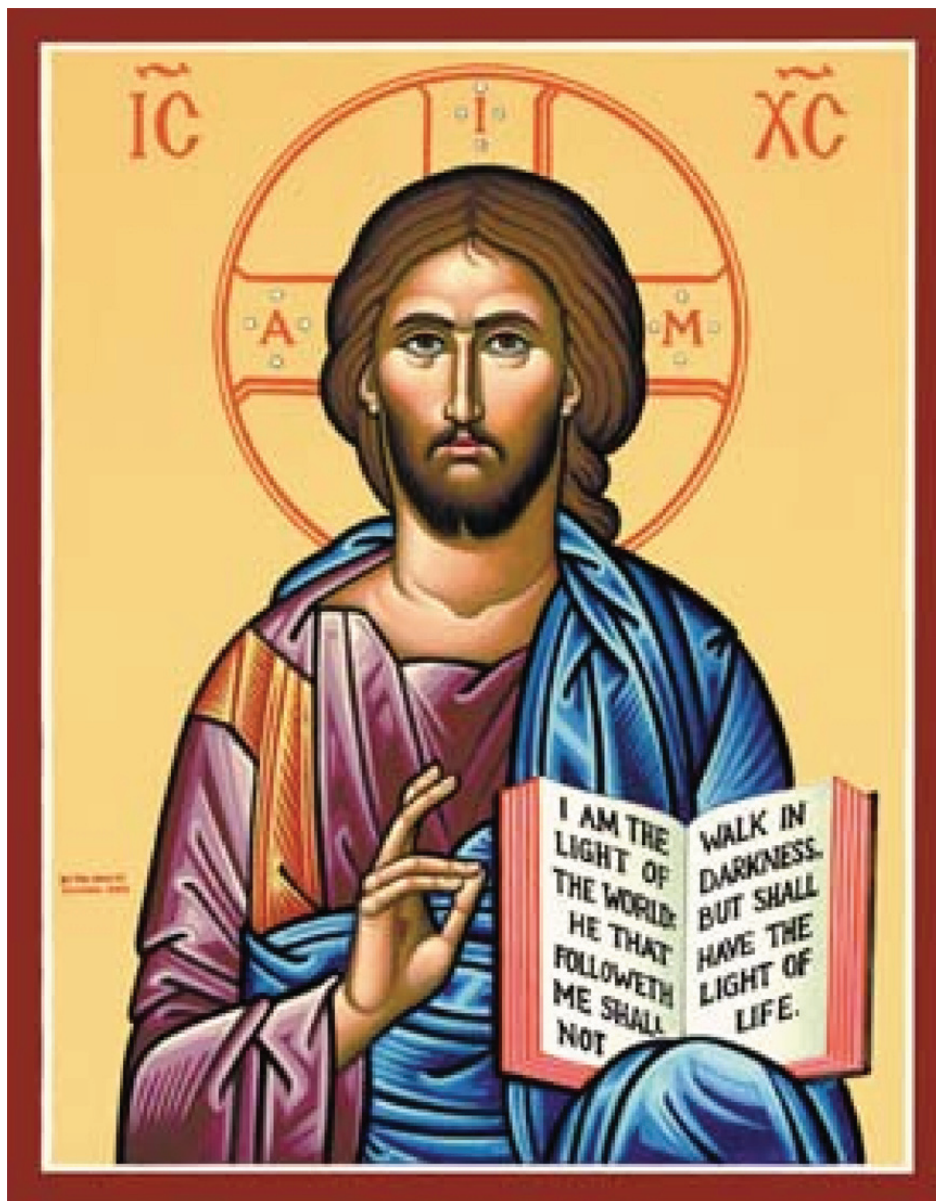


Welcome



Icon of Christ courtesy of www.MonasteryIcons.com

By **Pastor Edward F. Markquart**
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Life of Christ

A Study of the Four Gospels

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Session 1

Introduction

• *Prayer*

Welcome

Welcome to this class on the *Life of Christ: A Study of the Four Gospels*. During this fifty-four week course, you will have the privilege of seriously studying the life of Christ.

Many of you are at a time in your life when you want to study the life of Christ in depth. This is a moment in your life where you can gain a better understanding of Christ, the four gospels, and what it means for you to live out your Christian life. This class will help you do this.

As you walk into this class each time, you will see an image of Jesus Christ, The Teacher, projected on a screen. This icon is titled, “Christ Pantocrator” which means “Ruler of All.”

In this modern world, Jesus is still The Teacher who continues to teach us about the love of God and neighbor. We as human beings still have much to learn about loving God with all of our heart, mind and soul and our neighbor as ourselves.

The love of Christ, the Ruler over All (the title of this icon), still wants to rule over our lives, our families, our cultures, our nations, and our world.

“This icon is one of the best known presentations of Jesus in Byzantine iconography. While holding a Gospel that declares, “I am the Light of the world,” Christ blesses the beholder. His halo includes the letters “I AM,” symbolizing His divinity and referring to His words, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” The Greek letters “IC” and “XC” in the upper corners of the icon are abbreviations of the Greek word

Learn to love the beauty and significance of this icon during this class.

At the conclusion of the course, you will receive a graduation certificate with the picture of this icon on it. Perhaps, you will place this icon in your Bible or on your refrigerator.

(Any material highlighted in yellow will be shown as a power point during class. All power points and class material can be modified.)

Purposes

There are three purposes to this class:

1. to know and love Jesus Christ;
2. to know and love the four gospels;
3. to know and love one another in this class.

All three purposes will be the focus of this class. You will come to know Jesus Christ more closely and devoutly. The purpose of every sermon, class and gathering at church is to focus on Jesus Christ and his gracious love for us. Through this study of the four gospels, while sharing with others and praying, you will find yourself deepening your faith in Jesus Christ.

You will also come to know the four gospels more thoroughly. In your homework, you will be studying one small section of the gospels each day or night for a few minutes. Through intensive reading each day or night, you will gradually continue to grow in the Spirit of Jesus' life and also become aware many of the details of his life that you may not have known before. The class sessions will also add to your expanding knowledge of the four gospels.

You will also learn to know each other in class. During this class, you will be part of several small groups. The size of the small group may be 3-5 people. It is hoped that you would be in the same small group for several weeks and then change into another small group for the next segment of time. Over the duration of the class, you could be in numerous small groups. This is a great way to share your journey of faith and reinforce what you are learning.

There are two-four "small group discussion questions" provided for each session of the class. The length of each "small group" discussion may be about 10-12 minutes. The instructor will observe the flow of the discussion of the small groups. When the conversation has begun to slow down, the instructor will go to the next activity.

Try to have the same sized groups. Obviously, most often, a group of five would take longer than a group of three.

The three purposes of this class are easy to remember: to know and love Christ, to know and love the four gospels, to know and love each other.

Invite your friends, family, neighbors and associates

Many people surrounding us love the gospel and want to gain a better understanding of the four gospels. Such people are often open to coming to church for a course in the gospels, but they may not be interested in "coming to worship." It is an appropriate time for you to ask friends if they are interested in a Bible study in the gospels. For many people, the Old Testament can be filled with too many archaic stories, and the Apostle Paul may espouse too many complicated theological doctrines. Most people are more receptive to the simplicities of Jesus' teachings, parables, miracles and other great stories about Jesus' life. The four gospels are often a favorite choice for newer and beginning Christians. In other words, ask your friends to be part of this class. You may be surprised. Some friends/family may actually say "yes" to your invitation.



Discussion Question:

Introduce yourself, and briefly talk about your family, works, hobbies and interests

Each week, there will be 2-4 discussion questions during the class period. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to the questions. This is simply a time to get to know each other and share our feelings/observations about

a question.

It is now time to break into small groups and have a small group conversation for perhaps 10-12 minutes.

Needed for the course: The textbook and daily readings

Instructor: Distribute the textbook and the handout of the Table of Contents and the Daily Gospel Readings (pp 1-12).

The basic text that we are using for this course is the *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* by Kurt Aland, English edition, United Bible Societies. This book is not available as an electronic book, but can be ordered from your favorite bookstore or from the [American Bible Society](#) or www.amazon.com.

Your copy has been ordered for you. It is now in your hands.

The outline for the Daily Gospel Readings has been printed for each student and has been distributed. This outline gives the specific daily readings, so that a person can read a specific section of the four gospels each morning or night. This is good preparation for the class period.

Examine the primary text: Synopsis of the Four Gospels

The *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* is a great book. You will discover how great it is as you read it. You will discover how ingeniously it is organized.

Have the book in your hands. Get a feeling for the texture of the cover.

Write your name in the book, preferably in large print on the outside paper edges. If you have your name written in large letters on the outside of the book, it can easily be identified as yours if you misplace it.

Bring the book to class with you.

This book is edited by Kurt Aland. His name, Aland, rhymes with Holland. Please turn to the third page in the preface of this book. (This is not page three, but the third page in the preface.) Notice that this version is from the Greek text of the Nestle-Aland 26th edition of the Greek New Testament. In other words, almost all preachers know that the Nestle-Aland Greek text is the best Greek translation of the New Testament. *All* current translations of the New Testament today such as the *New International Version* or *New Revised Standard Version* go back to one primary Greek text of the New Testament and that text is the Nestle-Aland text.

What you have in your hand is an *English* version of this classic Greek text, done by none other than himself, “his theological majesty” Dr. Kurt Aland (1915-1994). He was a professor at the University of Munster in Germany when this work was done (1982). The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says: “the latest and best regarded Greek synopsis is that of the German scholar, Kurt Aland.”

Examine the printed handout

- Briefly examine the front page/picture of Christ.
- Briefly examine the Table of Contents and the flow of the 54 lessons.
- Briefly examine the Daily Gospel Readings.

A “study process” for the Daily Gospel Readings

- Begin and end the process with prayer.
- Study *only the designated* sections in the *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*.

- Set aside five to ten minutes a day for your reading.
- Use the Daily Gospel Readings as a system for your daily readings.
- Know that God always speaks to you through The Word.
- Be open to the Spirit speaking to you through the Scriptures you are reading.
- Compare the similarities/differences of the Biblical accounts of the same story.
- Feel free to write in and mark up this Bible.
- Highlight in yellow/pink those phrases/words that are most meaningful to you.
- Make notations of your thoughts.
- Write in the margins a personal reflection based on those phrases/words.
- Bring the text to class so it can be used as a notebook.
- There will be lectures and discussion in class each week, based on the readings.
- Lectures will be emailed to you each week, after the class is taught.
- Each class session will last approximately 90 minutes.

This course is interactive

There are seven levels of interaction during this course.

1. With the Word. This will be an intense study in the gospels for the laity.
2. With the instructor. A good Bible teacher is important to learning.
3. With each other. There are two-four weekly discussion questions provided.
4. With the best visuals (superb art, photography, archeology) from the Internet.
5. With the lessons. The lessons will be emailed so they can be further studied.
6. With the Lord God. Through all of the above, the Lord God will speak.
7. With one's own heart, soul, and mind. The inner self will be nourished.

Examine page 1 in *The Synopsis*: “Hands on the text”

Notice the four columns. Notice the particularity and individuality of the four authors.

Notice Matthew's column that traces Jesus to David and Abraham.

Notice Mark's column and its brevity and calling Jesus the Son of God.

Notice Luke's column and its detailed historical observations.

Notice John's column and how philosophical John is.

Each day, you are to read a specific section twice: once with a highlighter (to emphasize what you see) and then secondly, with a pen (to write a personal note or message.)

Make notes and observations. Mess up this Bible with your writing and underlining.

Martin Luther said that the Bible has feet to chase after us, arms to hold us, a voice to speak to us, and emotions to touch our heart. God is always speaking to us through the Word. Write down a few thoughts or sentences each day about the way God has spoken to you in this particular passage.

There are three activities for you each day:

1. Read and study the designated Scripture passage;
2. As you read, highlight certain words and phrases that speak to you.
3. Briefly write a response to what you have read.

Examine pages 1-12 in *The Synopsis*

Notice that these readings all focus on the birth and infancy stories about Jesus.

Notice that the numbers and headings in the SYNOPSIS correspond to the outline.

Notice that each page has smaller print at the bottom. These are other translations.

Notice that many pages contain smaller print. Skim the smaller print.

Notice all the white space for your personal notes, reflections, and notes from class.

Suggestions for reading *The Synopsis*

- All the stories, teachings, parables, miracles, and narratives of Jesus will be read.
- We will study these sections *only* once.
- Often, there are numbers listed below the designated section and these numbers show where these particular verses can be found elsewhere in the gospels. (See page 24, #25).
- If there are four columns, often the *primary* reading is *heavily italicized* in black ink. (See page 31, #33, Luke 4:16-30). The primary reading is to be carefully read. Supplement that reading with the parallel readings.
- Stop! Watch! Be attentive! Focus on the specific numbers of the reading for the day and study those specific sections. You will skip certain sections that you have already read or you will read later.

An Analogy about Beverly Doolittle's paintings

Beverly Doolittle's paintings are often referred to as "camouflage art." You, as the viewer, need to carefully examine intricacies of her paintings in order to see everything in them.

Carefully examine the details of Beverly Doolittle's "camouflage art"

 [The Earth is My Mother](#)

 [Woodland Encounter](#)

What do you see in the portrait? Look closely. Look carefully. Your eyes and mind need to be very active and busy to see all the detail in the painting. Do you see the rabbit on her left ear, the man near her left temple, the woman to the left of her lips? What other details do you see as you carefully examine this portrait? There are many details to see.

So it is with the study and comparison of the four gospels. Your eyes and mind need to be very active to discern the differences in the details of the four portraits of Jesus Christ that are found in the four gospels. As a student, you need to observe carefully... ..slowly...deliberately... examining four columns, four different portraits of the words and actions of Jesus, and you need to discover for yourself the intricacies and nuances of each portrait.

A good teacher will help you discover the details for yourself.

One of the pleasures of this course will be to discover the individual intricacies of each Biblical author. It will be like looking at another painting by Beverly Doolittle, "[Woodland Encounter](#)," of Appaloosa horses hidden behind birch trees that are covered by the snows of winter. As you first look at the snow covered birch trees, you do not initially see the spotted Appaloosa horses, hidden in the trees, but gradually you do. In fact, you discover several spotted horses hidden in the intricacies of her paintings of the spotted birch trees.

Similarly, as you carefully examine specific texts in four parallel columns, you will discover all kinds of the specific details in the gospel you hadn't seen at first. As you do this, the Bible will become more alive to you.

Do you see the horses? The Indian? How many? The fox? Do you not have to look slowly and carefully?

So it is when you examine the four gospels in parallel. You need to look slowly and carefully to see the details and differences in each author. This is a fundamental principle when taking this course.

This class will introduce you to some of the finest visual aids for Bible study

It is not only studying and comparing the details within the four gospels that makes this course interesting.

Also, you will see *superb visual aids* from the Internet. These graphic images will help to understand the life of Jesus more fully. That is, you will see some of the finest maps and photographs of the geography of Jesus, exceptional pictures of archeological sites related to the life of Jesus, excellent paintings of particular moments in Jesus' life. These historic paintings come from museums around the globe.

Always click on the Internet links during each lesson and a visual world about the Bible will open up to you.

This curriculum includes a listing of links to web postings of copyrighted images (like fine art and photos) that reinforce the themes of each session. Participants are encouraged to visit these websites to see these images.

Each lesson will be emailed to you after the class presentation and you, as a student, can slowly and carefully examine all the images.

Examine a map of the Life of Christ

 [Map of the Life of Christ](#)

Take a moment and examine the above map carefully. What do you see? Start to get a feeling for the map of Jesus' life.

Please note the insert on the top left of the map. Notice all the primary cities/villages where Jesus lived out his day-to-day life.

This process of examining images from the Internet will occur several times during each lesson plan. *As a student, you are to open the link and immerse yourself in the image.* You will flip back and forth, between the image and the class lecture. This will assist you in seeing more details in the visual image.

Examine a map of the primary places of the Life of Christ



Begin to memorize the important geographical locations in Jesus' life:

The primary bodies of water in Jesus' life: the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, the Dead Sea.

The primary cities in Jesus' life: Capernaum in adulthood, Nazareth where he was reared, Jerusalem where he taught in the temple and Bethlehem where he was born.

The primary provinces in Jesus' life: Galilee in the north, Samaria in the middle of the country, and Judea in the south.

Examine paintings from the Life of Christ

In this class, you will be able to view numerous classic paintings about Jesus' life. You will see numerous famous paintings of Jesus' birth, baptism, temptation, Galilee, Jerusalem, etc. The primary website for finding such paintings on the web is called, [Biblical Art on the WWW](#).

Go to this website and then click the link to Biblical Subject, then the link to the New Testament: [New Testament](#) This page is an endless resource for links to the paintings about Jesus' life... by topic.

Or, go to this website [Biblical Art on the WWW](#) and then click the link to Biblical Text, then the link to New Testament. Almost all the paintings viewed in this course can be trace to one of the four gospels listed in the following link: [the four gospels](#). Click on one of the four gospels and then click on any verse and you will see numerous paintings.

In preparation for this class, as the author, I have viewed thousands of these paintings and tried to find the most engaging works of art about a given Biblical text.

For example, in Lesson 4, we will examine the following paintings on the theme, "Paintings of Mother Mary with baby Jesus." Open the following links and immerse yourselves in these works of art:

Examine paintings of Mother Mary with baby Jesus

 [Adoration of the Shepherds, Gerard \(Gerrit\) van Honthorst](#)

 [Birth of Jesus, American Contemporary](#)

 [Mother and Child, Raphael](#)

 [Mother and Child, Mafa](#)

Which of these paintings speaks most deeply to you and why?

This process (opening links and immersing yourself in works of art and photography) will happen in every lesson. When you view the painting at home on your computer, you will have more time to immerse yourself in it.

A key to learning is always to pause, stop, listen, and feel "what's inside" the painting. Listen to the painting.

Repeatedly in this course, we will return to the basic analogy about Beverly Doolittle's camouflage. We, as the viewers, need to carefully examine intricacies of her paintings in order to see everything in them. That is true with every painting that you see during this course.

When viewing each painting, a student may ask: "What am I seeing? What do I feel? Why does this particular painting touch me more deeply? What is the artist attempting to convey? Does the artist accurately capture the scene in the Biblical text?"

Certain lessons will view numerous painting and photographs. Other lessons will view none. Why? Certain themes in Jesus' life are more easily to visualize for a painter or photographer. For example, there are numerous paintings about certain miracle stories (a sick man being lowered through the roof of a house), certain parables (a sower went out to sow), and certain historical incidents (Jesus teaching from a boat off the shore from the Sea of Galilee).

There are literally hundreds of paintings on *visual* themes from the life of Jesus.

But there are almost no paintings of Jesus' pithy teachings or philosophical discourses.

In other words, certain lessons will examine several paintings and photographs; other lessons will examine almost none.

Examine photographs from the land of Jesus

[In this class, you will see some fine photography about the land and life of Jesus. In the following,](#) scroll down to see several of the photographs of the Sea of Galilee. (This link is slow.)

Also note a photograph of a reconstructed fishing boat made out of wood. That fishing boat was 26 feet long and large enough for fifteen fishermen. This reconstruction was based on an archeological find in 1986, when the Sea of Galilee was exceptionally low and archeologists found remnants of a similar sized boat from the time of Christ. We will study this archeological find in Lesson 7.



Discussion Question:

Who was most influential on your Christian faith and why?

Or, who had the greatest influence on your Christian life and why?

Remember that you as a group have 10-12 minutes to discuss this question.

There is no appointed leader for each small group.

As a group, try to stay focused on the question.

Try to share time equally, so that no one person dominates the time allocated.

Each week, there will be two-four discussion questions during the class session itself.

“Quotable Quotes” about the Bible

It is time to slow down and absorb what these significant people have to say to us about the importance of the Bible in their daily lives.

I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through this book.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

The Bible grows more beautiful as we grow in our understanding of it.

GOETHE

The Bible is the greatest benefit, which the human race has ever experienced.

EMMANUEL KANT

So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society. I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

When you have read the Bible, you will know that it is the Word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own happiness, and your own duty.

WOODROW WILSON

A man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlastingly...The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me, it has hands, it lays hold on me.

MARTIN LUTHER

Many books in my library are now behind and beneath me. They were good in their way once, and so were the clothes I wore when I was ten years old; but I have outgrown them. Nobody ever outgrows the Scriptures; the book widens and deepens with our years.

CHARLES SPURGEON

What will I learn from this course?

- I will find Jesus Christ, the Beauty of God. As Christians, we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Christ is the perfect imitation of his Father who is God, the Creator of the universe. We believe that Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God, the Creator. That is, Jesus Christ is God in the flesh.We Christians further believe that Jesus is the Mind of God. Christ is the logic or logos of God.We further believe that Jesus is the Love of God. In Jesus, we encounter gracious love for us, given as a pure gift, totally unearned and undeserved.

When we add all these truths together, we can say that Christ is the Beauty of God. That is, in the Greek Orthodox Church, they speak of God and Christ as pure Beauty.

We know what it means to search for beauty in nature. We search for beauty all the time such as recently on a vacation to Maine. We were forever searching for beautiful autumn leaves, beautiful beaches, beautiful coastlines, beautiful mountains, beautiful panoramas. Constantly in life, we are forever searching for moments of Beauty.

Likewise, we seek for Beauty in human relationships. Such as when Nelson Mandela forgave his captors when he was in prison for some twenty-five years. Or Mother Theresa when she was picking up a nasty, dying piece of flesh from the gutter and she believed that this dying piece of flesh was a dignified human being. All around us. In our marriages, our friendships, our family. We are forever seeing the Beauty of God enacted before our lives and we are touched deeply, just as we are touched deeply by the beauty of sunsets and ocean coastlines.

In this class, Christ comes to us as the Beauty of God, and we search for God's beauty anew in every moment of every day and are often overwhelmed with the Beauty of God that we see and experience in the person of Jesus Christ.

In this class, you will have the opportunity to read sermons (or portions of sermons) on a theme. The following sermon is entitled, "[The Beauty of God](#)." This sermon is a good introduction to me as a person and pastor and

demonstrates the values I hold dear. You may want to read it.

- **I will find the gospel.** The gospel is God's good news of loving us in spite of our sinful selves and sinful circumstances. One thing we know for sure, we are poked and marked with sin at our very core and we all know that we cannot escape our dispositions and personalities. In all of this, we do not find God's condemnation for our sinfulness and imperfections. What we need is not God's condemnation of our flawed sinfulness but God's joyful celebration of our individual uniqueness. As we read and study the four gospels, we will read them with the Spirit of Jesus and his gracious love and mercy for us sinful imperfect people.

- **I will find love, wisdom and strength for daily living.** In my personal translation of Psalm 23, the words go like this: "You Lord are my shepherd and you take great care of me. You make me lie down in green pastures that are abundant with your food. You lead me beside still waters that are filled with your Spirit. Thereby, you restore my soul and inner emotions. You lead me in the paths of right relationships that please your powerful Presence. Even though I walk through the deep valleys of darkness and death, I will not fear evil for you are with me. Your Word and Wisdom strengthen me." The Bible is the Word and Wisdom of God. God's Word and Wisdom make us strong. They strengthen us. In these gospels, you will find love, wisdom and strength for daily living because God has promised to give us these qualities... in abundance.

- **I will find new insights, a greater understanding and deeper appreciation of the four gospels, the Word of God.** Most Christians come to a Bible study with certain expectations and these Christians want to find and expect to find new perspectives on the Bible. This course will not disappoint you. As you carefully examine the specific Scriptures and their parallels, you will learn and discover new things. As Spurgeon said so long ago, "I do outgrow my clothing from my childhood, but I never outgrow what I learn from the Scriptures." Don't worry. You will learn again and again as you saturate yourself in the Word of God.



Discussion Question:

How did you become part of this congregation?

Discuss this question in a small group at this time. It is an opportunity to begin to know each other. Remember, you have about 10 minutes for this small group discussion. Please share time, so that everyone in the group receives an equal opportunity to speak.

Complete the form on your table: "Quest/ions"

Each week there will be an opportunity for you to ask questions. Please write those questions on the *Quest/ions* sheet of paper on your table and turn it in at the end of the class. Next week, the first portion of the class will be dedicated to addressing these questions. At the end of the class, turn in this paper with your questions to the front table.

Instructor: Always have stacks of *Quest/ions* on each table so that people can write their questions any time during the class period. These *Quest/ions* can be on half sheets of paper.

- ***Closing Prayers***
- ***There are no specific Biblical readings for this week.***
- ***Instead of specific readings, familiarize yourself with our basic textbook, Synopsis of the Four Gospels.***

A Poem

“When reading The Word, take special care
To find rich treasures hidden there;
Give thought to each line, each precept clear,
Listen for God, the Lord is near.”

In Conclusion

- Commitment: study daily the designated section for 5-10 minutes.
- Bring your *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* to class.
- Invite a friend, relative or neighbor who may be looking for an in-depth Bible study on the gospels.
- Read the lesson plan that will be emailed to you and especially examine the paintings and photography provided through the links.

Primary resources used to compose this course

- Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*
- Bible Soft, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Advanced Reference Library
- Biblical studies that were written for congregations during the past 40 years.
- Biblical sermons on specific texts (34 years, Grace Lutheran Church, Des Moines, WA)
- Commentary, *Luke*, Concordia Commentary, Arthur A. Just
- Commentary, *Luke*, <http://www.biblegateway.com> Other commentaries in this series.
- Commentary, *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*, William Barclay
- Commentary, *Matthew*, The Layman's Bible Commentary, Suzanne de Dietrich
- Commentary, *The Gospel According to John*, Raymond E. Brown
- Crossways*
- <http://bible.crosswalk.com/> Great resources for study of the Bible.
- <http://www.biblical-art.com/> A great collection of art on the web.
- <http://www.sermonsfromseattle.com/> My collection of lectionary sermons.
- Internet, Google Search Engine. The best on the web for maps, photos, art, archeology.
- Lectionary studies in preparation for sermons (34 years, Grace Lutheran Church)
- Series of Commentaries on the Gospels e.g. *The Interpreter's Bible*, etc.
- The Bethel Bible Series*

Tips: Power Point Ideas for the Instructor

I think it is beneficial to have an assistant present during class to show the power point presentation. As an instructor, I can then focus fully on teaching.

I think it is helpful to have a hard copy for both the instructor and the assistant. (3 inch, 3 ringed, 3-holed paper, black and white ink only, draft, notebook dividers for each lesson)

Links to paintings and photographs are forever changing. As time goes by, some links that are presented in this course will no longer function. When that happens, use <http://www.biblical-art.com/> and <http://images.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi> to find other images that illustrate the theme being taught. In Google Images, type in the title of the painting and name of the artist and normally, several images of the painting will appear.

***** Please remember that anything in each lesson can be modified and revised. *****

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