

*"What's Out?" Study Guide by Pastor Cieslik*  
*Behind the Book(s): A History of How Our Bible Came to Be Series*  
Second of Four Presentations ~ Winter 2023

## Overview & Questions

Last week Pastor Lose helped us understand how we got to the place where we have 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. We discussed the criteria by which these books were included and others were left out. We learned that in the early church through controversy and conversation followers of Jesus were working together to create some boundaries about what was good, faithful, and biblical to say about Jesus and what were things that were outside of those bounds. This week we're going to take a look at what was outside, the writings that, while interesting, failed to provide a complete witness to the complexity of who Jesus was and is.

As Pastor Lose mentioned, many of the writings that we have now were found in the Egyptian desert, in a cave that was used to bury the dead. These are commonly referred to as the Nag Hammadi texts. Scholars have made translations of these texts available online, so you'll be able to find English renderings of these texts in many places.

But if you'd like to dive further into these sources after this class, I'd encourage you to begin here.

<https://religionforbreakfast.com/2016/12/16/gospel-of-thomas-episode-further-reading/>

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/story/heretics.html>

For this class, we will dig into some selections from the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Judas and perhaps others as time allows. Below I'll include one excerpt for you to begin with. What sounds familiar? What catches your attention? How does this resonate with your picture of Jesus?

*Saying 14: Jesus said to them, "If you fast, you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give to charity, you will harm your spirits. When you go into any region and walk about in the countryside, when people take you in, eat what they serve you and heal the sick among them. After all, what goes into your mouth won't defile you; what comes out of your mouth will."*

## Closing Prayer

*We give you thanks O God for the faithful witness of your church that continues to inspire us and by the work of your Spirit to awaken faith in us. Thank you for the gift of reason that together with tradition allows us to faithfully discern where you are calling us next. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

