

## Discussion Questions for **SEVEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE TRANSFIGURATION**

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### METAMORPHOSIS

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “metamorphosis”? Does it surprise you that this word is applied to Jesus?
2. One of the oldest philosophical questions in the world is the nature of change. Does change suggest to you continuity, development, or rupture? Does it depend on the kind of change?
3. Despite the strong language of change, what actually happens to Jesus is pretty modest. Why do you think that is?
4. What have you thought (if anything!) about the Transfiguration up till now? Why do we remember it every year?

### ESCHATON

1. The word “eschaton” refers to the end of all things, at least the way they are now, before God’s kingdom comes. Does this thought give you hope? does it scare you? have you never thought about it one way or another?
2. John the Baptist is a major player in the Gospel stories. How does he prepare the way for Jesus? How does Jesus surprise John?
3. Elijah is a lively character. Reread his stories in I Kings 17, 18, and 19. What qualities or activities of Elijah’s carry over into John’s ministry? into Jesus’ ministry?

### EXODUS

1. “Exodus” is the name of the second book of the Bible, and also of the event of delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. How can we understand salvation through Jesus as a kind of Exodus?
2. Moses is often called “the lawgiver,” but actually God gives the law—Moses just transmits it. What associations do you have with Moses? with the Law of God? Is it positive, negative, or something you mostly ignore?
3. God reveals to Moses his holy name: “I AM WHO I AM.” God also adds further clarifications in the form of “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy” and “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.” What does this self-naming tell us about God?
4. Paul tells us to “*be transfigured*” (not “transfigure yourself”). It’s a passive imperative, which means you can’t do it to yourself—someone else has to do it *to you*! Why do you suppose Paul phrases it this way?

## TABERNACLES

1. Christians usually know about the festival of Passover, but rarely about the festival of Tabernacles (also called Sukkot or Booths). Had you heard of it before? Does knowing about it help you understand Peter's proposal to build tabernacles for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah?
2. Reread John 7. How does knowing about the festival of Tabernacles help you understand this story better?
3. Reflect on the biblical six days of the working week, the seventh day as the day of rest, and the eighth day as a symbol of breaking out of historical time altogether. Do all of these days get their due in your life?
4. Do you think God dwells on earth?

## EYEWITNESSES

1. Peter often comes in for harsh criticism for all his mistakes. How are his mistakes instructive? What can you learn from them? Think especially of his advising Jesus not to talk about being crucified, and his offer to build tabernacles.
2. Biblical brothers are a powerful recurring motif. What do you think about James and John? What can you learn from them?
3. When is fear a good and appropriate response to God? When is it not?

## CLOUD

1. God reveals his name, his power, his glory, his Presence in the cloud, and his command to either sacrifice or redeem all firstborn males in tight connection with each other across Exodus. What does this tell you about God?
2. How does the story of Exodus, and God revealed there, prepare us to understand Jesus?
3. Read the story of Jesus' Baptism in Mark 1 and then the story of Jesus' Transfiguration in Mark 9. What's similar? What's different?
4. Now read John 12:20–36. What common elements do you see between this passage and Mark's account of Jesus' Baptism and Transfiguration?
5. Why is it so important that God names Jesus as his "Son" and Jesus in turn names God as his "Father"? How does this develop and deepen our understanding of God?

## PAROUSIA

1. "Parousia" is the Greek word that in English more often is expressed as Jesus' "Second Coming." What associations do you have with that? Are they negative or positive?
2. There have been countless predictions of the end of the world and Jesus' second coming that have been false. How can we think and talk about Jesus' second coming faithfully without falling into the trap of fearmongering and false prophecy?

3. If we add the festival of Pentecost to the festivals of Passover and Tabernacles, we have a new lens for understanding Jesus' Resurrection: as the firstfruits of resurrection from the dead—the beginning of the story, not the end. How does this help us understand the long time that has already passed since Jesus' Resurrection—and probably the long time yet until he comes again?
4. Read Acts 2, the story of the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. How does this help us understand both Jesus' Resurrection and the missionary calling of the church?
5. What does Jesus' Transfiguration tell us that his Resurrection does not?