

**LESSON 3: AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN**

This includes:

- 1. LEADER PREPARATION**
- 2. LESSON GUIDE**

**1. LEADER PREPARATION****LESSON OVERVIEW**

Our culture often pulls us away from our relationship with Jesus. But being connected to him doesn't mean we have to completely disconnect from the world. Jesus remained close to God the Father while engaging the world and culture he lived in. His connection to God meant he could connect with his culture without being influenced by it. In fact, he was the light of the world, offering it new life. Similarly, our connection to Jesus means we can be light and show love to people around us. Jesus gives us the strength and wisdom we need to influence culture without letting it negatively impact us.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- 1. WHAT:** Because Jesus wants to reveal his love to our world through us, he gives us wisdom and courage for the task.
- 2. WHY:** Teenagers experience transformation when their hearts break for people Jesus loves.
- 3. HOW:** When young people are willing to serve and love others as Jesus does, they become more aware of his presence in their lives and in the world.

**PRIMARY SCRIPTURE**

Matthew 17:1-14

**SECONDARY SCRIPTURE**

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

**TEACHING PREP**

**Use this short overview to prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your group, you'll want to absorb it as you prepare to lead.**



**LEADER  
TIP**

**Read Matthew 17:1-14.**

What mountaintop experiences with God do you remember? As a teenager, maybe your youth pastor took you on a backpacking trip into the mountains. You probably hiked for hours and then set up camp at the highest point. Perhaps you distinctly remember gathering under the stars, feeling God's presence more powerfully than ever before. When you went back down the mountain, not only did you probably feel "fueled" for everyday life, but you also wanted everyone around you to experience Jesus the way you had.

In Matthew 17, Jesus took a few disciples to a high mountain to get away from the crowds and reconnect with God. Atop that mountain, they actually encountered God. They saw Jesus' appearance change before their eyes. The bright display of power made the disciples afraid.

Verse 9, when they headed back down the mountain, is key to understanding this passage. Just as your youth pastor may have encouraged you to go back down the mountain, Jesus and his disciples returned to a crowd awaiting his presence (v. 14).

Similarly, Jesus doesn't take us up to the mountain to keep us there. When we take time to seek God and enter his presence, he'll transform us. But being transformed isn't about staying on the mountain alone with Jesus; it's about taking his presence back to the foot of the mountain.

Jesus wants young people to show his love to people they encounter daily. Like Jesus, we have the honor of taking teenagers to the mountaintop, where they can experience Jesus' transformational love. Once they've felt his presence and been refueled by his love, our job is to teach them to go back to the foot of the mountain—to our culture—where people desperately need to experience Jesus.

## **THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]**

### **TEXTS OR TWEETS**

**Send one or both of these messages to your students prior to your meeting. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.**

- Guess what Jesus' plan is for sharing his love with the entire world? Us. That's right—we're his plan! Let's talk about it this week.
- Ready to climb a mountain and then come back down? Join us as we discuss how to become more like Jesus.

### **PARENT EMAIL**

**Send this email to parents following the lesson to encourage them to continue the conversation at home. Feel free to edit and customize the email to fit your ministry needs.**

Dear parents,

To continue our series on culture, we explored Matthew 17:1-14 this week. After some of the disciples climbed a mountain with Jesus, they witnessed his appearance change. God's presence was so strong it was like Jesus' face was the sun. But Jesus didn't stay up on the mountaintop. He took the disciples back down, where people who needed healing and forgiveness waited to encounter Jesus. Similarly, he wants to take us to the foot of the mountain, where we can love and serve those who need him.

This week, I encourage you to spend a few minutes talking to your teenager about our lesson. Consider using the following questions in your conversation:

- What might it have been like to experience God's presence on that mountaintop?
- What are some ways you encounter God during your day-to-day life?

- Jesus took the disciples up a high mountain to be alone with God the Father. When's the last time you made this kind of effort to be alone with God?
- How did Jesus' time alone with God fuel him for ministry at the foot of the mountain, with people who needed him? What "fuels" you for living out your faith?

Thank you for all the ways you support our students. It makes a huge difference!

**LESSON 3: AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN****2. LESSON GUIDE****GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]****LEADER  
TIP**

Preview the following video for your group: [youtube.com/watch?v=2LNxDzhoey8&list=RD2LNxDzhoey8#t=99](https://youtube.com/watch?v=2LNxDzhoey8&list=RD2LNxDzhoey8#t=99) (or use another video about mountains and valleys). You'll need an Internet connection and a computer or tablet to display this video for participants.

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and then play the video clip. Then **ASK**:

- *What lyrics in this song made the biggest impact on you—or which lyrics could you relate to the most? Explain.*
- *If we stayed on the “mountain high” and never experienced Jesus in the “valley low,” what might our relationship with Jesus look like?*
- *What are some ways that Jesus’ love has reached down into your life?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *This song reveals a powerful, merciful truth about Jesus: He has always been willing to come down. He came down to earth to become a living sacrifice for our sins. And in Matthew 17, he came down from the mountaintop after being in God’s presence so he could minister to the crowds. He has also come down into our hearts and set us free. Like Jesus, we must be willing to go down into the valleys to reach people who need Jesus and his love.*

**TEACHING POINTS****LEADER  
TIP**

Use the Teaching Points to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. Remember: All throughout these lessons, it’s up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read Matthew 17:1-14 together as a group. Consider dividing verses among your students so several people have a chance to read.

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Let’s spend some time together exploring this Scripture passage where Jesus willingly came down a mountain to continue reaching people in need.*

## 1. BEING ALONE WITH GOD SOMETIMES REQUIRES A BIT OF CLIMBING

### ASK:

- *Why did Jesus need to get away from the crowds and into the presence of God the Father?*
- *Before Jesus and his disciples could experience God's presence, they first had to climb the mountain. What are some "mountains" you need to climb in order to have time alone with God?*
- *Learning to be alone with Jesus can sometimes feel like climbing a mountain. When can you get away from the busyness of life to set aside time alone with Jesus?*
- *Once you climb the mountain, what's one thing you hope to gain from your time with Jesus?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *When we get to the mountaintop, alone with Jesus, he desires to restore, renew, and transform us. But he doesn't pour out his extravagant love for our sake alone. Jesus longs to love through us, which means we can't stay in the mountains. We must go to the valleys and bring his presence there, too.*

## 2. WHAT HAPPENS ON THE MOUNTAINTOP DOESN'T STAY ON THE MOUNTAINTOP

### ASK:

- *Why is it important that Jesus took the disciples back down the mountain?*
- *What are some ways our mountaintop encounters with Jesus can impact the people we interact with in the valley on a daily basis?*
- *Verse 14 says a large crowd was waiting for Jesus at the foot of the mountain. Who might be waiting at the foot of your mountain? How can you minister to those people and help meet their needs?*

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Time and time again, Jesus' disciples saw him giving himself away to the crowd. His life's purpose wasn't to build his own fame but simply to give it away. And again and again, after being alone with God, Jesus returned to people who were hurting and needed him.*

## 3. LOVE CAME DOWN AND RESCUED US

**SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** *Here in Matthew 17, we see love coming down the mountain to rescue people in need of a Savior. Jesus wasn't hiding in God's presence to escape the evil of his society. After being renewed in God's presence, he went to reshape his culture by showing people love and offering them life.*

### ASK:

- *Why is it tempting to stay on the mountaintop with Jesus?*
- *What are some ways we can impact our culture by bringing Jesus' presence down to the valley in which we live?*
- *Jesus' love and presence aren't reserved for the "mountaintops" of our lives. They extend to our valleys as well. When have you felt Jesus' love and presence reach into a tough time or a struggle you experienced?*

## EXTRA DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

Ask students to form groups of two or three to discuss these questions.



ASK:

- Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. What spiritual disciplines or activities can help you become more and more like Jesus? How can you make time for them and embrace them as habits?
- Jesus chooses to love the world through us. What simple things can we do to ensure that his glory is reflected through us in every situation?

Bring everyone back together, and ask for volunteers to share answers to the previous questions, as time permits.

## LIVING IT OUT

ASK:

- Do you prefer to spend time with Jesus in a group setting or by yourself? Explain.
- Second Corinthians 3:17 says, “Wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” What kind of freedom in Christ do you need to experience today?
- How do you want to reflect Jesus’ image and love to your peers this week?
- What “fuels” you for living out your faith?

## SUMMARY



Provide a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) this lesson’s content, (2) the dialogue that took place today, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.

## FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the Scripture below.

*“The Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image” (2 Corinthians 3:18).*