
Making Sense of the New Testament: The Four Gospels

“The Gospels are the heart of all the Scriptures”

CCC 125

Focus Question: Describe your experience of reading the entire Gospel at one sitting.

Part 1 The Old Testament Storyline

1. OT Overview
 - Creation
 - Sin
 - Covenants
 - Prophetic Anticipation
 - Fulfillment in Jesus Christ
2. Covenant Theology / God as Covenant Partner
3. Messianic Prophecies – Jer 31, Isa 55, Ezek 34, Isa 42, Dan 7, Deut 30, Isa 52, Isa 2
4. “This is the time of fulfillment” – Mark 1:15, Luke 17:20-21, Matt 11:2-6, 2 Cor 6:2
5. Gathering Israel – Mark 3:13-15

Part 2 Jesus in the Gospels

1. The Formation of the Gospels – CCC 126
 - The Life and Teaching of Jesus – birth-30
 - The Oral Tradition – c. 30-65
 - The Written Gospels – c. 65-90
2. Reading the Gospels
 - Criteria for Interpretation – CCC 109-114
 - Synoptic Gospels

Part 3 The Four Gospels

1. The Gospel of Mark: Jesus the Suffering Servant

- a. Community →
- b. Structure →
- c. Dominant image of Jesus →
- d. Discipleship →
- e. Distinctive Texts →
- f. Major Themes →

2. The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus the Authoritative Teacher

- a. Community →
- b. Structure →
- c. Dominant image of Jesus →
- d. Discipleship →
- e. Distinctive Texts →
- f. Major Themes →

3. The Gospel of Luke: Jesus the Universal Savior

- a. Community →
- b. Structure →
- c. Dominant image of Jesus →
- d. Discipleship →
- e. Distinctive Texts →
- f. Major Themes →

4. The Gospel of John: Jesus the Word Made Flesh

- a. Community →
- b. Structure →
- c. Dominant image of Jesus →
- d. Discipleship →
- e. Distinctive Texts →
- f. Major Themes →

5. Praying with the Gospels: Theological Reflection

- a. The Spiritual Challenge
 - ✓ Vatican II, GS #43 “One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and the practice of their daily lives.”
 - ✓ T S Eliot – “We had the experience but we missed the meaning”
 - ✓ “People are tired; they are worn out, overloaded with information, and overwhelmed with the social, political, and economic climate. They are not striving to thrive; they are merely trying to survive. This is a tired culture.” Matthew Kelly
 - ✓ “... the unexamined life is not worth living” Socrates; “the unreflected ministerial life is not worth the ministering” Fr. Jos. Driscoll
 - ✓ “Inner silence is necessary to listen to the Word of God, to experience His presence, to hear God’s call. Today ... we are unable to pray. We are unable to silence the hubbub inside... there is no quiet, holy space in the heart for the flame of Pentecost.” Pope Paul VI, 1972
- b. Theological Reflection: God is present..., We desire God..., Be open to God..., Taste and See...
 - ✓ TR – “connecting faith with life”
 - ✓ TR – “discovering the revelatory quality of our human experience”

- ✓ Sources for TR – Experience, Tradition, Culture
 - ✓ TR is an attempt to integrate the segments of our lives so that we can live and breathe our beliefs, that our faith has a voice in our everyday beliefs.
 - ✓ TR makes “raw” experience into “lived” experience, and moves from insight to action.
 - ✓ “TR invites us to befriend our Christian heritage, our lived experience, our culture, and our contemporary faith community as conversation partners on the journey of faith.” JG 21
 - ✓ TR allows us to recall and savor fleeting glimpses of God, to recognize God’s graciousness, and to prioritize and fashion our lives accordingly.
 - ✓ “... the Christian leader thinks, speaks, and acts in the name of Jesus. To be such a leader it is essential to be able to discern from moment to moment how God acts in human history and how personal, communal, national, and international events that occur during our lives can make us more and more sensitive to the ways in which we are led to the cross and through the cross to resurrection.” Fr. Henri Nouwen
- c. Stages of TR process
- **Attending** – non-judgmental listening or narrating
 - **Reflecting** – identifying the heart of the matter, dialoguing with Tradition
 - **Applying** – identify new learning / insights + integrate them into life / action
- d. Process of TR: 3 questions to use in **Attending, Reflecting and Applying**
- what does this (text, experience) **mean**? *Do I understand the author’s words?*
 - what does this mean to **me**? *How is God challenging me through this text?*
 - what would it **cost** me to live this out? *How can I move from insight to action?*

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Assignment Question

Write a theological reflection (no more than 250 words, please) on just one of all the following suggested passages from one of the Gospels. The assignment is on documents page. Please complete within two weeks:

Matthew 10:5-33, 14:22-33

Mark 4:35-41, 7:1-15

Luke 7:11-17, 24:13-35

John 8:12-20, 21:15-19

Be sure to address these questions, using first person (“I”) language:

→ what does this (text) **mean**? *Do I understand the author’s words?*

→ what does this mean to **me**? *How is God challenging me through this text?*

→ what would it **cost** me to live this out? *How can I move from insight to action?*