

BIBLEX

Session 1: Variations

Scripture questions:

Matthew 2:1-12

Luke 2:8-20

How are these passages alike? How are they different?

Who comes to visit Jesus in the book of Matthew? Who comes to visit Jesus in the book of Luke? How do you resolve the differences between these two versions of the same story?

Matthew 5:1-12

Luke 6:20-26

How are the “blessed” different in these accounts? What are the similarities and the differences in these two passages? How do the “woes” in Luke shape how you view these comparisons?

Matthew 27:38-44

Luke 23:39-43

Do the robbers being crucified treat Jesus the same in both accounts? How is the story in Matthew different from the account in Luke?

John 7:53
John 8:1-11
Mark 16:9-20

Some versions of the Bible have added notes that raise questions about these passages. If there are notes in your Bible about these passages, what do they say?

Matthew 1:1-15
Mark 1:1-5
Luke 1:1-4
John 1:1-5

Of the four Gospels you read, which three had similar story-like beginnings? How would you describe the one that is different?

If this was your first time to read the beginning of John's Gospel, describe what you thought. Did you find it odd? If you have read John before, re-read this passage as though it was your first time. What do you find intriguing about the language that is used?

Gospel: means "good news" and refers to a special letter or announcement that was only issued when the Emperor of Rome won a crucial victory or rose to power. It was first used to describe the life of Christ in the book of Mark and signifies Christ's victory and power.

The Gospels are:

- People recounting the past and recalling the life and work of Christ.
- A form of biography, focusing specifically on the person of Christ.
- Theologically centered, and show how the will and activity of God shapes lives.
- Not modern history books, but grounded events that happened in the past.
- Grounded events that happened in the past.
- Focused on showing what the life of Christ meant to communities.

Many **variations** in the way the same stories are told within the Gospels cause some to reject Scripture. It's important to remember that these differences should be celebrated because they

reflect how the life of Christ affects different communities, in different places, at different times. Textual variants do not affect the teaching of our faith. In cases that variations are present in Scripture, the modern study of the Bible has enabled us to identify and locate these variations, either noting them, or restoring the original reading.

Synoptic Gospels: the Gospel books that have similar shared material—Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Because of its unique emphasis and writing style, the book of John is set apart from the Synoptic Gospels and is simply called The Gospel of John.

Application Questions:

If you were going to write a Gospel of Christ's activity in your life, what would the major experiences and dominant themes be?

Some people spend a lot of time debating the Bible and its reliability. What benefits and harmful outcomes do you think come from these arguments? Do you think they ultimately build your faith or the faith of others?

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