

THE GOSPELS

What are the Gospels

The Gospels are *Matthew, Mark, Luke* and *John*.

The Gospels are found in the New Testament and are faithful testimonies written to help people know who Jesus is, believe in Him, and follow Him. They tell the story of Jesus so we can believe in Him and live transformed lives. *The Gospels do not only tell us what Jesus did—they teach us how to live as His followers.*

Why do we have four Gospels:

We have four gospels because during the early church period, four people found it necessary to tell the story of Jesus from four different perspectives. It's because the person of Jesus is so unique. All four present Jesus as the Messiah, the central figure of Christianity, who lived, taught, performed miracles, died, and rose again. They collectively offer a complete, albeit varied, testimony of Jesus, inviting readers to faith. Not one author can capture, in beholding His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Each gospel was written for a different (original) group of people, by a different author, who was trying to accomplish a different purpose.

Purpose of the Gospels

- To reveal Jesus' identity as the Messiah and Son of God
- To record His teachings and miracles
- To proclaim salvation through His death and resurrection
- To call readers to faith and discipleship

The Four Gospels at a Glance

Gospel	Audience	Focus	Key Theme	Chapters	Unique Material	OT Quotes
Matthew – <i>The first Gospel</i>	Jewish Readers	Jesus as the promised Messiah and King	Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy	28	42%	53
Mark – <i>The shortest Gospel</i>	Roman Gentile Readers	Jesus as the Suffering Servant	Action, urgency, discipleship	16	7%	36
Luke – <i>The longest Gospel</i>	Gentiles, outsiders, historians	Jesus as the Savior of all people	Compassion, inclusion, justice	24	59%	25
John – <i>The Persuasive Gospel</i>	All believers and seekers	Jesus as the Son of God	Belief, eternal life, relationship	21	92%	20

Historical Context/Key Differences

Time of Writing: The gospels were written between 65-100 AD, within living memory of the events they describe.

Authors: The Church has traditionally attributed the gospels to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus' disciples - reflecting their connection to apostolic testimony.

Cultural Setting: The gospels reflect the complex interplay of Jewish, Greek, and Roman cultures in 1st century Palestine.

Synoptics vs. John: Matthew, Mark, and Luke are "synoptic" (see together) due to shared material and perspectives, while John offers a distinct, theological viewpoint.

Introduction: Matthew starts with genealogy, Mark with baptism, Luke with birth, John with the cosmic "In the Beginning" (John 1:1).

Content: John contains unique material (e.g., Jesus' "I Am" statements, Lazarus miracle) and fewer shared miracle accounts than the Synoptics, presenting a deeper theological explanation of Jesus' identity.

Theological vs. Historical Focus: John presents a more theological, spiritual Gospel, emphasizing Jesus's divinity and purpose, while the Synoptics focus more on Jesus's earthly ministry and kingdom parables.

Unique Content: About 90 - 95% of John's content is unique, including the prologue, the "I Am" sayings, the seven signs (miracles), the Paraclete (Holy Spirit) promises, and dialogues with individuals like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.

Narrative Style: Instead of parables, John uses long, philosophical discourses and dialogues to explain Jesus's identity.

Jesus's Identity: John begins with Jesus as the eternal Word (Logos) and consistently portrays Him as God, whereas the Synoptics often present Jesus first as a human Messiah.

Structure & Timeline: John describes Jesus's ministry spanning three Passovers, suggesting a longer period, unlike the Synoptics' shorter, single-year focus.

Symbolism: John is rich in symbolism (light/dark, life/death, truth/lies) and presents miracles as "signs" pointing to Jesus's divine nature.

Similarities: All four present Jesus as the Messiah, the central figure of Christianity, who lived, taught, performed miracles, died, and rose again.

Putting the Gospels Together: A Holistic Christian Life

Gospel	Emphasis	Christian Living Outcome
Matthew	Teaching	Obedient Faith
Mark	Action	Servant discipleship
Luke	Compassion	Inclusive love
John	Relationship	Transformed life

Living the Gospel: How the Gospels Shape Christian Life

1. Matthew: Living as Kingdom People

Focus: Obedient discipleship

Key Question: *How should citizens of God's Kingdom live?*

Key Themes

- Kingdom of Heaven
- Righteousness that goes beyond rules
- Jesus as King and Teacher

Christian Living Applications

- Practice integrity, humility, and faithfulness (Matthew 5–7)
- Live out faith publicly and ethically
- Obey Jesus' teachings, not selectively but fully

2. Mark: Following Jesus Through Costly Discipleship

Focus: Action and sacrifice

Key Question: *What does it cost to follow Jesus?*

Key Themes

- Servanthood
- Faith in action
- Suffering and perseverance

Christian Living Applications

- Serve others without recognition
- Trust God in hardship
- Put faith into action, not just intention

3. Luke: Living with Compassion and Inclusion

Focus: Love for all people

Key Question: *Who is my neighbor?*

Key Themes

- Compassion for the marginalized
- Justice, mercy, and generosity
- The work of the Holy Spirit

Christian Living Applications

- Show mercy across social, cultural, and personal boundaries

- Practice generosity and hospitality
- Care for the vulnerable and overlooked

4. John: Living in Relationship and Transformation

Focus: Belief, identity, and abiding

Key Question: *Who is Jesus to me personally?*

Key Themes

- Belief and eternal life
- Relationship with Christ
- Love as the mark of discipleship

Content

John divides the ministry of Jesus into two distinct parts: Chapters 2-12 gives insight into His public ministry, while chapters 13-21 relate His private ministry to His disciples. In 1:1-18 called the “prologue,” John deals with the theological implications of the first coming of Jesus. He shows Jesus preexistent state with God, His deity and essence, as well as His incarnation.

Christian Living Applications

- Build a daily relationship with Jesus through prayer and Scripture
- Abide in Christ to bear spiritual fruit (John 15)
- Love others as Christ loves us

As you read the gospels, ask these questions:

- What does Jesus say about Himself?
- Whom is Jesus talking to? (This is vital. Is he talking to His disciples, His enemies, a massive crowd?)
- What does Jesus say about God?
- How does Jesus react to different situations? What pleases Him? What upsets Him?
- What does Jesus tell people to do?

The Gospels call us not just to admire Jesus—but to follow Him, serve like Him, love like Him, and live transformed lives through Him.