Mark 9:1–13 Leader's Guide

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Overview for the leader

Big idea: On the mountain, Jesus is revealed in glory as greater than the Law and the Prophets, and the Father says, "Listen to him!" Mountaintop moments don't last, but they prepare us for life in the valley, where only Jesus remains.

Session flow

1. Welcome and opening prayer
2. Theme and reading (Mark 9:1–13)
3. Part A — The bridge from Mark 8 (v. 1)
4. Part B — The Transfiguration (vv. 2–8)
5. Part C — Coming down the mountain (vv. 9–13)
6. Things to remember and closing prayer

Before you lead

- Read the parallels in Matthew 17:1–13 and Luke 9:27–36.
- Skim Exodus 33:18–23, Exodus 34:29–35, 1 Kings 19:8–13, Deuteronomy 34:5–6, and Malachi 4:5–6.
- Part B is the longest. If time is short, skip the optional notes marked in it.
- Some points, especially about Elijah's future return, reflect the original leader's interpretation. Present them as one view and welcome discussion.

Opening

Welcome the group and open in prayer.

Theme: Today we go up the mountain with Jesus — and see why we can't stay there.

Read aloud: Mark 9:1–13.

Part A — The bridge from Mark 8 (v. 1)

- Verse 1 continues the conversation from the end of chapter 8, with the disciples and the crowd around Caesarea Philippi.
- Jesus had just spoken in no uncertain terms about His rejection, death, and resurrection, and about taking up the cross.
- Then He says that some standing there would not taste death before seeing the kingdom of God come with power.

Ask: *What do you think Jesus meant?*

- Some read this as a prophecy of the Second Coming within the first century.
- Read in context, though, it most naturally points to the Transfiguration that follows — which may be why the verse opens chapter 9.

Part B — The Transfiguration (vv. 2–8)

v. 2 — Up the mountain

After six days, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, and He is transfigured before them.

- "Transfigured" translates the Greek *metamorphoō* — our word *metamorphosis*.
- Ask: *What does "transfiguration" mean to you?*
- Only Matthew, Mark, and Luke record it. Ask: *Why doesn't John?* One common explanation: John's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' eternal glory throughout rather than this single event, and may allude to it in John 1:14 ("We have seen his glory").
- Ask: *Who saw the kingdom come with power before dying?* Peter, James, and John.

When did it happen? Matthew and Mark say six days later; Luke 9:28 says *about* eight days.

- Luke uses the Greek *hōsei*, "about" or "approximately," and uses it more than any other New Testament writer.
- He may be counting inclusively — the day Jesus spoke through the day it happened — while the others counted the days in between.
- Mark rarely gives time markers; he usually just says "then."

Where? If they were still near Caesarea Philippi, the high mountain was likely Mount Hermon — the mountain from last session. *Picture it: Jesus in glory at the top, the "gates of Hades" at the bottom.*

Before v. 3, ask: *Have you ever wondered why Jesus dressed so plainly — no bling?* Hold that question.

v. 3 — Dazzling white

His clothes become dazzling white, whiter than anyone on earth could bleach them.

- The Greek suggests radiant light — not reflecting light but giving it off. The laundry comparison simply means no natural process could produce this white.
- Ask: *What is this transformation showing?* His deity, through His glory.

Through a Jewish lens — the Day of Atonement:

- Atonement means payment for sin.
- The high priest normally wore elaborate garments whose colors and detail reflected the inside of the temple and pointed to the majesty of heaven.
- On the Day of Atonement, he set those aside for plain white linen — no bling — to offer the sacrifice that removed the people's sin (Leviticus 16).
- In the same way, Jesus laid aside His glory to come to us and be the sacrifice for our sins. On the mountain, the disciples glimpse the glory He set aside.

The disciples' questions are being answered. Until now they had asked:

- Who is this, that calms the storm?
- Who is this, that forgives sin?
- Who is this, that heals the sick and casts out demons?

On the mountain they — and we — get a glimpse of who Jesus really is.

v. 4 — Moses and Elijah appear

- Ask: *Who shows up?* This is huge. Peter especially must think, "This is it!"
- They are recognizable — a hint that we will recognize people in eternity too.
- Ask: *What did they talk about?* Only Luke tells us: Jesus' coming departure He would fulfill in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31).
- Ask: *Did Moses and Elijah already know what would happen, or was Jesus telling them?*

- It's easy to read this as Moses and Elijah encouraging Jesus. But the main message may be something else — hold that thought.

Ask: *Why Moses and Elijah?*

- **Moses represents the Law.** It was given through him, and he lived it his whole life.
- **Elijah represents the Prophets**, including the last of them, John the Baptist, who came in the spirit of Elijah (Luke 1:17) and even dressed like him (2 Kings 1:8; Mark 1:6).
- Together with Jesus, we see the fulfillment of the Law and the confirmation of every prophet who foretold Him.

Ask: *What do Moses and Elijah have in common?*

	Moses	Elijah
On a mountain with God	Asked to see God's glory but saw only His back; no one may see His face and live (Exodus 33:18–23)	On Mount Horeb, the same mountain: wind, earthquake, and fire, then God's gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:8–13)
Fulfilled at the Transfiguration	Finally sees the glory of God in the face of Jesus, which shone like the sun (Matthew 17:2)	Finally sees God's glory face to face in Jesus
Unusual departure	Died, and God Himself buried him; no one knows where (Deuteronomy 34:5–6). The archangel Michael disputed with the devil over his body (Jude 9)	Never died; taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11)

- Moses' request was answered not through the Law or in his lifetime, but in Christ, on a mountain.

The main message: Moses and Elijah aren't the focus. Jesus is greater than both. **He literally outshines them.**

Optional note: Moses' face also shone after he spoke with God (Exodus 34:29–35). But his was a reflected glory that faded, so he covered it with a veil (2 Corinthians 3:13). Jesus' glory isn't reflected — He is its source, just as the Father was for Moses.

vv. 5–6 — Peter's three shelters

- Peter offers to build three shelters. Luke adds that he said it as Moses and Elijah were leaving (Luke 9:33).
- Ask: *Why this response?* The Jews expected only one coming of the Messiah. Peter likely thought this was the moment and struggled to grasp what was coming.
- Peter was genuine. He wanted to preserve the moment.

v. 7 — "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

- God never said this of Moses or Elijah — only of His Son.
- So much happened here, but the main message is: **Listen to him.** As if God says, "Have I got your attention now?"
- It's a message for the disciples, and for you and me.

v. 8 — Only Jesus

- Suddenly they see no one but Jesus.
- Ask: *What does that represent?* Jesus is enough. So far it's the biggest message of Mark: Jesus is all we need, and God has orchestrated it for us.

Part C — Coming down the mountain (vv. 9–13)

v. 9 — Jesus tells them not to tell anyone — but this time with a timeframe: until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.

v. 10 — Once again the disciples discuss it among themselves. What does "rising from the dead" mean — literal or figurative?

v. 11 — "Why do the teachers of the law say Elijah must come first?" They're trying to fit what they saw into Jewish expectations.

v. 12 — Jesus says Elijah does come first and restores all things — yet Scripture also says the Son of Man must suffer and be rejected.

- Jesus is teaching them about two comings.
- Read Malachi 4:5–6. It was written to the Jews, who expected only one coming of the Messiah.
- Ask: *Does this prophecy sound like the first coming or the second?*

v. 13 — "Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished."

- Ask: *Wait — has Elijah already come and restored all things?*
- Jesus means Elijah came *in spirit* through John the Baptist. John wasn't seen on the mountain, but he was represented, just as he had lived in the spirit of Elijah.

How to summarize (the original leader's view):

- Just as Jesus has two comings, Elijah has two: first in spirit through John, and again ahead of Jesus' return.
- John came in Elijah's spirit, was rejected, suffered, and died — a forerunner of what Jesus would experience.
- When Elijah returns, it will be for a great revival among the Jews (Revelation 11 is often linked to this) — an opportunity for Israel to accept Jesus and be reconciled to the Father once and for all.

Mountain to valley

Set the deep meaning aside, and here's the experience for you and me. On the mountaintop, the disciples tried to preserve the moment — and it ended. After the visitors left, God spoke and told them to listen to Jesus, because more was coming. But they had to come down the mountain and return to the valley — back to life, where there are:

- unanswered prayers
- helpless parents
- tormented children
- frustrated followers of Jesus
- spirits and demons

That's exactly what they'll find at the bottom — and where we pick up next time (vv. 14–29).

Closing — Things to remember

- **Jesus outshines them all.** Moses and Elijah, the Law and the Prophets, point to Him — He is the source of the glory.
- **Jesus laid aside His glory for us.** Like the high priest in plain white on the Day of Atonement, He came humbly to pay for our sin.
- **Listen to Him.** The Father's one command on the mountain is still His word to us.
- **Only Jesus.** When everything else fades, He remains — and He is enough.

- **Mountaintops don't last.** We can't preserve the moment, but we carry what we heard down into the valley, where real life happens.

Close in prayer, asking God to help each man listen to Jesus this week, especially in the valleys. **Next time:** Mark 9:14–29.