

Bible and Bacon

One Story, Four Voices: Jesus in Every Gospel

In this study, we're going to take a closer look at the life of Jesus through stories that all four Gospel writers—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—chose to include. Each of these authors had a unique perspective and audience in mind, so their accounts bring out different details and themes, but together they give us a fuller picture of who Jesus is and why His life is so important. Whether it's showing Jesus as the promised Messiah, a humble servant, a compassionate Savior, or the Son of God, these stories help us see the depth of His love and mission. Along the way, we'll reflect on the challenges ("trouble") and hope ("grace") in these passages and discover how they speak into our lives today.

The Four Gospel Writers

Matthew

- **Who He Is:** Matthew (also called Levi) was a Jewish tax collector who became one of Jesus' disciples.
 - **Why He Wrote:** Matthew's Gospel is written primarily for a Jewish audience. His goal was to prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies.
 - **Purpose:** Matthew highlights Jesus as the King of the Jews and the fulfillment of God's covenant with Israel. He connects Jesus' teachings and actions to Jewish scripture, showing that Jesus is the continuation and completion of God's plan for His people.
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Mark

- **Who He Is:** Mark (John Mark) was a companion of Peter and Paul. Though not one of the twelve disciples, his Gospel is thought to be based on Peter's firsthand accounts.
 - **Why He Wrote:** Mark's Gospel was written for Roman Christians, many of whom were experiencing persecution. It is the shortest and most action-packed Gospel, focusing on what Jesus did rather than long teachings.
 - **Purpose:** Mark presents Jesus as the Suffering Servant and Son of God, emphasizing His actions, miracles, and sacrifice. He writes with urgency, encouraging readers to persevere in faith and follow Jesus' example of servanthood.
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Luke

- **Who He Is:** Luke was a physician and a companion of Paul. He was likely a Gentile and is the only Gospel writer who wasn't Jewish. Luke also wrote the Book of Acts, making him a significant historian of the early church.
 - **Why He Wrote:** Luke's Gospel was addressed to "Theophilus" (likely a patron or a broader audience of Gentile believers) to provide an orderly and detailed account of Jesus' life and ministry.
 - **Purpose:** Luke portrays Jesus as the Savior for all people, emphasizing His compassion for the marginalized, such as the poor, women, and sinners. He highlights God's plan of salvation as inclusive and universal.
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John

- **Who He Is:** John, the "beloved disciple," was one of Jesus' closest companions and part of His inner circle. He lived to an old age and wrote his Gospel after the others, offering a unique theological perspective.
 - **Why He Wrote:** John wrote to a broad audience, likely including both Jews and Gentiles, to emphasize belief in Jesus as the Son of God. His Gospel is deeply reflective and focuses on Jesus' divine nature.
 - **Purpose:** John's Gospel highlights Jesus as the Word made flesh, the light of the world, and the source of eternal life. He writes to inspire faith and belief, so readers may "have life in His name" (John 20:31).
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Session 1: The Baptism of Jesus

Agenda:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**
 - Reflect on God's presence and ask for insight.
2. **Scripture Reading (10 minutes)**
 - Read Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34.
3. **Discussion (5 minutes each):**
 - **Trouble in the Text:** Why does Jesus, the sinless Son of God, submit to baptism?
 - **Trouble in Today's World:** Challenges of humility and identity.
 - **Grace in the Text:** God's affirmation of Jesus as His beloved Son.
 - **Grace Today:** Recognizing our identity as beloved children of God.
4. **Comparing the Gospels (10 minutes):**
 - Explore differences and common themes in the Gospel accounts.
 - **Character Question:** How do Jesus, John the Baptist, and God respond in each account?
5. **Closing and Prayer Requests (5 minutes):**

Key Points:

- **Unifying Message:** All Gospels affirm Jesus' identity as God's beloved Son and His mission.
 - **Relevance to the Audience:**
 - **Matthew:** Highlights Jesus' fulfillment of Jewish prophecy.
 - **Mark:** Encourages Roman Christians to see Jesus as a servant leader.
 - **Luke:** Assures Gentiles of Jesus' inclusive mission.
 - **John:** Introduces Jesus as the Lamb of God, pointing to His redemptive purpose.
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Session 2: The Feeding of the 5,000

Agenda:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**
2. **Scripture Reading (10 minutes):**
 - Read Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:30-44, Luke 9:10-17, and John 6:1-14.
3. **Discussion (5 minutes each):**
 - **Trouble in the Text:** Limited resources and doubt.
 - **Trouble in Today's World:** Feelings of inadequacy.
 - **Grace in the Text:** Jesus' abundant provision.
 - **Grace Today:** Trusting in God's abundance.
4. **Comparing the Gospels (10 minutes):**
 - **Character Question:** How do the disciples, the crowd, and Jesus act in faith or doubt?
5. **Closing and Prayer Requests (5 minutes):**

Key Points:

- **Unifying Message:** Jesus' provision demonstrates God's care for physical and spiritual needs.
 - **Relevance to the Audience:**
 - **Matthew:** Emphasizes Jesus' fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.
 - **Mark:** Reassures Roman Christians of Jesus' reliability in hardship.
 - **Luke:** Highlights Jesus' compassion for the marginalized.
 - **John:** Focuses on Jesus as the Bread of Life, offering eternal sustenance.
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Session 3: The Triumphal Entry

Agenda:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**
2. **Scripture Reading (10 minutes):**
 - Read Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19.
3. **Discussion (5 minutes each):**
 - **Trouble in the Text:** Misconceptions about Jesus' role as Messiah.
 - **Trouble in Today's World:** Misunderstandings of Jesus' mission today.
 - **Grace in the Text:** Jesus as a peaceful King.
 - **Grace Today:** Finding true peace through Jesus' reign.
4. **Comparing the Gospels (10 minutes):**
 - **Character Question:** How do the crowds, the disciples, and Jesus react?
5. **Closing and Prayer Requests (5 minutes):**

Key Points:

- **Unifying Message:** Jesus' humble entry fulfills prophecy, contrasting worldly power with spiritual peace.
 - **Relevance to the Audience:**
 - **Matthew:** Reassures Jewish readers of Jesus as the promised Messiah.
 - **Mark:** Encourages Roman Christians to remain faithful amidst tension.
 - **Luke:** Highlights peace and reconciliation for Gentile believers.
 - **John:** Presents Jesus as a divine King with a spiritual reign.
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Session 4: The Crucifixion of Jesus

Agenda:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**
2. **Scripture Reading (10 minutes):**
 - Read Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49, and John 19:16-37.
3. **Discussion (5 minutes each):**
 - **Trouble in the Text:** Suffering, rejection, and injustice.
 - **Trouble in Today's World:** Relating to experiences of suffering and injustice.
 - **Grace in the Text:** God's sacrificial love and forgiveness.
 - **Grace Today:** Seeing God's love and mercy in difficult circumstances.
4. **Comparing the Gospels (10 minutes):**
 - **Character Question:** How do different groups (soldiers, leaders, disciples, and Jesus) act?
5. **Closing and Prayer Requests (5 minutes):**

Key Points:

- **Unifying Message:** Jesus' death reveals God's love, forgiveness, and salvation for all.
 - **Relevance to the Audience:**
 - **Matthew:** Affirms Jesus as the Messiah through prophecy fulfillment.
 - **Mark:** Encourages Roman Christians to find solidarity with Jesus in suffering.
 - **Luke:** Highlights forgiveness and inclusion for Gentiles and outcasts.
 - **John:** Reflects on Jesus' divine authority and mission as the Savior.
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Session 5: The Resurrection of Jesus

Agenda:

1. **Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)**
2. **Scripture Reading (5 minutes):**
 - Read Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-12, and John 20:1-18.
3. **Discussion (10 minutes each):**
 - **Trouble in the Text:** Fear and doubt surrounding the resurrection.
 - **Trouble in Today's World:** Hopelessness in challenging times.
 - **Grace in the Text:** Jesus' victory over sin and death.
 - **Grace Today:** Finding hope and new life through the resurrection.
4. **Comparing the Gospels (10 minutes):**
 - **Character Question:** How do the women, the disciples, and Jesus act?
5. **Closing and Prayer Requests (5 minutes):**

Key Points:

- **Unifying Message:** Jesus' resurrection proclaims victory, hope, and new life.
 - **Relevance to the Audience:**
 - **Matthew:** Emphasizes Jesus' authority and fulfillment of God's promises.
 - **Mark:** Encourages faith amidst awe and uncertainty for Roman Christians.
 - **Luke:** Highlights joy and peace for Gentile believers.
 - **John:** Invites a personal relationship with the risen Jesus.
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