

Bringing the Message into Everyday Life

The Gospel According to . . . Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These Gospels represent all we know about the historical Jesus. Taken together they present the life and times of Jesus as Teacher, Healer, Friend, and Savior. Individually, each Gospel provides a somewhat different “angle” on the person of Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark was written first and gave the early Christians the earliest organized account of Jesus’ life and his core message of the coming of the Kingdom of God. This fast-paced Gospel gives us a picture of Jesus always on the move, usually surrounded by the crowd, and freely giving expression to his feelings of compassion, pity, and even anger.

To get a sense of Mark’s Gospel, read it all in one sitting. It gives a sweeping view of the movements of Jesus’ life and the close connection between the words and actions of Jesus and his subsequent death and resurrection.

The Gospel of Matthew was written to a community made up primarily of Jewish Christians. So as the writer wove together the stories of Jesus’ life and teaching, he highlighted Jesus as the promised Messiah. The writer of Matthew’s Gospel makes frequent reference to events and experiences of the Jewish people and connects those with the life of Jesus.

Read the events surrounding Jesus’ birth as set out in the first two chapters. Make note of the multiple times that the words of the prophets and quotes from the Old Testament are woven into the account.

The Gospel of Luke was written about the same time as Matthew’s, but is addressed to a predominantly non-Jewish community. In Luke we find a compassionate Jesus who cares for the poor and the outcast and expects his followers to do the same. For the writer of Luke’s Gospel, the saving words of Jesus are intended for everyone.

Page through Luke’s Gospel and you’ll find many of the best known parables, many of which are only in this Gospel. Pause along the way and read through those that appeal to you.

The Gospel of John was the last account written and is distinct from the other three. The first three accounts have much in common and are termed the Synoptic Gospels. From the opening lines of John’s Gospel a different image of Jesus is shown. The manger and the Magi are gone; in their place, the writer of John’s Gospel places a clear statement that Jesus is not only human but also divine.

Chapters 14 through 16 present an image of Jesus as one who cares for his followers and will be present with them always. Take your time in reading through these chapters.

Bringing the Message Home

What words of Jesus hold special meaning for you?

Each week, reflect on a Scripture passage that highlights a teaching or saying of Jesus.

- ◆ Make the passage part of your daily prayer. Read the passage and then sit quietly to reflect on the meaning these words of Jesus have for you in your own life.
- ◆ Write the passage on a small piece of paper and place it where you will see it often during the day—on your bathroom mirror, in your car, on the refrigerator.
- ◆ Take time to write down your thoughts about the passage in a special notebook. Keep this notebook as a prayer journal, adding your own insights, and prayers of petition and thanks.
- ◆ Share this passage with your children at mealtime, while you are in the car with them, or during their prayer at night. Ask them to tell you what the passage means to them.

† Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Mt. 7:7)

† Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. (Mt. 11:28)

† Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant. (Mk. 10:43)

† You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Mk. 12:30–31)

† Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will

not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. (Lk. 6:37)

† Give and gifts will be given to you. (Lk. 6:38)

† Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." (John 6:35)

† I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (John 8:12)

† I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

† Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. (John 14:27)