

# New Testament Genre: Gospels

By Donald Kim

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read Mark 1:2–3. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What is the meaning of the phrase, “As it is written”? Which prophet is the passage quoting? Why would this passage be important in Mark as part of the New Testament?

### Assignment Two

When Jesus came out of the water, He saw the heavens open. Read Mark 1:10. Go outside during the day and take a look at the sky. Try to observe and note how the heavens would have opened. Prepare to share your thoughts and reactions with your group.

### Assignment Three

Read Luke 1:1–4. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How is the beginning of Luke different from Mark? How does it differ from Matthew and John?

### Scripture to Memorize

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John 1:14

### Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will identify the Gospels in the Bible and explain the purpose of the gospel message.

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## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Imagine being stuck in the middle of a storm with blowing sand, rain or snow. What would be considered good news for you? What would you do to get out of the storm?

The word *gospel* means “good news.” In our culture today, what are some of the “storms” that cause people to need to hear the good news of Christ?

### The Gospel According to Mark

This is the title of the book. Some Greek manuscripts have a shorter title: “According to Mark.” Mark is one of four Gospels. Each one tells the story of Jesus and proclaims Him to be the Son of God. They are like biographies, and each one has a slightly different approach to telling Jesus’ story. Matthew focuses on informing Jews, but Mark tells the story to a wider, Roman audience.

Read Mark 1:1–15 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 1. The beginning of the gospel.** This good news is the story of Jesus, who is the Christ (“Messiah” or “anointed one”). **Son of God.** Jesus is God’s Son.

**Verse 2. As it is written in Isaiah.** This is part of the Old Testament backdrop for Jesus. **I send.** God sent His messenger. **My messenger.** The messenger Isaiah foretold was John the Baptist. **Who will prepare Your way.** John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of Jesus.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: What is the meaning of the phrase, “As it is written”? Which prophet is the passage quoting? Why would this passage be important in Mark in the New Testament?

### Discussion Question

Why would using the Old Testament be important when you talk about Jesus?

### On Your Own

In the space below, list some of the Old Testament books you’ve read and why those books were significant or memorable to you.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 4. wilderness.** This was the desert area where John preached. **baptism.** This Greek term referred to immersion in water. **of repentance.** This word carries the idea of a total change in direction, to turn away from sin and toward God.

**Verse 5. all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem.** Many people came to hear John.

**Verse 6. camel's hair.** John wore rough, uncomfortable clothing. **leather belt.** This did not make Him more fashionable, especially since he was eating **locusts and wild honey**—an unusual diet even back then. Yet it wasn't his lifestyle people wanted to check out. It was his *message* that drew people to him.

**Verse 7. who is mightier than I.** John was clear that the One coming (Jesus, the Messiah) would be mightier than John. **not worthy to . . . untie.** John did not feel worthy to untie Jesus's sandals—a job too lowly even for a servant. That's a big difference in status.

**Verse 8. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.** John baptized with water, but Jesus would bring the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

**Verse 9. Jesus came from Nazareth.** Jesus came from His home city. **baptized.** Jesus specifically came to be baptized by John.

**Verse 10. heavens being torn open.** There was an opening in the sky. **Spirit descending on Him like a dove.** The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in visible form.

### Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on verse 10 and observations of the sky opening.

**Verse 11. My beloved Son.** The voice speaking was clearly God's. God was identifying with and blessing His Son, Jesus. Immediately, Jesus began His mission.

**Verse 12. into the wilderness.** Jesus went out to the wilderness to be tempted.

**Verse 13. forty days, being tempted by Satan.** Satan tempted Jesus in the desert. Afterward **the angels were ministering to Him.**

### Discussion Question

When Jesus got baptized, a miraculous event took place. Describe the event. Why is this event significant?

**Verse 14. came into Galilee, proclaiming.** Jesus preached throughout the region where He grew up. **gospel of God.** This message was the “good news” that Jesus had come to bring salvation.

**Verse 15. repent.** Jesus' command involved a complete change in direction. **believe in the gospel.** The words of Jesus—along with His life, death, and resurrection—are all part of the gospel message. The good news is that Jesus came into the world to “give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This means Jesus has a special role in giving His people eternal life. He gave His life so that others may live by believing in Him. That is the purpose of the gospel message.

### Discussion Question

How many Gospels are there in the New Testament? Has anyone read through those Gospels? Can you think of any differences in perspective? If so, what are they?

### John: Believing In His Name

Read John 20:30-31 out loud.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 30. many other signs.** Jesus did far more miracles than John had room to write about.

**Verse 31. but these are written.** What was recorded in John (and also in the other three Gospels) serves one main purpose. **that you may believe.** This is the purpose: so people will believe in Jesus. *Believe* means “trust.” When one believes in Jesus, that person hears the good news, sees its value and responds to it. Believing in Jesus means believing in His name. Believing in His name means trusting in the saving work of God through His Son. The Son lived, died for our sins and rose again.

### Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: How is the beginning of Luke different from Mark? How does it differ from Matthew and John?

### On Your Own

In the space below, list several reasons you believe Jesus is the Son of God.

### Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

**Since Last Week**

5 minutes

**Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

**Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

**Prayer**

7 minutes

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

The four Gospels in the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are critical for understanding who Jesus is and what He has done. This is the reason the word *gospel* means “good news.” The good news of Jesus is that He came into the world fully God and fully man. Though the four Gospels have differences in their *presentation* of biographical material, the *message* is consistent.

Jesus came into the world to give His life. He taught people how to live rightly, but He also taught how He Himself is the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus (see John 14:6). The news He brought was good because (1) He demonstrated His authority as the Son of God, and (2) He showed His love by dying on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. People can have their relationship with God restored by taking Jesus at His word, repenting of their sin, believing that He paid the price for their sin and living life under His kingship.

We respond to the gospel message by believing in Jesus, a historical figure, who is also beyond this world. Knowing Jesus through the Gospels also means we trust Him—trust what He has done and trust Him as the Son of God. The Gospels all reveal that Jesus lived, taught and died, but there’s more! He rose from the dead, conquering death itself! The Gospels are historical accounts of this Jesus in order to bring life and hope to those who believe.

The four Gospels are more than just collections of stories. They are accurate accounts of how Jesus, the Son of God, impacted history and changed lives as He ministered here on earth. Even after two thousand years, the gospel message is still transforming lives as people around the world hear about Jesus. Lives are changing because Jesus is the hope and light of the world.

### **Follow up Question**

*What are the Gospels and why are they important?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.