

# Journeys



JUDSON BIBLE LESSONS | Spring 2022 | Vol. 1.3



# TESTIFY!

2 CORINTHIANS 4:6-9



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American Baptist Home Mission Societies

# Journeys

JUDSON BIBLE LESSONS | SPRING 2022 | VOL. 1.3

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## About the Quarter

This quarter begins within the first week of Lent and takes us on a journey through Eastertide up to Pentecost. It is a season of deep prayer, repentance, reflection, and recommitment to the God we love. Themes such as **TEMPTATION**, **SUPPLICATION**, **HOPE**, **TRUST**, and **BELONGING** will help us purge those weights, sins, and habits that hold us back and keep us bound. Through Christ's **REDEMPTION**, we are able to experience **RESURRECTION** power, spiritual **RESILIENCE**, and the **TRANSFORMATION** we need to make us **RESOLUTE** in our **DISCIPLESHIP**, as we go forth **WITNESSING** for Christ and sharing God's mercy, love, and grace. We are delighted to welcome back some of our favorite JOURNEYS writers from the past. **PEACE** be with you!

## About the Writers

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# TEMPTATION

## focusing on God and goals

Jesus answered him, “It is written,  
‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

—LUKE 4:8

### Introduction

Luke’s Gospel introduces the story of Jesus’ public ministry with an account of his temptation experience during forty days in the wilderness. Although we know that Jesus is the Son of God, what kind of Son of God he would be was put to the test. After all, the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, who had been adopted by Julius Caesar, was called “son of the god” during his lifetime. Yet, Jesus and Caesar could not have been more different. Luke sets Jesus’ story in a worldwide context and shows how Jesus was faithful to his calling even as his way led him to the cross.

### Lesson Objectives

- To gain a deeper understanding of Jesus’ humanity by reflecting on his temptation experience.
- To reflect on how Jesus drew strength and guidance from the Hebrew Scriptures.

#### Luke 4:1-13 NRSV

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. 3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.”

4 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” 5 Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. 7 If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” 8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” 9 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, 10 for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ 11 and ‘On

their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”  
12 Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” 13 When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

## Into the Scripture

Traditionally attributed to Luke, “the beloved physician,” the Gospel of Luke is part of a two-volume work that includes the Acts of the Apostles. Together they tell the story of God’s Holy Spirit at work in Jesus of Nazareth and in the men and women of the early church. While we cannot be certain when or to whom the Gospel was written, we know that the original readers spoke Greek, that they probably had at least some familiarity with the Scriptures in Greek translation (the Septuagint, abbreviated LXX), and that they were most likely already Christians (see Luke 1:4).

Luke begins his Gospel by explaining to Theophilus (“friend of God”) that he has written an ordered account of Jesus’ story based on what eyewitnesses had handed down to those who had not been privileged to witness the events themselves (Luke 1:2). The Gospel of Luke

was probably written between AD 80 and 90 to assure Christians of their common story. Luke sets his story in a worldwide context. Jesus’ birth is placed within a census in the Roman Empire. And whereas the Gospel of Matthew traces Jesus’ lineage back to Abraham through David, Luke

shows how Jesus’ story goes all the way back to Adam, who represents the beginning of all humanity.

The story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness following his baptism by John the Baptist intentionally recalls Israel’s formative wilderness experience during the Exodus generation. Jesus’ responses to the devil are taken from Deuteronomy, quotations that are set within the context of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness. Jesus’ forty days of solitude recall the forty years

“

Luke shows how Jesus’ story goes all the way back to Adam, who represents the beginning of all humanity.

of God’s people moving from slavery in Egypt towards the promise of a land where they would find freedom in community with God and one another.

The devil’s first temptation (4:3) suggests that Jesus turn stones to bread: “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Luke tells us that while Jesus was in the wilderness these forty days, he fasted. His need for nourishment was real, but Jesus refused to put his own needs first. He responds (4:4) to the devil with a quotation from Deuteronomy 8:3 which puts life’s needs in the proper order: “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

In the second temptation, the devil holds out the lying promise of worldly power (4:7) in exchange for Jesus acknowledging the diabolical ownership of the world’s kingdoms: “If you, then, will worship me, it will



all be yours.” The temptations attempt to confuse Jesus’ clarity of vision about His mission. Jesus was challenged to accept that this is the way the world works, and to embrace it in order to accomplish great things for God. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

Finally, the devil leads Jesus to a high place atop the temple in Jerusalem. Satan urges Jesus to jump off the temple and even quotes from Psalm 91:11-12. This temptation represents the attempt to force God’s hand to do *our* will. It is moved by the opposite impulse of that expressed in Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane: “Not my will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42). In answer to the final temptation in this series, Jesus again responds by quoting Deuteronomy: “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (Deuteronomy 6:16).

## Into the Lesson

Some readers will remember the very popular game show “To Tell the Truth,” which began in 1956 on the CBS television network. It ran for many years in various formats and on different networks since then. The original version involved a central character with an interesting backstory of some kind and two impostors. The central character in each round of play was obliged to tell the truth. But the impostors would try to fool the celebrity panel of four by lying. The panelists would each ask questions of the three contestants: “Number One, did you . . . ?” “Number Three, have you . . . ?” As time ran out for that round, the panelists would vote for the contestant whom they believed to be the real John Smith or the true Jane Doe.



It was not often easy to tell which man or woman was TRULY the person she or he claimed to be! Who was for real? Who was an impostor? The moment of truth came at last as the host said: “Will the real Jane Doe please stand up!” Then the truth was revealed.

The stakes are higher when nominees for high office appear before a Senate confirmation committee. We sometimes learn that there is a question as to whether the nominee’s public and private behavior line up. As we are presented with differing descriptions of the character of the nominee, naturally the question is raised: “Which is the *real* person? In a crisis, which person is likely to emerge and make the crucial and sensitive decisions that need to be made?”

In the temptation experience, the devil confronted Jesus with the question: Who are you “if you are the Son of God?” the devil whispered. Most English translations render the Greek word as “if” while a few others use “since” instead. In either case, the question is put to Jesus: What does it mean to be the Son of God? What kind of Savior will you be? Jesus answers each of the temptations by addressing a different, more fundamental question: “*Whose* are we?” Though hungry, he would not turn desert stones to bread because human beings do not live by bread alone. We are meant to live by the Word of God our Creator. And Jesus would not stoop



Jesus would not stoop to the ways of the rich  
and powerful in our world.

to the ways of the rich and powerful in our world in order to amass political power. Though he came to save humanity, he knew that when the world goes low, God's Son must go high: "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."

The third temptation represented the all-too-human desire to force God's hand to do our will rather than the other way around. "Jesus, just jump off this building and let the angels catch you." In 1987 the famous televangelist Oral Roberts shut himself up in a prayer tower and told the public that unless he raised some large sum of money by a certain deadline, God would take his life. Some donors, alarmed by the language, were worried that Roberts intended to harm himself. Although his projects had produced some good results, this sensationalist fundraising method seemed to many people to draw attention away from the God that Oral Roberts sought to serve. At its heart, it was an attempt to force God's hand to do Roberts' will.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have learned of congregations that decided public health measures were unnecessary for them. Surely God will intervene to make maskless, in-person worship safe, they said. Some even appealed to Psalm 91, the very words which the devil quoted to Jesus. Jesus' response in the desert long ago is just as on target today as it was then: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Remember *whose* we are!

Jesus was led by God's Spirit through the wilderness temptations. Steeped in the Scriptures and keeping his eyes focused on the Heavenly Father, Jesus did not allow himself to be distracted by the devil's "If you are . . ." challenges. Jesus remained clear about whose he was and what he was to be about.

At the end of Luke's temptation narrative, there is a foreboding of the cross. Luke reverses Matthew's order of the second and the third temptations, which leaves Jesus in Jerusalem, where the drama of redemption on the cross and in the subsequent Resurrection will play out. In verse 13, we read: "When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time." Temptation was over, but just for now. Luke is telling us, his readers, that there would be more temptations and struggles to come. On the night when Jesus was arrested, the devil's opportune time arrived. Jesus exclaims in Luke 22:53 to those about to seize him: "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!" Jesus had worked through the

temptations and had emerged clear-minded about whose he is and where his path will lead him.

## Into Discipleship

My wife and I attended seminary in Berkeley, California, in the 1970s. We lived in seminary housing in a first-floor apartment that in an earlier time had been the manager's apartment. Every time someone buzzed in a friend, it buzzed in our wall. Each time that heavy front door slammed, we felt it in our apartment. There was the constant sound of traffic wending its way past our Berkeley apartment. University students living across the street would sometimes open the windows of their apartments, turn up the volume on their stereos and share their music with the neighborhood. Once a disturbed person set fire to a car parked across the street from us. Standing nearby, he clapped his hands delightedly as the car burned. There soon followed the sound of sirens as firefighters came to the rescue. There was never a dull moment in that neighborhood and rarely any quiet!



I began to understand why Moses, Elijah, and Jesus spent time in the wilderness away from the constant background noise and distractions.





Following graduation, we moved to Western Colorado to serve a church in Grand Junction. Our new neighborhood at the edge of town was very quiet. After the noise in Berkeley, it was difficult at first to get used to the quiet. One day I drove a few miles from town, parked my car, and walked out into the desert. It was a windless day, and I stood still, surrounded by quiet. Suddenly, I heard a faint sound: “Scritch . . . scritch . . . scritch.” I looked around me and then down at my feet. There on the ground, making his way across the dry and sandy soil, was a large ant, making the faintest of sounds as he passed in the desert quiet. I began to understand why Moses, Elijah, and Jesus spent time in the wilderness away from the constant background noise and distractions.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us were separated from family, friends, and co-workers. We may have grown lonely, but how often were we truly alone and open to God’s voice? We are caught up in the twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week news cycle. Many live from moment to moment on social media. Disciples of Jesus need time away if we are to listen for God’s voice. Susanna Wesley, the mother of the Methodist founders, John and Charles Wesley, had nineteen children. She could not go on retreat in the desert. In

order to carve out a time for herself to commune with God, Susanna Wesley would sometimes sit in a chair and pull her apron over her head!

Earlier generations of Christians emphasized the importance of Scripture memorization. My mother memorized many Bible verses and even had a list of favorite verses in alphabetical order. In her later years, I learned that when she could not fall asleep, she would begin working through her list beginning with “A” and working through the alphabet until she fell asleep. Today we can easily look up Scriptures on sites like Bible Gateway or use a Bible app on our phones. In today’s text, we see that Jesus was grounded in the Hebrew Bible. But Jesus did not read the Scriptures seeking proof texts for what he already believed or wanted to do. He had not only memorized the words; he had taken the meaning to heart. Even the devil quoted the Bible in the encounter with Jesus in the wilderness. We are told that it was the Holy Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness for this time of quiet. For a Spirit-led Jesus, the holy Scriptures were part of his life conversation with His Heavenly Father. This is a way to live out the words we say each time we recite the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.”

## Reflection Questions

### Into the Scripture

The beginning of today's passage talks about how the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness. We now know that it was for Jesus to exercise his judgement and rely on the Holy Spirit to defeat the temptations of the devil. His success helped him begin his ministry with a sense of confidence and clarity concerning challenges that would come his way. When you reflect back on moments in your life, can you recall a time when retrospectively you realized that the Holy Spirit had led you to go somewhere or accomplish some purpose? Share anecdotally what happened and how you know God was behind the scenes leading and guiding you.

### Into the Lesson

Jesus quotes Scripture when confronted by temptation. However, in the third scene, the devil weaves a Scripture passage from Psalm 91 into his temptation. Scripture has sometimes been used to justify unjust systems such as slavery, for example, or to legitimize wishful thinking. What are some ways that we can hold one another accountable in our use of the Bible?

### Into Discipleship

Luke tells us that Jesus fasted when he was led into the wilderness. During the season of Lent, many Christians give up something such as watching television, impulse spending, eating junk food, or holding grudges. If you are fasting in some way this Lenten season (and are comfortable sharing with your class), tell how you decided to take on this discipline and how it is going so far.

### Closing Prayer

Loving God, be our unseen friend during this season of Lent. When we live as though we are all alone in life, change our way of thinking about ourselves and your world. We believe the Good News, O Lord. Help us with our unbelief. We thank you for sending Jesus, who walked the way of the cross and died for us so that we might live. Help us always to listen for your voice and so follow Christ in faithful discipleship. In his name we pray. Amen.

## Resources

### Helpful Books for Your Lenten Journey

<https://www.judsonpress.com/AdvancedSearch/Default?Filter.aspx?SearchTerm=lent/>

- **Journey with Jesus Through Lent**  
by Glenn E. Porter Sr.
- **Let Us Pray-Lent-Easter DIY: Contemporary Prayers for the Seasons of the Church**  
by Israel Galindo



## Songs to Consider

### *A Mighty Fortress*

The words in Martin Luther's beloved hymn *A Mighty Fortress* reflect on the temptations we face and the help we receive from God to overcome. You may choose to read (or sing) this hymn together. Here is a link to a YouTube version by Michael W. Smith:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ZwFSBxyL5c>

Two stanzas are provided here.

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe does seek to work us woe;  
his craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,  
on earth is not his equal.

And though this world, with devils filled, should  
threaten to undo us,  
we will not fear, for God has willed his truth to  
triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
his rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure;  
one little word shall fell him.

### *Yield Not to Temptation*

*Yield Not to Temptation* is another great hymn of the church. You can find the lyrics at [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org):

[https://hymnary.org/text/yield\\_not\\_to\\_temptation](https://hymnary.org/text/yield_not_to_temptation)

## Devotional Scriptures

### Year C First Sunday in Lent

### Week of 03/06/22

#### **Sunday 03/06/22**

First Sunday in Lent

Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16;  
Romans 10:8b-13; Luke 4:1-13

#### **Monday 03/07/22**

Psalm 17; 1 Chronicles 21:1-17; 1 John 2:1-6

#### **Tuesday 03/08/22**

Psalm 17; Zechariah 3:1-10; 2 Peter 2:4-21

#### **Wednesday 03/09/22**

Psalm 17; Job 1:1-22; Luke 21:34-22:6

#### **Thursday 03/10/22**

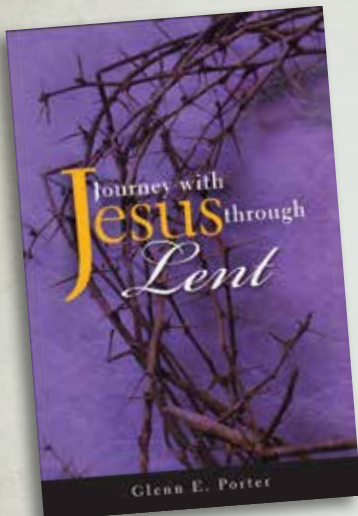
Psalm 27; Genesis 13:1-7, 14-18; Philippians 3:2-12

#### **Friday 03/11/22**

Psalm 27; Genesis 14:17-24; Philippians 3:17-20

#### **Saturday 03/12/22**

Psalm 27; Psalm 118:26-29; Matthew 23:37-39



## **Journey with Jesus through Lent** by Glenn E. Porter

Consisting of seven weeks of meditations, each day's devotion begins with a Scripture reading from the Gospel of Luke and an African proverb or other saying, followed by a meditation, and concluding with a biblical prayer focus.

**“Using Christian history, cultural heritage, Holy Writ, and internal reflection, Dr. Porter has handily laid a path that's conducive to our spiritual formation.”**

—Rev. Dr. Bernadette Glover, Senior Pastor, Saint Paul Baptist Church, and Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship, New Brunswick Theological Seminary

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# DISCIPLESHIP

## being present for God and others

Then from the cloud came a voice that said,  
“This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!”

—LUKE 9:35

### Introduction

The story of the Transfiguration is a strange tale of the unnerving experience that Peter, James and John had one day on a hike with Jesus. However, under the shadow of the cross, the meaning of this story comes into sharp focus and poses a challenge: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” During this season of Lent, as we hike up the mountain of remembrance, we are called to follow Jesus in faithful discipleship. Dietrich Bonhoeffer observed in *The Cost of Discipleship* that when Jesus calls someone to discipleship, he calls that one to come and die. But it is a dying that spreads hope and plants seeds of new life.

### Lesson Objectives

- To gain deeper insight into Luke’s portrayal of Jesus as Son of God.
- To engage Luke’s Transfiguration narrative as a call to faithful discipleship.

#### Luke 9:28-36 NRSV

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. 31 They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. 33 Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. 35 Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to

him!” 36 When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

## Into the Scripture

In last week’s lesson, we learned that the authorship of the Gospel of Luke is traditionally ascribed to Luke, a physician and co-worker with the Apostle Paul. Although the Gospel itself does not identify the writer, the “we” sections in Acts suggest that an eyewitness to Paul’s journeys stands behind the narrative. Taken together, Luke and Acts account for over a quarter of the New Testament writings.

All the first disciples were Jewish, but by the time Luke was written, the early church had become a diverse group of Jews and Gentiles. The Gospel narrative grounds Jesus’ story firmly in the witness of the scripture and connects God’s work in Jesus and the early church with the experience of God’s people in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses promised the people that the Lord would raise up a prophet like Moses

in the future: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.” Luke shows how Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

The appearance of Moses and Elijah with Jesus in the Transfiguration account reminds us of Old Testament themes and connects Jesus’ life

and ministry with the prophetic tradition of Israel. For example, both Moses (Exodus 24:15-18) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:8-13) had mountaintop encounters with God. While Matthew, Mark and Luke all recount the Transfiguration story, only Luke tells us that Moses and Elijah were discussing Jesus’ departure with Him. The Greek word translated “departure” in this context may



When Jesus calls someone to discipleship, he calls that one to come and die.

also be rendered as “exodus.” Here is another indication that Luke intended to connect Jesus’ story with God’s earlier work with Israel.

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the author relates Jesus’ story to the scriptures, and at the end of the Gospel, the risen Christ explains to the disciples that the scriptures pointed towards him (Luke 24:44-45). The importance of Jesus’ practice of prayer is emphasized throughout the Gospel of Luke and is highlighted at crucial moments in Jesus’ ministry. For example, Luke tells us that following his baptism, Jesus was praying when the heavens opened, the Spirit descended, and the heavenly voice declared to Jesus: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). Before choosing the twelve, we are told that Jesus spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12). Luke 9:28 informs us that the Transfiguration experience occurred while Jesus was in prayer: “Now about eight days after these





sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray” (Luke 9:28). In their account of the Transfiguration, both Matthew and Mark use the expression “and after six days” to set the chronology. There is no scholarly consensus regarding Luke’s change to “about eight days after.” However, only Luke tells the readers that Jesus’ purpose in ascending the mountain was to enter into a time of prayer.

In the passage that immediately precedes the Transfiguration account (Luke 9:21-27), Jesus warns his disciples of his death and resurrection and the cost of their discipleship. In this passage, Luke continues to bring Jesus’ identity as Son of God into sharper focus. Jesus’ own words about the meaning and requirements of discipleship in Luke 9:23-26 serve as background to God’s challenge spoken to the disciples from the cloud: “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” (Luke 9:35b). In addressing the disciples directly, God is calling Peter, James, and John to follow Jesus in faithful discipleship.

## Into the Lesson

The summer before we were married, my wife and I went backpacking in Yosemite National Park. Each morning would start out beautifully with clear skies, crisp air, and beautiful vistas! But each afternoon the clouds rolled in, and the rain began pouring down. Early in the trip, as we were hiking up yet another mountain, we suddenly moved above the tree line. As we trudged through the soaking rain and up the trail that had become a muddy stream, lightning flashed, and thunder boomed. I suddenly realized that we were now the two tallest things

in the area! Struggling up that mountain, I remember having an almost overwhelming sense that I was watching the Creator’s love at work with the rest of Creation.

We cannot predict these moments of insight, awe, and a sense of the holy. They come to us as both gift and challenge, perhaps with a mixture of insight, fear, and even some doubt thrown in. We cannot manufacture these moments when a glimpse of God’s presence and purpose are disclosed to us. All that we can do is to put ourselves in the place and in the time and in the position where God can hand us this gift. Sometimes the most important thing we can do is to show up! The disciples accompanied Jesus up the mountain for a time of prayer and saw their master’s face changed before their eyes. Luke also tells us that when the disciples were overshadowed by a cloud and heard a voice, they were terrified! That heavenly voice called them to faithful discipleship: “This is my Son . . . Listen to him!”

With the appearance of Moses and Elijah, we are reminded that the fellowship of God’s faithful servants extends backwards and forwards in time. It is no accident that when God met Moses at the burning bush, God said: “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exodus 3:6). The God of past generations, the God who was faithful



God is calling Peter, James, and John to follow  
Jesus in faithful discipleship.

in the past, is forever doing new things. Whatever clouds may overshadow you today, the God who has been faithful in your life in the past will break through surprisingly to bring some new life tomorrow. The God of Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, and Peter, James and John, and Mary and Martha, and so many others since, and so many yet to come, is bringing something new out of what has gone before!

Luke's Transfiguration narrative is first of all about the person and the work of Jesus, the Son of God. This is a story of initiation into the mystery of who Jesus is for us and the world. Beyond that, however, this is a discipleship text. In words that remind us of Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone," the voice of God challenges Peter, James, and John from the cloud: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" For a disciple, to listen to Jesus means to hear and to obey.

Jesus had just said some very difficult things to the disciples in Luke 9:23-24: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it." Connecting this call to discipleship with Jesus' Transfiguration, today's text begins with the words: "Now about eight days after these sayings." During this otherworldly experience, a cloud came and overshadowed the disciples. It was a frightening experience, but within the reduced vision of that cloud, God's voice was heard. God's Word is spoken not only in the brightly lit occasions of life but sometimes within the shadows and cloudy times as well.

Several years ago, our family was camping on Cape Cod near Provincetown. One night near midnight we hiked to the beach where we lay on our backs and looked up at the stars. Suddenly someone exclaimed: "Shooting star!" Not everyone had seen it, but now we all began to watch intently. Soon there was another shooting star! And another! On that beach far from the lights of a big city, there in the midnight darkness, we were treated to the light of a meteor shower.

God's light in our lives isn't always bright and blinding. Sometimes it is more like a shooting star moving across our own night skies, appearing briefly and then gone for a time. It is precisely in those midnight times of our lives, when all light seems to have left us, that God's light may flash again through our lives as a reminder.

And in those shadow times beneath the cloud, we may once again hear God's voice calling: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

## Into Discipleship

During the ten years that our family lived in Rhode Island, I was a member of a running club. It was a friendly group of people who would miss you if you didn't show up and would call to find out how things were going. Whenever we went on a group run together, the faster runners could run as fast as they liked, but we never left anyone behind. The frontrunners would circle around and pick up the slower runners at the back of the pack. And when a member of that club missed several weeks and put on some extra pounds, there was a lot of good-natured teasing! We helped each other stick with the discipline, and we left nobody behind.

In the life of Christian discipleship, we have training partners who walk up the mountain with us. Not all moments in the Christian life are created equal, but half of this Christian life is often just about showing



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up! Much of the life of Christian discipleship is about putting ourselves in a position where God's presence and purpose can break through the clouds from time to time and do something new with us.

The disciples in our story found themselves in a position to receive this strange Transfiguration experience by walking with Jesus up that mountainside together. They did this in spite of the anxious and confused feelings that they must have had after hearing their teacher just days earlier talk about what lay ahead for him! Look at Luke 9:21-22:

[Jesus] sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

The Christian disciplines are time-tested ways that God has provided for Jesus' disciples to show up. The list may include worship with the Christian community, fasting of some kind, seeking God's guidance by engaging in prayer and Scripture study, and charitable giving (almsgiving) of time and money to relieve some of the human need around us. These are some of the practices that we disciples do whether we feel close to God or not.

If we practice Christian disciplines in season and out, we will be ready for God to surprise us!

On that hike up the mountain, the disciples not only stood together with one another. They also stood together with those from the past who had been faithful like Moses and Elijah. It is no accident that when God met Moses at the burning bush, God said: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exodus 3:6). God was promising: "Yes, I am the God of the present. But I am also the God who was faithful in the past and the God who will meet you in the future." We do not know what the future holds, but we know Who holds the future! The communion of God's people extends not only around the world into all people and cultures but backwards and forwards through time as well.

Under the shadow of his cross, Jesus invites us each new day to remember his life-giving sacrifice—to look back in time with all disciples. And he also invites us to look forward in hope to that day when the dream of God's peaceable kingdom becomes a reality. In Luke 21:17-18, we recall the promise: "Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'"



## Reflection Questions

### Into the Scripture

While the appearances of Moses and Elijah along with Jesus represent the offices of priest, prophet, and king, how does Jesus incorporate and represent all three roles in one person?

### Into the Lesson

Has God spoken to you in a dark or cloudy time in your life? What issues were you facing? How did God's guidance get through to you?

### Into Discipleship

While there is no definitive list of Christian disciplines, fasting, prayer, Scripture study, and almsgiving (acts of charity) are included on most such lists. Over the centuries, actively seeking to meet human need has been an important discipline in both Jewish and Christian practice. Can you recall a time when you were in great need, and somebody helped you? How did they deliver aid to you? What was the effect on your sense of dignity and belonging? What extra action would you like to take during Lent to help others in need?

### Closing Prayer

Gracious God, reduce the background noise of our daily lives, we pray. Throughout this season of Lent, help us once again to hear your challenge to Jesus' disciples long ago: "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to Him!" Turn down all lesser lights of the world around us that we might better see the light of your presence in our lives. Grant that, as faithful disciples, we might always be doers of your word and not hearers only. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

## Resources

### The Transfiguration in Art

Images throughout this lesson are taken from the Vanderbilt University "Art in the Christian Tradition" website. Compare and contrast the images in the lesson and discuss how the different artists created varying depictions of the Transfiguration.

<https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-search.pl>

- What do you see as the suggested meaning behind the interwoven symbolism and images?
- What did the artists choose to include and what did they omit?
- How does the use of color play into their interpretations?



## Song to Consider

*King of Glory* Music Video

Sung by Michael W. Smith and CeCe Winans

<https://youtu.be/8JGS9WICtIg>

You can find the lyrics at

<https://www.invubu.com/music/show/song/Michael-W.-Smith%7CCeCe-Winans/King-of-Glory.html>

Here are the first two verses:

Yes, the world will bow down and say You are God  
Every man will bow down and say You are King  
So let's start right now  
Why would we wait?

### CHORUS

King of Glory, fill this place  
We just wanna be with You  
Just wanna be with You  
King of Glory, fill this place  
I just wanna be with You  
I just wanna be with You

Yes, the world will bow down and say You are God  
Every man will bow down and say You are King  
So let's start right now  
Why would we wait  
We can praise You now  
In victory

## Devotional Scriptures Year C Second Sunday in Lent Week of 03/13/22

### Sunday 03/13/22

Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1;  
Luke 13:31-35 or Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

### Monday 03/14/22

Psalm 105:1-42; Exodus 33:1-6; Romans 4:1-12

### Tuesday 03/15/22

Psalm 105:1-42; Numbers 14:10b-24;  
1 Corinthians 10:1-13

### Wednesday 03/16/22

Psalm 105:1-42; 2 Chronicles 20:1-22; Luke 13:22-31

### Thursday 03/17/22

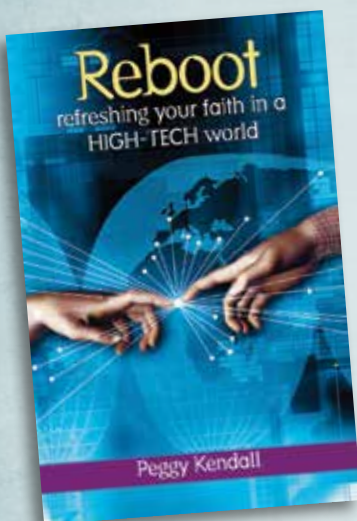
Psalm 63:1-8; Daniel 3:19-30; Revelation 2:8-11

### Friday 03/18/22

Psalm 63:1-8; Daniel 12:1-4; Revelation 3:1-6

### Saturday 03/19/22

Psalm 63:1-8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Luke 6:43-45



## Reboot: Refreshing Your Faith in a High-Tech World by Peggy Kendall

*Reboot* explores three areas where “our unexamined choices regarding technology may unintentionally be altering our fundamental operating system”:

- Our values
- Our relationships
- The way we view our Creator

“*Reboot* is anything but another thinly veiled, quasi-negative book about technology salted with biblical proof-texts and preachy admonitions. It isn’t about disconnecting. It’s about staying connected the right way.”

—from the foreword by Robert Parham, Baptist Center for Ethics

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