

Experiencing Christ

STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Complete a worksheet.
- *Optional:* Talk about life-changing experiences.
 - Pencils or pens
 - “I’ll Never Be the Same Again” worksheet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Work through the Bible study in *The Rock*.
- Explore the Old Testament.
 - Bible *The Rock*
 - Paper
 - Pencils or pens

STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Students draw a map of their spiritual journeys.
- *Optional:* Students draw their spiritual walk as a road map.
- *Optional:* Have students read the feature story in *The Rock*.
 - Bible *The Rock*
 - Paper
 - Pencils or pens
 - Optional:* Lightly-colored construction paper, colored pencils or markers, *The Rock*

STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Students are given the opportunity to receive Christ.
- *Optional:* Students pray with a partner.

Memory Verse

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

—John 14:6

Bible Basis:

Peter, James, and John see Christ transfigured (Matt. 17:1-12; 2 Pet. 1:16-18).

Bible Truth:

Jesus’ uniqueness is experienced by those who walk by faith with Him.

Lesson Aim:

That your students experience the reality of Jesus through acceptance of Him as their Savior.

Understanding the Bible

Ever since the second century, Mount Tabor has been considered the traditional site of the Transfiguration. But it is not a “high mountain” as the scriptural account indicates (Matt. 17:1); it is less than 2,000 feet high, and in Jesus’ day, a fortress topped its summit. Instead, the site more probably was Mount Hermon (9,200 ft.), about 12 miles northeast of Caesarea Philippi.

From the Greek word for “transfigured” (Matt. 17:2), we get “metamorphosis.” An example of metamorphosis is the change of a woolly caterpillar into a butterfly. During the holy metamorphosis of the Transfiguration, Jesus’ glory “blazed through the sackcloth covering of His humanity,” wrote Lewis Johnson (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, April 1967). It was like a million floodlights had just been turned on inside Him.

In 2 Peter 1:16-18 the voice is identified as that of “God the Father” (vs. 17), and the author identifies himself (and others) as “eyewitnesses” (vs. 16). Such events were not “cleverly invented stories.”

indicates items you will need to prepare before class

Tips

classroom

Today's lesson calls for students to draw a life map. You need to reserve adequate time for this activity, or you won't really be able to finish. Do one yourself in preparation, but don't take too much time discussing it. Instead, leave it where students can see it to use as a model for their own.

This exercise can be extremely important to you to find out more about your students' inner lives. Don't force any of the students to reveal what they've drawn, but allow volunteers to share briefly. You may want to come back to these next week.

Today you will also be challenging students to commit or recommit their lives to Christ. There are times to be direct about this and times to be more indirect. Use your discretion, but do not be hesitant to state the issues clearly.

PRESESSION ACTIVITY



Unique Qualities

• **Objective:** To help students talk about ways others in class are unique.

Write all of your students' names on slips of paper and put them in a box. As students arrive, let each select a name. Have paper and pencils ready and have each student write a brief biography of the student whose name he or she selected. Have your students write no more than 30 to 50 words on their biographies. You can ask them serious or silly questions to get them started, such as "What do you know about this person?" "Would this person know what to do if a boa constrictor crawled into his or her window?" "What's one characteristic that is unique to this person that no one else can claim?" The only ground rule is that all biographies should be positive. They can be funny, but no put-downs are allowed. Let as many students as you have time for share what they have written. Then talk about how each of them is unique.

Understanding Your Students

This week's lesson is a critical one in the quarter. Young people in our communities are faced daily with the realities of life and death. Even in the midst of less-than-the-best conditions, life goes on for them. A whirlwind of physical, mental, emotional, and social growth preoccupies and shields them from an everyday awareness of the long-term effects of sin and their eternal destinies.

Considering where your students are, the term "salvation" needs to be presented and explained with extreme care. Rather than restricting the

meaning of salvation as just receiving Christ, portray it in its fullest context as a lifetime process.

In this lesson, each student will look at his or her own spiritual journey. Hopefully each student will realize the extent to which they recognize Jesus' lordship. Some of your students may have drifted away from their initial commitment to Christ, and rededication is necessary. Some of your students may realize they don't know Jesus at all. Repentance is the first acknowledgment of Christ's lordship a young person can make.



STEP 1

Life Need
5–10 minutes

Lesson Aim:

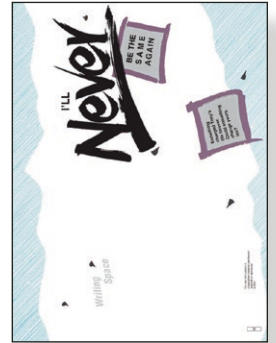
That your students experience the reality of Jesus through acceptance of Him as their Savior.

Objective: That your students understand the impact of life-changing experiences.

Materials:

- Pens or pencils
- “I’ll Never Be the Same Again” worksheet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Open class by having your students do the worksheet called “I’ll Never Be the Same Again,” about life-changing experiences. Parts of the worksheet are reprinted here. Read the story together and have them answer the questions.



■ From *MIDDLE SCHOOL CREATIVE TEACHING AIDS— I'll Never be the Same Again*

- ▶ Without knowing any other details, list how Tony’s life might change because of the fire. (*Tony might have suffered injuries from the fire. He might be an orphan if his parents died in the fire. He might get a medal for saving his baby brother’s life. He’ll probably have to move to a new home.*)

Tony had what is known as a life-changing experience, an event that changes you from the way you were before. Some people have life-changing experiences that make them happier and stronger. Others have experiences that make them more sad or scared than they were before.

Here is a list of some life-changing experiences that many people have had at one time or another. Some are happy; some are sad. As you read through them, check off the ones Tony may experience after the fire. Star the ones that you have experienced.

Allow students to discuss their answers. You might also survey the list before class or while the students are choosing their answers.

Now think of an event that has changed you and explain how you changed after it happened. Allow volunteers to talk about their life-changing experiences.

Many of you could describe an experience you have had with God. Maybe you’ve heard a lot about Jesus, but have never had an encounter with Him that changed your life. We’re going to look at an experience three of Jesus’ disciples had that changed their lives forever.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you have time, allow your students to talk about life-changing experiences they know others have experienced. The list of experiences in the worksheet may stimulate some interesting stories.

STEP 2

Bible Learning

15–20 minutes

Bible Basis:

Peter, James, and John see Christ transfigured (Matt. 17:1-12; 2 Pet. 1:16-18).



Objective: That your students explore the significance of the Transfiguration and its effect on the disciples.

Materials:

- Bible
- The Rock*
- Paper
- Pencils or pens

Pass out this week's issue of *The Rock* and turn to the Bible study.

■ From *THE ROCK*—The Mountain View

Peter knew Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. He'd said so already (see Matt. 16:16). But apparently he didn't really understand all he'd said. There's a big difference between saying and seeing. Jesus took His closest disciples up the mountain to let them see something that would change their lives forever.

Read about their mountain view in Matthew 17:1-12. Also read 2 Peter 1:16-18.

Read together Matthew 17:1-8; then pick two volunteers to be Old Testament explorers. The following question is for the Old Testament explorers:

- ▶ Who were Moses and Elijah?** *Compare these verses: Exodus 33:21-23; Deuteronomy 34:4-6, 10-12; Malachi 4:4-6; 1 Kings 19:8-13a; 2 Kings 2:11-12, 15-17.*

While your explorers are looking up these verses on Moses and Elijah, have the rest of the class do the first three questions in *The Rock*. Don't discuss their answers yet.

1. Read Matthew 17:1-8. Look at verses 3 and 4 again. Draw a picture of what Peter wanted to do.
2. Change your picture to show what God thought of Peter's plan.
3. Write in the clouds what the disciples heard and underline the words you think were emphasized.

When the explorers are ready, introduce them with the following information:

Peter may not have thought anything out of the ordinary would happen on the mountain. But no sooner did they get up the mountain than, suddenly, Jesus took on a supernatural appearance. Moses and Elijah were there too, talking to Christ.

Have the explorers present their findings, then follow up with these questions.

- ▶ Two weeks ago we learned that Moses experienced God's glory on a mountain. Did anything like that ever happen to Elijah? What?** *(Yes, Elijah had an experience on a mountain. God told Elijah to stand on Mount Horeb because He was about to pass by. Elijah stood there, and soon a great wind swept by, but God was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Next came a fire, but God was not in the fire. Finally, Elijah heard a still small voice. At last God spoke.)*
- ▶ What other similarities are there between Moses and Elijah?** *(Neither Moses nor Elijah has a known grave. God buried Moses, and nobody's ever been able to find his grave. Elijah didn't even die. He was taken up into heaven in a whirlwind with a chariot of fire. Moses and Elijah are mentioned in the very last verses of the Old Testament.)*

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Matthew 17:1-12

¹After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

²There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

⁵While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid."

⁸When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

¹⁰The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

¹¹Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. ¹²But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

2 Peter 1:16-18

¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

Have one of your explorers read Malachi 4:4-6.

The disciples knew that Moses symbolized the Law, and that Elijah symbolized the Prophets. These two men were important figures in Old Testament prophecy about the Messiah.

- ▶ **How do you think the disciples felt seeing Jesus shining like the sun, talking with Moses and Elijah? How would you have felt?** *(The disciples were probably afraid, excited, amazed, and proud that they were there.)*
- ▶ **What was Peter's plan? Why do you think he wanted to carry out this plan?** *Have students show their drawings for question one in The Rock now. (He wanted to build three tents: for Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. Maybe he thought he could get them to stay longer or honor them.)*
- ▶ **What do you think God was saying?** *Have students show and discuss their answers for questions two and three in The Rock. (Matt. 17:5b. God was showing the disciples that Jesus was not just a human being who happened to be chosen by God, but was God's only Son.)*
- ▶ **How did the disciples react when they heard the voice? Why?** *(They fell down on their faces in terror because they'd actually heard the voice of God.)*

Until this time the disciples had seen Jesus perform many miracles. They even believed He was the Messiah, but did they fully grasp that He was actually God come in the flesh?

Read today's memory verse, John 14:6, together.

- ▶ 4. Who is Jesus? *(Jesus is the unique Son of God. There is no way to get to God the Father except through Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life.)*
- ▶ 5. Read Matthew 17:9-12. Why do you think Jesus told His disciples not to tell anybody what they'd seen? *(It may not have been fully understood by the other disciples until after the Resurrection.)*

Years later, Peter looked back and wrote about his experience. Read 2 Peter 1:16-18.

- ▶ 6. Why do you think Jesus let His disciples see Him in His glory? *(Peter knew Jesus was the Messiah. Years later, he had a solid experience to look back on when he told people about Christ. The Transfiguration was yet another confirmation of Jesus' divine status.)*
- ▶ 7. What did Peter learn from this experience? *(He saw Jesus in all of His glory. Like Moses and Elijah before him, he had a real experience with God. He could never be the same again.)*

STEP 3

Bible Application
(5–10 minutes)

Objective: That your students map out their own spiritual journeys.

Materials:

- Bible
- Paper
- Pencils or pens

Earlier, we looked at some life-changing events. According to Peter, what he and the other two of Jesus’ disciples saw and heard on that mountain was a life-changing event.

You and I will probably not see Jesus transfigured before our eyes on a mountain-top, but we may have some other kinds of mountaintop experiences with God. What are some of those experiences for you?

Draw a map of your life in the form of a mountain range, showing the highs and lows—times when you’ve felt closest to God as well as farthest away.

Hand out sheets of paper and pens. Use lightly colored construction paper and colored pencils or markers if you have them. Have your students draw maps of their own lives, identifying the times when they’ve felt closest to God or farthest away.

This can be a good way to help young teens see whether or not they have ever really known God and where they are today in their walk with Him. It is also a good way to show them that the Christian life is not a onetime experience. All of us need to keep growing.

Before students begin to work on their maps, it may help them to see your own life map that you have prepared before class. You may want to point out how you realized that you were a sinner and separated from God. Talk about when you recognized that Christ died on the cross and rose again so that you could be forgiven of your sin and live forever with Him.

Be open about the spiritually dry periods, as well as the vibrant times, in your walk with God. In your story, include people who helped you, verses that were especially meaningful, and ways in which you’ve seen God work in your life.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- Lightly-colored construction paper, colored pencils or markers
- The Rock*

1. If you have time, you may want to have your students draw more elaborate road maps illustrating their spiritual journeys. These maps could include things such as the following:
 - spiritual detours
 - roadblocks
 - freeways and tollways
 - a variety of other imaginative metaphors that students create themselves.

2. Have students read the feature story in *The Rock*.



STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

Jesus' uniqueness is experienced by those who walk by faith with Him.

Objective: That your students have a chance to make or renew a commitment to Christ.

When your teens have drawn their life maps, ask them to think prayerfully about where they are now in their spiritual journey.

The Bible is full of stories, but they are not fiction. They are true. And the reality that the disciples experienced that day on the Mount of Transfiguration can be yours. Look back at the map of your life. Is Jesus real to you? Where are you now? Have you ever really crossed the line of putting your faith in Christ?

Be aware of those students who want to commit their lives to Christ or rededicate themselves to a closer walk with Him. Close class with a time of quiet prayer. You may want to take the step of asking for a show of hands, or some other indication, of those who want to trust Christ as Savior today.

Be prepared to stay after class and talk with any student who indicates a spiritual need. For help in leading a student to Christ, see the inside back cover of this teacher's commentary.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

If you have time, allow those who want to show their maps and talk briefly about some of their highs and lows. To save time—and build a greater sense of community in the group—have them share their maps with each other in pairs; then pray for one another.