

*Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the New Testament*  
Living the Message 2021-2022  
October 2021 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

**October Question: “What Is A Gospel, Anyway?”** [Click here to watch the video.](#)

### **Focus Statement and Summary**

Prior to the writing and sharing of the four Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – the term “gospel” was not a literary designation but signified a message or proclamation of good news. The Evangelists – those who wrote the four biblical Gospels – are therefore doing something new in offering several similar, but also distinct, accounts of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the one each declares as the Christ, or Messiah, of God. In this session, we explore what a Gospel is, where they came from, the sources the Evangelists used, why there are four (rather than one) accounts, and their shared purpose.

### **Opening Prayer**

*Dear God, invite us to hear in the varied witness of the Gospels the good news of your Son, a truth too large to be held by a single work, and in hearing this story be strengthened in our faith. Amen.*

### **Opening Questions to Consider *Before* Watching the Presentation**

Two central passages to last year’s class – Everything You Wanted to Know about the Bible – will serve us well in this opening session as well: [Luke 1:1-4](#) and [John 20:30-31](#). You are invited to read them each again, noticing that both draw upon historical events – Luke talks about “eyewitnesses” and John refers to Jesus doing “many other things that aren’t written in this book” – and both indicate that the authors made literary and artistic decisions – Luke’s desire to write “an orderly account” and John’s decision to include some stories but not others. As you read these statements:

- What do you sense is the purpose and hope of each author?
- How are they similar?
- How are they different?
- How does answering those questions inform your sense of what a Gospel is?

### **Question to Consider *After* Watching the Presentation**

In the presentation, Pastor Lose suggests that a Gospel is a different kind of literature – not a biography or historical novel, but not a heroic quest or saga either. If a friend was to ask you what a Gospel is, how would you answer?

## Going Deeper into the Word

*After the main presentation is a “Deeper Dive” to assist with this exercise. (There is not a second video this year.) In it, Pastor Ruud explores the four Gospel accounts of the Last Supper.*

As we learned in the presentation, the four Gospels share a similar plot line even while differing in many details. One of the signature plot moves in all four is the last meal Jesus shares with his disciple. This story – generally referred to as “The Last Supper” – occurs at [Mark 14:12-26](#), [Matthew 26:17-30](#), [Luke 22:7-23](#), and [John 13:1-20](#). Of these, Mark and Matthew’s accounts are the closest. Choose one of those and compare it with either the account in Luke or John.

- What similarities do you notice?
- What differences?
- How do you interpret those differences?
- Or, asked another way, what do you think the Evangelist is trying to tell his audience – and us – by telling the story this way.

## Closing

We started this session by recognizing that the Gospels are in many ways unique – rooted in history, but more than a mere historical account; telling the heroic mission of the Son of God, but more than simply a recounting of a heroic saga.

As we close our time of conversation, how do you understand what a Gospel is? Again, if a friend were to ask you what a Gospel is, how would you answer? And what about the presentations and conversations has helped you to think differently or more clearly about the nature of the Gospel stories we read in Church. What questions remain? Finally, and just for fun, do you have a “favorite” Gospel? If so, which one... and why?

## Closing Prayer

*Dear God, you have blessed the church with four distinct witnesses to the good news that in Jesus you shower your love upon us and the whole world. Let us approach these witnesses confident that by reading them we gain insight into your love for us and confidence to share that love with others. Amen.*