

The Gospels

Student Syllabus

ACADEMIC
PACKET

RESOURCES FOR GROUPS
USING THE ACADEMIC PACKETS



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ABOUT THIRD MILLENNIUM MINISTRIES

Founded in 1997, Third Millennium Ministries is a non-profit Evangelical Christian ministry dedicated to providing:

Biblical Education. For the World. For Free.

Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

Over the years, we have developed a highly cost-effective method of producing award-winning multimedia lessons of the finest content and quality. Our writers and editors are theologically-trained educators, our translators are theologically-astute native speakers of their target languages, and our lessons contain the insights of hundreds of respected seminary professors and pastors from around the world. In addition, our graphic designers, illustrators, and producers adhere to the highest production standards using state-of-the-art equipment and techniques.

In order to accomplish our distribution goals, Third Millennium has forged strategic partnerships with churches, seminaries, Bible schools, missionaries, Christian broadcasters and satellite television providers, and other organizations. These relationships have already resulted in the distribution of countless video lessons to indigenous leaders, pastors, and seminary students. Our websites also serve as avenues of distribution and provide additional materials to supplement our lessons, including materials on how to start your own learning community.

Third Millennium Ministries is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation. We depend on the generous, tax-deductible contributions of churches, foundations, businesses, and individuals. For more information about our ministry, and to learn how you can get involved, please visit www.thirdmill.org.



COURSE DESCRIPTION

The four gospels are key books of the Bible, since they narrate the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Each gospel has a unique perspective and a unique purpose. This course explains the background, the structure, the main contents, and the major themes of each gospel. It is based on the lecture series, [The Gospels](#), produced by Third Millennium Ministries and hosted by Dr. Pete Alwinson with contributions from a variety of professors.

PROFESSORS

In this course a wide variety of professors from different backgrounds and different denominations participate in the making of the videos. That list has been given at the bottom of this syllabus.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

GOALS

In this course, we would like to accomplish the following:

1. We hope you become fascinated by the four gospels and enthusiastic about studying them more carefully.
2. We hope you will learn the key information about the background, the contents, and the major themes of each of the gospels.
3. We hope that you will apply to your own life the lessons learned as you study the four gospels, especially that you come to know Jesus better and love Him more.

OBJECTIVES

When you have done the following, it will show that the goals are met:

1. Obtain satisfactory grades on the tests, demonstrating that you can: a) identify key information about the background of each of the four gospels, including their author, the audience, the date of composition,

and the purpose, b) identify the structure and key contents of each of the four gospels, and c) identify the major themes of each of the four gospels.

2. Answer the application questions in the study guides, expressing your own thoughts and attitudes regarding the four gospels, and showing how you have applied the teachings of the course to your own life, especially how the course has changed your attitude toward Jesus.

THE FACILITATOR

This course is designed to be studied in a group with a facilitator, supervisor, or mentor. If you do not have a facilitator, you may wish to speak with your pastor or some spiritual leader in your church. The facilitator should read the "General Guidelines for Facilitators."

OTHER MATERIALS

Besides this syllabus, there are other resources you will need for this course. They should be available in the same place, or same folder, where you found this file. If not, talk to your facilitator.

CREDIT

Third Millennium does not offer credit for their courses. However, the materials are offered freely to any institution that would like to use them. If the student would like to seek credit for the course, he needs to find an institution that will supervise his studies and give him credit. He should consult with them to see about their requirements and expectations.

THEMATIC OUTLINE OF THE COURSE

1. Introduction to the Gospels
2. The Gospel of Matthew
3. The Gospel of Mark
4. The Gospel of Luke
5. The Gospel of John

GENERAL EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

The guidelines for assignments below are meant to be suggestions. Each group or academic institution may customize the course according to the needs of their students. For example, some may prefer to require the additional reading, while others may not. The same applies to the optional written project. Furthermore, some may prefer to meet once a week, while others prefer to meet more often or less often. Some groups may prefer to restructure the assignments to fit a regular pattern of classes, possibly a period of eight weeks, for example.

Don't worry about the details now, since they will be given to you as you go through the assignments of each session, but in order for you to know what to plan for, the suggested assignments can be summarized as follows:

The Lectures

1. Watch the video lectures (or listen to the audio, or read the text version).
2. Complete the study guides for each section of each lesson. This includes writing notes on the lesson while using the outline provided, answering the review questions, and answering the application questions.
3. Take the tests on each lesson. These will be administered in the classes. (For credit, they must be graded by the authorities of the academic institution where the student is seeking credit.)

Optional Additional Reading

Read the additional reading. This may be done in two different ways, according to the agreement you have with the facilitator or academic institution. Option 1: Read the selected additional reading provided for this course, and take the test on it. Option 2: Read at least 300 pages of additional reading that you select from the list of "Recommended Extra Reading." In this case, you should turn in a written report on each book or article, using the "Form for reading reports." (For credit, these reports must be turned in for evaluation.)

Optional Written Project

Write an 8-10 page project, following the instructions found below. (For credit, this must be turned in for evaluation.)

GRADES

We recommend calculating the final grade as follows, depending on the option selected:

- a) Without the additional reading or written project:

Each test is 20%.

- b) Including the additional reading, but without the written project:

Each test is 15% (total: 75%).
The additional reading is 25%.

- c) Including the written project, but without the additional reading:

Each test is 15% (total: 75%).
The written project is 25%.

d) Including both the additional reading and the written project:

Each test is 12% (total: 60%).
The additional reading is 20%.
The written project is 20%.

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENTS FOR EACH SESSION

These plans are only suggestions. Your facilitator may decide to modify them, as he talks things over with the group.

INITIAL PLANNING MEETING

The first meeting is a brief orientation for the course. There is no homework before the first meeting. The student will receive the materials he needs and talk over plans for the course.

NOTE: If the group is studying a series of courses, we recommend that you take advantage of the last session of each course to make arrangements for the following course, thus avoiding unnecessary extra meetings.

LESSON 1

Watch the first lesson in the video series from *Third Millennium*, "The Gospels."

The first lesson of this series is called "Introduction to the Gospels." We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the video.

SECTION 1

1. Watch section 1 of the first video lesson, called "Literary Character." (The video time is from the beginning to 34 minutes and 17 seconds, 00-34:17.)

Remember: You may also download the audio files for listening to the lecture, or you may also read the text version.

2. Use Study Guide 1.1 to help learn the contents of the first section of the lesson. Use the outline to take notes, answer the review questions, and answer the application questions.

SECTION 2

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Status in the Church" (Video time: 34:18-52:48), using Study Guide 1.2.

SECTION 3

Follow the same procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Unity" (Video time: 52:49-1:10:17), using Study Guide 1.3.

SECTION 4

1. Follow the same procedure for section 4 of the video lesson, "Variety" (Video time: 1:10:18-1:48:23), using Study Guide 1.4.

2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

NOTE: If you are going to do the additional reading, we recommend that you begin to do part of it now, to avoid reading a lot at the end of the course. See the assignments below.

LESSON 2

Watch the second lesson of the series, called "The Gospel of Matthew." We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the lesson.

SECTION 1

1. Watch section 1 of this second video lesson, called "Background" (00:35:10).
 2. Use Study Guide 2.1 to help learn the contents of the first section of the lesson. Use the outline to take notes, answer the review questions, and answer the application questions.
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SECTION 2

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Structure and Content" (35:11-1:46:41), using Study Guide 2.2.

SECTION 3

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Major Themes" (1:46:42-2:23:36), using Study Guide 2.3.
2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

LESSON 3

Study the third lesson of the video series, called "The Gospel of Mark."

We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the video.

SECTION 1

1. Watch section 1 of the third video lesson, called "Background" (00-22:54).
 2. Use Study Guide 3.1 to help learn the contents of the section.
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SECTION 2

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Structure and Content" (22:55-1:17:24), using Study Guide 3.2.

SECTION 3

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Major Themes" (1:17:25-1:54:21), using Study Guide 3.3.
2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

LESSON 4

Study the fourth lesson of the video series, called "The Gospel of Luke."
We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the video.

SECTION 1

1. Watch section 1 of the fourth video lesson, called "Background" (00:28:19).
 2. Use Study Guide 4.1 to help learn the contents of the section.
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SECTION 2

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Structure and Content" (28:20-1:34:44), using Study Guide 4.2.

SECTION 3

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Major Themes" (1:34:45-2:08:11), using Study Guide 4.3.
2. Review all sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

LESSON 5

Study the fifth lesson of the video series, called "The Gospel of John." We have broken down the assignments into parts, according to the main sections of the video.

SECTION 1

1. Watch section 1 of the fifth video lesson, called "Background" (00-35:05).
 2. Use Study Guide 5.1 to help learn the contents of the section.
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SECTION 2

Repeat this procedure for section 2 of the video lesson, "Structure and Content" (35:06-1:20:54), using Study Guide 5.2.

SECTION 3

1. Repeat this procedure for section 3 of the video lesson, "Major Themes" (1:20:55-2:03:46), using Study Guide 5.3.
2. Review all the sections of the lesson, in preparation for the test.

ADDITIONAL READING

Option 1:

1. Read *The Literature and History of New Testament Times*, by John Gresham Machen, using the study guide to help find the most important points.
2. Read all four of the Gospels.
3. Take the test in the next class on this reading.

Option 2:

1. Read at least 300 pages of additional reading, selecting from the list of "Recommended Extra Reading." Find resources related to the topics of this course.
2. Fill out a separate written report on each book or article, using the "Form for Reading Reports."
3. Prepare to share what you are learning from your reading and *turn in your written reports*.

OPTIONAL WRITTEN PROJECT

Some groups may require a written project. If so, we recommend a project of 8-10 pages, using the following guidelines:

1. Choose a short passage (from two to eight verses) from one of the four gospels, in order to write an analysis (exegesis) of the passage. Find a passage that you have a hard time understanding, or that raises questions. This way you will learn more from your study.
2. Read the passage in several different translations, and write down key questions that you have regarding the proper interpretation of the passage. For example: What words do you not understand? What phrases seem perplexing? Is there something that seems to contradict some other passage of the Bible? Is there something that seems to go against your understanding of theology?
3. Investigate the historical background and context of the passage. For this, you may need to find Introductions or commentaries. See the list of "Recommended Extra Reading." If you have electronic software, such as Logos, BibleWorks, E-Sword, or Bible Gateway, you can use it for this research.
4. Research key words in the passage. Look them up in a dictionary. Look them up in a concordance to see how the rest of the Bible uses them. Focus especially on writings of the same author. If you know Greek, look up the words in a dictionary of New Testament Greek. Use electronic software for this also.
5. Review the immediate context of the passage to see if anything helps understand your verses.
6. Consider the overall historical context of your passage. How does this fit into the history of the whole Bible? How does it fit into the general plan of redemption?
7. Look up cross references to see parallel passages or passages that deal with similar subjects.
8. Read commentaries to evaluate the opinions of these authors. See the list of recommended extra reading for suggestions.
9. Make sure you keep good notes on your research. If you are quoting from some source, or even taking ideas without quoting exactly, you must write down the author, name of book, place of publishing, publishing company, year of publishing, and the page or pages where you got your ideas or your quotes.
10. Write a rough draft of the project.
 - a. Be very careful to follow the "Guidelines for Writing an Essay."
 - b. Make an outline and begin writing. Make sure you include an introduction that stirs interest in the study.
 - c. Explain the questions that you are especially researching. In the main body, you should include possible answers to your questions that others offer, then give your own conclusions. Back up your opinions with biblical evidence and linguistic resources.
 - d. Try to discover the message of the passage for the believers who would read it at the time it was written, and try to apply the same message to people today. What practical importance does it have?
 - e. Take into account how the passage relates to Christ and the plan of salvation.
 - d. Include a conclusion, summarizing your answers.
11. Make sure to add footnotes where you have used ideas or if you have quoted from another source, and a bibliography at the end.

12. Edit the final version of your project. Read and re-read it until it flows clearly and is easy to understand. Correct any spelling errors or grammatical errors. Make sure you have documented the sources properly with footnotes and a bibliography. Make sure you have an introduction and a conclusion. Again, make sure you follow the "Guidelines for Writing and Essay."

13. Be prepared to turn in your project, and be prepared to share what you have been learning about the passage.

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