

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 6

The Christ of God

Luke 9

The confession, the Transfiguration, the sealed guesses opened, and a face set toward Jerusalem

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants answer the storm question through Peter's mouth, discover the Eucharistic grammar of the feeding, and then open their sealed guesses from Session 1 as the cloud overshadows the mountain: the same verb spoken over Mary, *episkiazō*, tracing back to the glory cloud of Exodus 40. The session ends at the Gospel's hinge, 9:51, as Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem.

Catholic Touchstone: The Transfiguration as the Trinity's confirmation of the way of the cross (CCC 554–556); Mary as Ark and tabernacle of the New Covenant, now confirmed from the mountain; and Luke's daily in take up his cross daily as the shape of discipleship.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Luke 9 is the Gospel's hinge, and tonight is the study's summit so far. Plan the sealed-guess ceremony deliberately: it belongs at Question 5, after the group has read the Transfiguration and found the overshadowing cloud, and before you consolidate. Have them take out Take-Home 1, open the My Guess box, and read their guesses aloud, and only then walk the chain together: Exodus 40, Luke 1:35, Luke 9:34. Whoever came closest in Session 1 gets the floor first; if anyone guessed the cloud or the tabernacle, let them say it again in triumph, as promised.

The chapter opens with the sending of the Twelve and Herod's haunted question, who is this about whom I hear such things, which stacks a third asking onto Nain's crowd and the storm's disciples. Then the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle of Jesus' ministry, apart from the Resurrection itself, recorded in all four Gospels. Watch Luke's verbs: taking the five loaves, he blessed and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. Take, bless, break, give: Luke deliberately echoes this sequence twice more, in the upper room (22:19, where "gave thanks" stands in place of "blessed") and exactly at Emmaus (24:30), and he knows it. The feeding is deliberately liturgical, the Messiah hosting Israel in the wilderness like the manna, mediated through the hands of the Twelve, with twelve baskets left over. Do not preach Session 13 tonight; just make the group memorize the verbs.

Peter's confession (9:18–22) happens, Luke alone notes, while Jesus was praying alone. The storm question finally gets its answer: the Christ of God. And the answer detonates a paradox: Jesus charges them to tell no one and immediately defines the Christ by suffering: the Son of man must suffer many things, be rejected, be killed, and on the third day be raised. The *must*, *dei*, is divine necessity, the same word the twelve-year-old used about his Father's house. Then the cost is generalized with Luke's signature adverb: if any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily. Not once, heroically; daily, hiddenly. This is tonight's memory verse and the study's working definition of discipleship.

The Transfiguration (9:28–36) is the Father's answer to the question Peter just answered. Luke's account has three details the others lack: Jesus goes up the mountain to pray; Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets in person, speak of his departure, exodus, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem; and the disciples are heavy with sleep, a preview of Gethsemane. The cloud that overshadows them is

the payoff of our longest thread. Episkiazō: the power of the Most High will overshadow you (1:35); the cloud overshadowed them (9:34); and behind both, the cloud covering the tent of meeting when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Ex 40:34–35, where the Septuagint uses the same verb family). The logic runs both directions: the mountain shows what the cloud means, God's own glory-presence descending, and therefore shows what happened to Mary, the tabernacle the glory filled, the Ark our Session 2 discovery unveiled. The Father's voice completes the storm question's answer: this is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him, with Deuteronomy 18:15's promised prophet folded in. When the voice has spoken, Jesus is found alone: the Law and the Prophets have testified and withdrawn; listen to him.

Then the descent: a demon the disciples could not cast out, a second passion prediction landing on uncomprehending ears, an argument about which of them is greatest answered with a child, and John forbidding an outside exorcist, rebuked. And at 9:51 the Gospel turns on its hinge: when the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. The phrase evokes Isaiah's suffering servant, I have set my face like a flint (Isa 50:7), and it opens Luke's great central journey, ten chapters of teaching on the road, which the study now walks until Session 12. Every session from here on happens with Jerusalem in view. The chapter closes with three would-be followers and the hard sayings about the plow; the journey admits no lookers-back.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Ex 16 with Ps 78:19 Manna: can God spread a table in the wilderness? — **Lk 9:12–17**

Ex 40:34–35 The cloud overshadows the tabernacle; the glory fills it (SEALED GUESS RESOLUTION) — **Lk 9:34 with 1:35**

Ex 24:15–18; 34:29 Moses on the mountain, the cloud, the shining face — **Lk 9:28–36**

Deut 18:15 A prophet like Moses: him you shall heed — **Lk 9:35**

1 Kgs 19:8–18 Elijah at the mountain of God — **Lk 9:30**

Isa 50:7 I have set my face like a flint — **Lk 9:51**

1 Kgs 19:19–21 Elisha's call: permitted to kiss his parents farewell before following, a contrast Jesus sharpens — **Lk 9:61–62**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Leo the Great (*Sermon 51, on the Transfiguration*)

Leo preaches that the Transfiguration's great purpose was to remove the scandal of the cross from the disciples' hearts: the brightness shown on the mountain was given so that when the Lord hung disfigured on Calvary, they might remember what his humiliation concealed. The glory was not new that day, Leo insists; only the unveiling was. And in the Father's command, listen to him, the whole obedience of the Church is contained.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, Book VII*)

Ambrose lingers on the cloud: not a cloud of storm and darkness like Sinai's, but a luminous overshadowing of the Spirit, the same presence that came upon Mary at the Annunciation, revealing not fear but mystery. Moses and Elijah appear and pass, for Law and Prophecy were heralds; when the voice has spoken, Jesus is found alone, because the fulfillment does not stand in a row with its witnesses.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 45)

Aquinas teaches that it was fitting for Christ to be transfigured before his Passion so that the disciples, and we with them, might endure the cross by glimpsing the end of the road: no one bears a hard journey well without some foretaste of its destination. The clarity shown on the mountain, he argues, is the very glory promised to the bodies of the blessed, so the Transfiguration is not only Christ unveiled but our own future shown ahead of schedule.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 554–556 The Transfiguration: a foretaste of the Kingdom, the Trinity manifested, the cross confirmed as the way to glory.

CCC 697 The cloud as symbol of the Holy Spirit: from the tent of meeting to Mary to the mountain to the Ascension.

CCC 1335 The feeding miracles as prefigurations of the Eucharist's superabundance.

CCC 2600 Luke's Jesus at prayer before every decisive moment: baptism, confession, Transfiguration.

THREAD WATCH

Overshadow (RESOLVES TONIGHT): The ceremony at Question 5. Chain: Ex 40:34–35, Lk 1:35, Lk 9:34, one verb, *episkiazō*. Payoff sentence for the group: what the tabernacle foreshadowed, Mary is, and the mountain proves it. Honor whoever guessed closest in Session 1.

Who then is this? (RESOLVES TONIGHT): Peter answers at 9:20; the Father answers at 9:35. Close the loop from the storm out loud.

Take-bless-break-give (plants tonight, resolves Sessions 13–14): Make the group memorize the four verbs of 9:16. Say only: Luke will use them again. Twice.

The journey (plants tonight): 9:51 opens the travel narrative. From tonight until Session 12, everything happens on the road to Jerusalem; keep saying so.

Exodos (plants tonight, resolves Session 14): Moses and Elijah discuss his exodus at 9:31. Name the word, let it hum, and promise nothing.

SESSION GOALS

1. Close the who-is-this arc: Herod's question, Peter's confession, the Father's voice, in that order.

2. Fix the four verbs of the feeding (took, blessed, broke, gave) in the group's memory without preaching ahead.
3. Run the sealed-guess ceremony with full honors: guesses read aloud, then the episkiazō chain assembled together.
4. Let Luke's crosses be daily: the memory verse as the working definition of discipleship.
5. Turn the corner at 9:51 and orient the group for the journey narrative.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

Protect twenty-five minutes for Questions 4 and 5 together, the Transfiguration and the ceremony. If the clock presses, compress Question 1 (the sending and Herod) into leader framing and treat the descent material (9:37–50) inside Question 6's setup. Nothing else tonight is optional; this is the session the study has been building toward, and a rushed ceremony wastes five weeks of discipline. This session splits naturally after Question 3 if you ever need two nights.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, on the mountain you unveiled your Son and commanded us to listen to him. Unveil him again tonight: in the breaking open of your word, in answers we have waited weeks to hear, and in whatever cross you are asking each of us to carry today. Let your glory overshadow this room as it overshadowed the tent of meeting, and give us ears for your voice. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is the longest you have ever waited for an answer to something, and was the answer worth the wait?

W2. If you had to answer in one sentence, tonight, before we read anything: who do you say Jesus is? Keep your sentence; we will come back to it.

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Tonight has a ceremony in the middle: the sealed guesses from Session 1 open at Question 5, after the group reads the Transfiguration, and not one minute before. Keep Take-Home 1 sheets face down until then. Everything before it should feel like a climb.

1. Read Luke 9:1–9. The Twelve are sent with power and authority, and word reaches Herod, who asks the question this Gospel keeps collecting: who is this about whom I hear such things? Count with the group: who else has asked some form of this question so far?

Leader: *Quick stocktake: Nain's crowd (a great prophet?), the storm boat (who then is this?), Simon the Pharisee (who is this who forgives sins?), now Herod. The pressure is building on purpose.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke has been stockpiling the question: the crowd at Nain reached for a great prophet, the Pharisee's table asked who is this who even forgives sins, the boat asked who then is this that wind and water obey him, and now a tetrarch with John's blood on his hands asks it nervously from a palace. Luke is a careful builder: he has made the question unavoidable precisely so that tonight it can be answered twice, once from a disciple's mouth and once from a cloud.

2. Read Luke 9:10–17. Watch Jesus' hands in verse 16: list the four verbs in order. Where is the crowd, what do the leftovers number, and through whose hands does the bread actually reach the people?

Leader: *Took, blessed, broke, gave. Wilderness setting, twelve baskets, the disciples distribute. Fix the verbs; promise only that Luke will use them again.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Took, blessed, broke, gave: memorize that sequence, because Luke echoes it at the two most important tables of this Gospel, and he is planting it here on purpose. The scene is manna revisited: a crowd in a lonely place, fed to satisfaction by God's Messiah, with twelve baskets over, one per tribe, one per apostle, and the bread reaches every hand through the Twelve. The Fathers and the Catechism alike read the feeding as a prefiguration of the Eucharist's superabundance (CCC 1335). Tonight, just bank the verbs. They mature in Session 13.

3. Read Luke 9:18–27. Luke alone tells us Jesus was praying alone before he asked. Peter finally answers the storm question: the Christ of God. Why does Jesus immediately forbid them to tell anyone, and immediately redefine the title by suffering? And what does Luke's word *daily* (9:23) do to your picture of carrying a cross?

Leader: Two moves: the messianic secret guarded because Messiah suggested conquest to many in the crowd, and the daily that domesticates martyrdom into Monday.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Peter's confession is correct and combustible: to many in Israel, Christ suggested a political conqueror, and proclaiming the title would have risked raising an army Jesus did not come to lead. So the title is silenced until it can be redefined, and the redefinition follows instantly: the Son of man *must* suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised, the divine *dei* of the Father's plan. Then the cost goes universal, and Luke alone adds the adverb that changes everything: take up his cross *daily*. Not one grand martyrdom but ten thousand hidden ones: the tongue held, the comfort surrendered, the person forgiven again. Luke's discipleship is heroism on a schedule, and it is tonight's memory verse.

4. Read Luke 9:28–36 slowly. Note what Jesus goes up the mountain to do, who appears, and what topic Luke says they discussed (v. 31). Then find the strange word in verse 34: what does the cloud do to them?

Leader: Draw out: prayer, Moses and Elijah (Law and Prophets), his departure, in Greek *exodos*, at Jerusalem, and the cloud that **OVERSHADOWED** them. When the word lands, pause the room and move straight to Question 5.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Luke's Transfiguration is framed in prayer, and its conversation topic is unique to him: Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets in person, speak of the *exodos* he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, a new and greater Exodus, accomplished not from Egypt but at the cross, through the sea of death to resurrection. File that word; it returns at the end of our study. The Father's voice completes tonight's arc, this is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him, folding in Deuteronomy's promised prophet, and when the voice ends, Jesus is found alone: the witnesses withdraw, the Fulfillment remains. But before any of that, verse 34: the cloud came and **overshadowed** them. Hold everything. Take out your Take-Home 1.

5. THE OPENING OF THE GUESSES: Open the My Guess box you sealed five weeks ago. Read your guess aloud to the group, exactly as written, no edits. Then, together, hunt down the chain: the angel's words in Luke 1:35, tonight's cloud in Luke 9:34, and Exodus 40:34–35. One verb links all three. What does the mountain reveal about what happened to Mary?

Leader: Ceremony order: every guess read aloud first, applause for the closest, then the chain assembled on a whiteboard: Ex 40:34–35 (the cloud covers the tent, the glory fills the tabernacle), Lk 1:35 (the power of the Most High will overshadow you), Lk 9:34 (the cloud overshadowed them). Same verb, *episkiazō*. If someone guessed it in Session 1, this is their promised moment: let them say it again.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The chain, assembled: in Exodus 40, Israel finishes the tabernacle and the cloud covers the tent of meeting while the glory of the Lord fills it, the verb of the Greek Old Testament being the same *episkiazō* family. In Luke 1:35, Gabriel promises Mary that the power of the Most High will overshadow her. Tonight on the mountain, the cloud of divine glory overshadows again, and now everyone can see what the word means: God's own presence descending to fill a dwelling. So the mountain interprets the Annunciation backward: what the cloud did to the tabernacle, the Most High did to Mary. She is the tent of meeting of the New Covenant, the Ark our Session 2 hill-country discovery unveiled, the dwelling the glory filled, which is why Elizabeth's cry copied David's before the Ark, and why the Church has never been able to speak of Mary without speaking of the One she carried. Five weeks was the right length to wait: some answers need to be earned.

DIG DEEPER: HEAVY WITH SLEEP

Luke alone notes that Peter, John, and James were heavy with sleep on the mountain (9:32), and drowsiness returns on the Mount of Olives, where Jesus finds the disciples sleeping for sorrow (22:45). Luke does not name the three there, but the echo is hard to miss: glory and agony both find the flesh weak. Luke is gently warning every disciple: the mountaintop does not exempt you from the olive grove, and grace will have to carry what enthusiasm cannot.

6. Read Luke 9:46–48, 9:51, and 9:57–62. Fresh from the mountain, the disciples argue about who is greatest, and Jesus answers with a child. Then verse 51: he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Check Isaiah 50:7 and identify whose voice that phrase echoes. What do the three would-be followers at the chapter's end learn about the road that starts here?

Leader: The hinge. Isaiah's servant sets his face like flint toward suffering. From here to Session 12, everything happens on this road.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The greatness argument gets a child for an answer, he who is least among you all is the one who is great, the Magnificat's reversal now aimed at the Church itself. Then Luke turns the entire Gospel on one sentence: when the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. The phrase echoes the suffering servant's resolve, I have set my face like a flint (Isa 50:7): the one the cloud just glorified chooses the road to the cross with Isaiah's own resolve. Ten chapters of journey begin here, and the three would-be followers are its gate inscription: no den, no

delay, no looking back, for the servant's plow cuts one direction. Everything we read from now until Session 12 happens with Jerusalem in view. So does everything a disciple does daily.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Your sealed guess waited five weeks for its answer. What prayer of yours is still sealed, still waiting? What would it mean to trust God's timing with it the way you trusted the study's?

S2. Take out the one-sentence answer you gave in the Win question tonight: who do you say Jesus is? After the confession, the cloud, and the voice, would you change a word? Say your revised sentence to the group.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Each morning this week, before your feet hit the floor, name the day's cross and say the memory verse. Daily means daily.
- Read Exodus 40:34–38 once more on your own, then pray one Hail Mary slowly with the tabernacle in mind.
- Before next session, read Luke 10:1–11:54: seventy sent out, a Samaritan on the Jericho road, two sisters, and the Our Father.

Scripture memory: **Luke 9:23**, *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Father, you answered our sealed question with a cloud of glory, and our deepest question with your own voice: this is my Son; listen to him. Give us the grace to listen when he speaks of crosses, to carry ours daily without drama, and to walk the road he set his face toward, all the way to where it goes. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 6

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Exodus 40:34–35 stays hidden until the ceremony.

Passage Used for

Luke 9:1–9 Q1: the sending; Herod's question

Luke 9:10–17 Q2: the feeding; the four verbs at 9:16

Luke 9:18–27 Q3: the confession; take up his cross daily

Luke 9:28–36 Q4: the Transfiguration; exodus at 9:31; overshadow at 9:34

Luke 1:35 Q5 ceremony: the Annunciation link

Exodus 40:34–35 Q5 ceremony: the glory cloud and the tabernacle

Deuteronomy 18:15 Q4: listen to him

Isaiah 50:7 Q6: set his face like a flint

Luke 9:46–48, 51, 57–62 Q6: the child, the hinge, the plow

1 Kings 19:19–21 Q6 background: Elisha's call, the contrast

CCC 554–556, 697, 1335, 2600 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 10–11, on the road: the seventy, the Good Samaritan, Martha and Mary, and the Lord's own prayer. A challenge to Marian devotion also appears at 11:27–28; read the steelman in advance, because it resolves with the very threads we closed tonight.