

Book Study – Synoptic Gospels

A tool to help with reading the Bible.



Produced by XA Denton Chi Alpha | UNT & TWU

The Synoptic Gospels: (biblestudytools.com)

Matthew, Mark, and Luke, or the Synoptic Gospels, differ from John in that they closely mirror one another in their accounts. In these three gospels, we find similar wording, chronology, and Old Testament referencing. While we should expect consistent narratives amongst all the gospels, the similarities amongst the Synoptics seem to suggest that they were written in reliance upon one another or an outside source. Even amidst the similarities, we do still find content that is unique to one or two books.

The Gospel of Matthew, one of two gospels written by a disciple, tailored its account for a Jewish audience. Matthew wrote to identify Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies so that the Jews would recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they had long awaited.

In contrast, the Gospel of Mark is written with a Gentile audience in mind. The shortest of the four gospels, early Church history tells us that Mark had a close connection to the apostle Peter. Mark weaves a narrative that identifies Jesus as the Son of God and demonstrates the veracity of the cross.

The Gospel of Luke is written to a specific person, Theophilus, and mounts a defense of the gospel message as revealed in the life of Christ. Though not an eyewitness to the life of Jesus, Luke wrote as a historian who had access to multiple accounts and brought them together in one narrative.

Reading Checklist:

Matthew 1: ____	Matthew 24:____	Luke 1: ____
Matthew 2: ____	Matthew 25:____	Luke 2: ____
Matthew 3: ____	Matthew 26:____	Luke 3: ____
Matthew 4: ____	Matthew 27:____	Luke 4: ____
Matthew 5: ____	Matthew 28:____	Luke 5: ____
Matthew 6: ____		Luke 6: ____
Matthew 7: ____	Mark 1: ____	Luke 7: ____
Matthew 8: ____	Mark 2: ____	Luke 8: ____
Matthew 9: ____	Mark 3: ____	Luke 9: ____
Matthew 10: ____	Mark 4: ____	Luke 10: ____
Matthew 11: ____	Mark 5: ____	Luke 11: ____
Matthew 12: ____	Mark 6: ____	Luke 12: ____
Matthew 13: ____	Mark 7: ____	Luke 13: ____
Matthew 14: ____	Mark 8: ____	Luke 14: ____
Matthew 15: ____	Mark 9: ____	Luke 15: ____
Matthew 16: ____	Mark 10: ____	Luke 16: ____
Matthew 17: ____	Mark 11: ____	Luke 17: ____
Matthew 18: ____	Mark 12: ____	Luke 18: ____
Matthew 19: ____	Mark 13: ____	Luke 19: ____
Matthew 20: ____	Mark 14: ____	Luke 20: ____
Matthew 21: ____	Mark 15: ____	Luke 21: ____
Matthew 21: ____	Mark 16: ____	Luke 22: ____
Matthew 22: ____		Luke 23: ____
Matthew 23: ____		Luke 24: ____

Matthew:

Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface

- Content:** The birth of Jesus of Nazareth ushered in the long-awaited age of a new kingdom on earth—the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew's Gospel records the advent of this new Kingdom through the teachings and actions of Jesus, the Messiah. Since the Kingdom of Heaven is a major theme throughout this Gospel, Matthew was careful to show how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament history to show his royal lineage. After describing the virgin birth of Jesus, Matthew detailed Jesus's messianic baptism, his temptation in the wilderness, and the early days of his ministry in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught his disciples how life in the Kingdom should be lived. Jesus also performed many miracles and taught the people various parables, or stories, that further illustrated what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. Matthew was careful to point out that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, would be included in the Kingdom of Heaven. Matthew's Gospel concludes with Jesus' death and resurrection and his command to make disciples from every nation.
- Author:** Matthew (Levi)
- Date:** Probably between A.D. 60 and 65
- Purpose:** To present Jesus as the Messiah, who has brought the Kingdom of Heaven to earth
- Themes:** Jesus the Messiah, the Kingdom of Heaven, Gentiles' inclusion in the Kingdom of Heaven

Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Jesus' Birth:** Jesus' genealogy highlights His descent from Abraham and David, showing that He's the Messiah, King and God with us who fulfills Old Testament prophecies.
- **Baptism and Temptation:** Jesus' baptism and wilderness experience confirms He is God and launches King Jesus' rescue operation of confronting evil, restoring God's reign and creating a new family.
- **Sermon on the Mount:** Jesus introduces servant leadership and the upside-down kingdom. He gives instructions on how to live in God's kingdom and welcomes everyone to join Him.
- **Jesus Teaches:** Most of the Gospel of Matthew shares Jesus' teaching ministry that parallels Moses' life and demonstrates the power of God's kingdom for people who are hurting.
- **Death, Resurrection and the Great Commission:** A servant king, Jesus fulfills prophecy and sacrifices His life for his people. After his resurrection, He tells His followers to spread the good news.

For a video overview, visit: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/matthew>

Matthew 1-4: The early life and ministry of Jesus

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew chapters 8-11: General teaching, parables, and discourses (part 1)

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew chapters 11-14: General teaching, parables, and discourses (part 2)

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew chapters 15-18: General teaching, parables, and discourses (part 3)

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew 19-23: Journey to Jerusalem and final warnings

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew chapters 24-25: Prophecies of things to come

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Matthew chapters 26-28: Jesus' death and resurrection

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Mark:

Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface

Content: Many passages of Scripture speak of Jesus as the exalted Lord, but Mark's Gospel presents another side of Jesus, as well: his servanthood. Mark was not one of the twelve disciples, but it is traditionally believed that his Gospel was compiled from the sermons of the apostle Peter. Mark set the pace for his Gospel from the very start, forgoing the details of Jesus' birth and moving straight into his baptism and ministry. Throughout this Gospel, Jesus is constantly on the move, healing the sick, confronting demons, feeding large crowds, giving time to "outsiders," and tirelessly responding to requests for help and guidance. Mark included several passages of teaching as well, but these are largely overshadowed by the accounts of Jesus' actions. Mark made it clear that Jesus is indeed the Son of God; no one else could have done what Jesus did. But Jesus' actions and teaching also point toward a core theme of the book: "for even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many". The book closes with Jesus' death and resurrection, thus completing a basic outline of the life of Jesus Christ.

Author: John Mark

Date: Probably between A.D. 55 and 65

Purpose: To present Jesus Christ as both servant and Son of God by recounting his ministry and teaching in a basic biographical outline

Themes: Jesus the Messiah, servanthood/ministry, miracles

Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Jesus' Baptism:** John the Baptist, the messenger sent to prepare Israel for their Messiah and King, baptizes Jesus. God declares that Jesus is His son and the Messiah.
- **Jesus' Ministry:** Jesus travels through Galilee introducing Himself to the people, forgiving sins and performing miracles as He shares the Old Testament story of God's rescue mission.
- **Disciples Questioned:** Jesus asks His disciples if they believe He's the Messiah. He explains that He is a servant and will give His life to save many.
- **The Transfiguration:** Jesus and three disciples ascend a mountain where God affirms Jesus as His son. The disciples are reminded that He will suffer to provide salvation.
- **Abrupt Ending:** The Gospel of Mark is a story and ends abruptly and challenges us as readers to decide if we believe Jesus is the Messiah.

For a video overview, visit: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/mark>

Mark 1-4: The baptism and early Galilean ministry of Jesus

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Mark 5-9: The Galilean ministry of Jesus

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Mark chapters 10-12: Trip to Jerusalem and entrance into the city, conflicts in the city

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Mark chapters 13-16: Prophecies of things to come, Jesus' death and resurrection

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Luke:

Descriptions provided by Tyndale's New Living Translation Bible book preface

Content: Like an investigative journalist compiling a story from several informants, Luke composed his Gospel from the accounts of several eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ. Luke, a Gentile physician who traveled extensively with the apostle Paul, wrote his Gospel for a man named Theophilus most likely another Gentile believer. After consulting several eyewitnesses and accounts of Jesus' life, Luke wrote this fresh account of Jesus' life and ministry. Since both Luke and Theophilus were Gentiles, it is not surprising that his Gospel has a very universal flavor to its stories and teachings of Jesus. Luke also highlighted Jesus' concern for the oppressed and outcast, such as women and the poor, and there is a notable emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit. Luke was careful to give precise dates for the events recorded in his Gospel, beginning with an extensive record of Jesus' birth and the only canonical story from Jesus' childhood years. Luke arranged his outline of Jesus' ministry in the same general order as the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. And he added a lengthy account of Jesus' trip to Jerusalem. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the book leaves the disciples rejoicing and waiting for the promised power of God to fill them.

Author: Luke, a Gentile physician and associate of Paul

Date: Probably between A.D. 60

Purpose: To present an accurate account of the life and ministry of Jesus

Themes: Jesus Christ the Savior, the Holy Spirit, compassion for the oppressed, salvation for Gentiles.

Milestones (Bibleproject.com)

- **Prophecy Fulfilled:** The Gospel of Luke compiles eyewitness accounts that prove Jesus fulfills the Old Testament covenant between God and Israel and creates a new Israel for all mankind.
- **Jesus' Mission:** Jesus ministers to the poor, outcasts and others as He brings restoration and reversal to people's life circumstances and expands God's covenant to include everyone.
- **The Prodigal Son:** Jesus uses parables like the prodigal son to teach His followers about the new upside-down kingdom that honors humility and welcomes everyone who repents.
- **Road to Emmaus:** Jesus reveals to two followers at Emmaus that disciples will only see Him when they submit to His upside-down kingdom and sacrificially love others.
- **God's Plan for Mankind:** Jesus explains to His disciples that God's plan was always for a suffering Christ to conquer evil through His death on the cross and resurrection.

For a video overview, visit: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/luke>

Luke chapters 1-4: Jesus' birth, boyhood, baptism and temptation

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Luke chapters 5-9: Jesus' Galilean ministry

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Luke chapters 10-13: Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem (part 1)

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Luke chapters 14-16: Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem (part 2)

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Luke chapters 17-20: Jesus' ministry on the way to Jerusalem (part 3)

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Luke chapters 21-24: Prophecies, Jesus' death and resurrection

What are two things that you noticed about God's character in this section?

From what you read, what is something that you feel like God is showing you at this moment?

What is something that you learned or were challenged by that you can apply to your life?

What is something you read in this passage that you did not previously know or understand?

Additional Notes:

Next, pick up one of these booklets from the XA store.

1. *Genesis* - 50 chapters
2. *The Torah* (Exodus - Deuteronomy) - 133 chapters
3. *Joshua and Judges* - 45 chapters
4. *Ruth and Esther* - 14 chapters
5. *The Kings* (1 Sam - 2 Chronicles) - 177 chapters
6. *After Babylon* (Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel) - 35 chapters
7. *Psalms* - 150 Psalms
8. *Poetry* (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs) - 93 chapters
9. *Isaiah & Ezekiel* - 110 chapters
10. *Jeremiah and Lamentations* - 57 chapters
11. *Minor Prophets, Pre-Exile* - 43 chapters
 - (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk)
12. *Minor Prophets, Post-Exile* - 24 chapters
 - (Zephaniah, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)
13. *Synoptic Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, Luke) - 68 chapters
14. *John* - 21 chapters
15. *Acts* - 28 chapters
16. *Paul's Letters to churches* - 59 chapters
 - (Romans, 1 & 2 Cor., Galatians, 1 & 2 Thes.)
17. *Paul's Prison Epistles* - 15 chapters
 - (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon)
18. *Paul's Letters to people* (1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) - 13 chapters
19. *Apostle's Letters* (Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 2 3 John, Jude) - 34 chapters
20. *Revelation* - 22 chapters