Mark 1:11).

When you pray today, pray the words of Romans 8:31-39 as affirmations of your heavenly Father. E.g. "You gave me your Son, so you will spare nothing for me... You will let nothing separate me from the love of your son, Jesus Christ..." Allow his love to fill you up, so that you may fill others with your own words of love.
