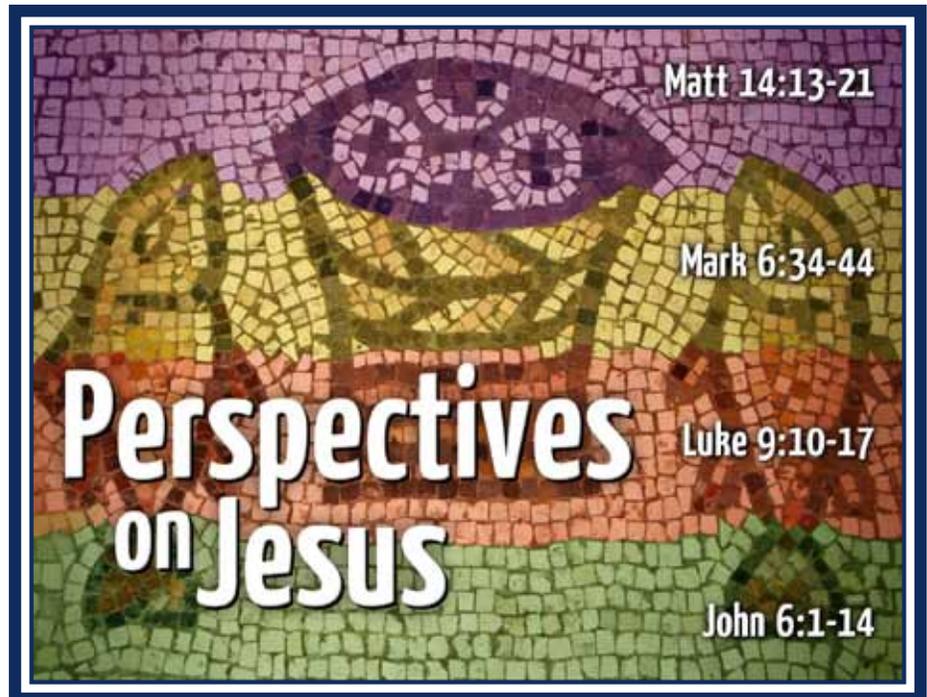


## I. Background Information

A. Discuss your understanding of the New Testament's four Gospels.

1. Why do we have more than one account. Why aren't the accounts more similar? How do you explain the differences?
2. Define "synoptic" gospels. How is it that John's gospel is so different?



3. Consider this statement from John 21:25: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." How does understanding these gospel stories as chosen from among many help us understand the purpose of the stories we do have? Also read John 20:30, 31.
4. How does this statement from *Volume 1 of Selected Messages* on the nature of inspiration impact our discussion?

"There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures. The miracles of Christ are not given in exact order, but are given just as the circumstances occurred, which called for this divine revealing of the power of Christ. The truths of the Bible are as pearls hidden. They must be searched, dug out by painstaking effort...

The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say



such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers.

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.-- Manuscript 24, 1886

- B. Each week, look at the Bible passages that give us biographical information about the writer and explore the pages in *Desire of Ages* and *Acts of the Apostles*.
1. **Levi-Matthew.** Mt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-31; Acts 1:12-14; DA, 272-280
  2. **John Mark.** Acts 12:5-17, 25; 15:36-41; AA, 166-170, 455
  3. **Luke.** Colossians 4:7-18; 2 Timothy 4:6-13
  4. **John.** Matthew 4:18-22; 10:1-8; John 20:1-8; DA, 139
- C. We'll be exploring the four gospel writer's perspective on the one miracle story that each Gospel records. As you study, concentrate on just one of the Gospels at a time. Discuss the similarities and differences in each story. What strikes you as most unique among the tellings?
1. Matthew 14:133-21
  2. Mark 6:34-44
  3. Luke 9:10-17
  4. John 6:1-14

## II. Read the Scriptural Focus together for each week.



**MATTHEW: March 19**

Matthew: Good morning, my name is Matthew.

**Congregation: Good Morning, Matthew.**

Matthew: What would you like to hear about today?

**Congregation: Tell us about yourself.**

Matthew: My full name is Levi Matthew. My father's name was Alphaeus. He was an observant Jew. But he valued, and taught me to value, getting along with the people in charge. In our case, that meant getting along with the Romans.

**Congregation: That wasn't popular, was it?**

Matthew: Not at all. Thanks for being understanding. The value led me to take a job as a tax collector, and you can imagine what most of the Jews thought about that! I wasn't very well liked, to say the least.

**Congregation: Sorry.**

Matthew: I had a portable office, 'the tax collector's booth' they called it, and I followed the crowds to be sure I collected the most money possible. It was during one of those days, at the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum, that my life changed forever.

**Congregation: What happened?**

Matthew: I can describe it in two words: 'Follow Me.' Jesus came up to me out of the crowd, and that's what He said.

**Congregation: What did you do?**

Matthew: I got up, walked away from everything, and followed Him. My life immediately changed! I started growing in a new direction. I called all my friends and invited them to a banquet at my place, forgetting that, to most of Jesus' followers, my friends were just more of the despised tax collectors. "Sinners" they called them! But Jesus had a different attitude toward them.

**Congregation: What was His attitude?**

Matthew: He actually seemed to like them! No one could believe He was eating with them. And listening to them. And not being judgmental. People accused Him of "being friends" with the sinners. He explained later that healthy people didn't need a doctor. He said He had not come to work only with "the righteous."

**Congregation: What impressed you most about Jesus?**

Matthew: That very openness to people. And the way He never let an occasion pass without teaching us something about what He called "the kingdom." Like when He fed the 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five loaves of bread and two small fishes, and then used that miracle to teach us that we needed to trust Him.

**Congregation: That's a good lesson.**

Matthew: That's a great lesson! The more you listen to Him, the more you learn, the more you want to be just like Him. At least, that's been my experience.

**Congregation: Thanks for sharing with us.**

Matthew: Thanks for listening.



**MARK: March 26**

Mark: My name is Mark. Thank you for inviting me here this morning.

**Congregation: Good Morning, Mark.**

Mark: You've started an interesting sermon series about Jesus.

**Congregation: We're enjoying it.**

Mark: May I tell you how I got acquainted with Jesus?

**Congregation: Please do.**

Mark: And may I ask the children here this morning to help me tell the story?

**Congregation: Of course.**

Mark: The story starts for me with a knock on our front door. So when I get to that part in the story, and I'll mention it several times, I'd like to ask all the kids to knock three times on the back of the pew in front of them. Would you practice that with me? I'll say "knock at the front door" and you knock. Ready? "Knock at the front door."

**Congregation: Knock. Knock. Knock.**

Mark: That was great! And there are a few other things for all of you to repeat, so watch the screen for your parts. Now let me tell you my story. And you get ready to knock. My family belonged to the early Christian church in Jerusalem during the time when King Herod was putting Christians in prison. One night, while the church members were at our house praying, there was a loud knock at the front door.

**Congregation: Knock. Knock. Knock.**

Mark: It sounded just like that! A young girl named Rhoda ran to the door and said:

**Congregation: "Who's there?"**

Mark: It was Peter! But Rhoda knew that Peter had been put in prison by King Herod. So instead of opening the door, she ran back to the room where everyone was praying and said,

**Congregation: "It's Peter!"**

Mark: Just then there was another loud knock at the front door.

**Congregation: Knock. Knock. Knock.**

Mark: "Rhoda's not thinking right," someone said. "It must be his angel," someone else suggested. But Peter kept knocking at the front door.

**Congregation: Knock. Knock. Knock.**

Mark: Finally we opened the door and sure enough, there was Peter! He told us all about how the angel had delivered him from the jail. And that's how I got to know Peter, and it was Peter who told me the stories about Jesus.

**Congregation: Then what happened?**

Mark: Peter introduced me to Barnabas. Barnabas introduced me to Saul, who we soon were calling Paul, and I started traveling with them. Every where Paul went he told the people the story of Jesus. I did a lot of growing up in those days, but Jesus kept knocking at the door of my heart.

**Congregation: Knock. Knock. Knock.**

Mark: Thanks for letting me tell you my story. Hope you'll keep reading my book!