

## THE GOSPEL GAME

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When early Christians went forth spreading their good news about what God had brought to pass in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus-- they did so at first by word of mouth. Only after several decades did they begin to write their message down.

The early Christian did not keep the things they knew about Jesus locked up in a file case. They used everything they knew of Jesus' words and activities in their tasks of telling others about him in ministering to one another, in shaping their prayers, worship and daily life,

Imagine the period when the transition was being made from the life of Jesus to the written Gospels which tell us about it:

Jesus' ministry running from approximately 27AD to 30AD; then by 50AD the first written documents from Christian hands (the letters of Paul) are beginning to appear.

There was about four stages of this development:

(a) during Jesus' own lifetime no written records were kept about him by friend or foe

(b) from 30AD to about 100AD and beyond, the Gospel was spread by word of mouth

(c) about 70AD written materials about Jesus begin to appear

(d) finally the disciples themselves gathered various materials together (oral and written), emphasizing those facets of Jesus' life and teachings which best fitted the needs of the local church and the readers.

Throughout all this, there was the spreading of the good news about God's relationship to man, good news which would transform the lives of those who read and heard and believed. A major thrust of this good news was the revolutionary life style taught by Jesus.

The four documents of good news (the Gospels) are believed to have been written for four different social groups. That is, they present the life and teachings of Jesus from four different points of view:

MATTHEW: written for Jewish Christians and for gentiles living in Asia Minor; presents a fuller biography of Jesus and records more teachings than Mark; emphasizes that Christianity was not overthrowing but fulfilling Jewish law.

MARK: written for gentiles living in Rome to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and to encourage Christians suffering from Roman Persecution.

LUKE: written to a Roman official, perhaps to convince the imperial government that the Christians were not a subversive sect.

JOHN: written to a more theological minded and

philosophical group as compared to the three groups above.

THE GOSPEL GAME is a simulation exercise about the fourth stage in the development of the Gospels which we have with us today:

the pulling together of various materials about Jesus to fit the needs of particular people.

The purpose of the game is to demonstrate how a gospel writer's outlook on life, point of view, audience, and political pressures influenced how he wrote his good news.

The game has been used in communicant classes, retreats, bible study workshops and youth programs. It is recommended for use by 5th grade young people through adults.

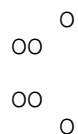
Many thanks goes to the many people who creatively played with such an idea as this one...

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR GAME ADMINISTRATION

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1. THE GOSPEL GAME is played best on the floor of a large room. The room should be large enough to accommodate 6 teams of 3-5 players each.

2. Space the teams any way you wish. We have found that spacing the teams well enough apart from each other in a circle arrangement like the following works best:



3. Each team is to have access to glue, newspapers, old magazines, large sheets of construction paper, and blank

4x6 cards. Each team should also have ample pencils or marking pens.

4. Become familiar with the sequence of game activities as found in the players instructions.
5. Allow one to two hours for playing THE GOSPEL GAME, discussion, and follow through activities.
6. When you are ready to begin the game, spend a few moments setting the climate for playing the game. You may want to use one of the media resources suggested in this booklet.
7. Hand out the game instructions to the players. Allow time for each team to read. Then "walk through" the sequence of events of the game and what is expected of each team.
8. Hand out game packets and announce that they have a time limit of 30 minutes in which to finish their gospel.
9. Act as a guide to the teams. Interpret the idea of the game to each team separately-- answering questions, suggesting possible ideas of how to work together.
10. Demonstrate your own excitement about playing THE GOSPEL GAME. If you are not personally eager to run it, don't go through with it. If you, as the administrator of the game, are excited, so will the players.
11. Give the players 30 minutes to make decisions and do their paste-ups. Give 15,10,and 5 minute warnings. Feel free to give players more time if they need it.
12. At the end of 30 minutes call time. Each team is to select a spokesperson to describe their gospel and how they feel it helps the intended audience; as well as way their particular gospel is important. Each group should be given a three minute time limit
13. After each team has reported, give three minutes of free time in which anyone may join other groups based on their gospels.
14. If possible go directly into the discussion period. Your role during this time is to be a facilitator, helping the entire group to reflect on their experience and the discussion activities.

#### PREPARING FOR PLAYING THE GOSPEL GAME

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1. Collect old magazines and newspapers. 2-3 for each player should be sufficient.
2. Collect a dozen or more small bottles of glue.
3. Collect 50-60 blank 4x6 cards or cut white construction paper to a similar size.
4. Collect a dozen or more sheets of 3'x5' construction paper
5. Prepare packets of game materials ahead of time. These packets are to contain scripture cards, one audience card, and players instructions
  - (a) Type or write the enclosed list of scripture verses on indicated colored 4x6 cards
  - (b) Type or write players instructions on 5x8 cards as

indicated on the enclosed list (enough for each player)

(c) Type or write audience cards as indicated on enclosed list

AUDIENCE PROFILES TO BE PUT ON CARDS:  
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AUDIENCE #1:

Write to people that are suffering from being attacked by Roman soldiers. It is important that you give them hope by showing them that Jesus is the Messiah.

AUDIENCE #2:

Write to people that are Jewish Christians, giving as full a biography of Jesus and recording as many of his teachings as you can. It is important that you emphasize that Christianity is not overthrowing but fulfilling Jewish law.

AUDIENCE #3:

Write to convince the Roman Government that the Christians were not trying to overthrow them. It is also important that you tell about healings and miracles of Jesus.

AUDIENCE #4:

Write to people that await the promised return of Jesus. Show them that Jesus gives life now to those who will believe.

AUDIENCE #5:

Write to people of today to show that there is hope, love, and power to those who believe in Jesus. And to believe means to become free unto a completely different life style.

AUDIENCE #6:

Write from the point of view of a gospel writer in the future (the year 2100 AD).

SCRIPTURE VERSES TO BE PUT ON CARDS:

Special Material In Luke: Special Material In Mark:  
[ON GREEN CARDS] [ON ORANGE CARDS]

Luke 10:30-36      Mark 2:13-14  
Luke 22:35-38      Mark 3:31-35  
Luke 18:10-14      Mark 2:1-12  
Luke 12:32-34      Mark 8:27-29  
Luke 12:47-48      Mark 6:45-51  
Luke 13:6-9      Mark 1:35-39

Mark 10:46-52  
Mark 7:31-37

Material Unique To Luke  
And Matthew Together:  
[ON BLUE CARDS] Old Testament Quotations

In Matthew

Luke 12:1-3 [ON RED CARDS]  
Luke 12:54-56  
Luke 21:32-33      Matthew 12:18-21

Luke 12:49-53      Matthew 8:17  
Luke 6:20-26Matthew 13:13-17  
Luke 11:2-4 Matthew 9:13  
Luke 12:10    Matthew 9:13  
Luke 18:15-17      Matthew 13:34-35  
Luke 11:29-32      Matthew 15:7-9  
Luke 13:22-24  
Luke 12:39-40  
Luke 17:20-21  
Matthew 8:5-13  
Matthew 24:29-31  
Matthew 24:36  
Matthew 7:15-20  
Matthew 10:34-39  
Matthew 6:34

#### INSTRUCTIONS TO PLAYERS

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YOU AND YOUR TEAM ARE GOSPEL WRITERS.  
WHAT WILL YOU SELECT TO BE IN YOUR GOSPEL?

YOU WILL HAVE AVAILABLE THE SAME  
KIND OF MATERIAL THAT A WRITER COULD  
HAVE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN AN AUDIENCE CARD THAT  
TELLS YOU WHAT PEOPLE YOU ARE TO WRITE YOUR  
GOSPEL TO. THINK TOGETHER ABOUT EVERYTHING  
YOU MIGHT KNOW ABOUT THESE PEOPLE: THEIR  
LIFE, NEEDS, PERSECUTION...

YOUR TEAM MUST DECIDE WHAT MATERIALS  
YOU WANT TO USE AND IN WHAT ORDER.  
LOOK AT THE SCRIPTURE CARDS. SELECT  
THOSE CARDS THAT CAN BEST BE USED TO  
WRITE TO YOUR AUDIENCE. HOW CAN YOU  
BEST GIVE THEM A MESSAGE OF HOPE,  
STRENGTH, COURAGE, AND FAITH?

YOU MAY MAKE UP OTHER MATERIAL OF YOUR OWN  
OUT OF NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES. BLANK  
CARDS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE.

PASTE YOUR "GOSPEL MATERIAL" IN THE  
ORDER YOU WANT ONTO THE CONSTRUCTION  
PAPER. WORK AS FAST AS YOU CAN. BE  
PREPARED TO SHARE YOUR GOSPEL WITH  
OTHER GROUPS.

#### RULES

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1. Everyone in your team must agree to any decisions made
2. You must use at least 12 scripture cards
3. You must be done within 30 minutes
4. No talking between teams

## RELATED ACTIVITIES

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1. Instead of giving the teams audience cards, have them pick their own audience.
2. Compare the general outline of the gospel written by each team to the general outline of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The INTERPRETER'S BIBLE [Abingdon Press] gives detailed outlines for each book of the bible.
3. Instead of just written material for scripture cards, tape some material orally-- to recreate oral tradition that the Gospel writers had to work with. This may necessitate giving the players more time during the game.
4. The good news of the Gospel written during the early church was proclaimed as news of an event which was good for people to hear. The result of its proclamation was that many responded with joy and "became Christian"... They shared the way of life of the Gospel writers and their conviction that Jesus has universal significance. Have the group compare the music and songs in contemporary hits to their own good news. What is the central convictions of the songs and of their own good news? Recent movies? TV shows? TV commercials?
5. Compare the songs and writings of such recordings as JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR, GODSPELL, and others to the gospels written by the players.
6. Follow through with the creative use of some of the media resources listed.
7. Give opportunity for some of the players to share their gospels at worship, family nights, congregational meetings...

## DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

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What kinds of decisions did you have to make in your group?

What sorts of problems did you face in selecting material for your gospel?

Do you think the gospel writers of the early church had the same problems? Any different problems? Why?

What was the general message of your gospel to your audience? Do you think you communicated any "good news"....?

Why did you go to join another group? What was their good news? What influenced you the most: message? artwork? friends? Do you think this happened in the early church?

Have the players look at the scripture cards used by each team. Mention that ORANGE CARDS represented special material that Mark used; RED CARDS represented Old Testament quotes that Matthew used; GREEN CARDS represented special material used by Luke; BLUE CARDS represented material unique to Luke and Matthew together. What color predominates the gospel of each team? How does this correspond to the audience they wrote to?

#### MEDIA RESOURCES

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##### BOOKS:

BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA FOR CHILDREN [Westminster Press, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia PA 19107]

EXERCISES IN INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE [Geneva Press, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia PA 19107]

THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE [Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave., South, Nashville TN 37202]

THE INTERPRETER'S DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE [Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave., South, Nashville TN 37202]

TWENTY WAYS OF TEACHING THE BIBLE [Abingdon Press]

THE WESTMINSTER DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE [Westminster Press, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia PA 19107]

THE WESTMINSTER HISTORICAL ATLAS TO THE BIBLE [Westminster Press, Witherspoon Building, Philadelphia PA 19107]

YOUNG READERS DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE [Abingdon Press, 201 8th Ave., South, Nashville TN 37202]

##### FILMS:

THE GUIDE [Cathedral Films, 2921 West Alameda Ave., Burbank CA 91505]

IT'S ABOUT THIS CARPENTER [New York University, Film Library, 26 Washington Pl., New York NY 10003]

NEW BORN AGAIN [Grailville, Loveland OH 45140]

THE SEASON [Contemporary Films 330 West 42nd St, New York NY 10036 or 828 Custer Ave, Evanston IL 60202]

##### FILMSTRIPS:

BEHIND THE SCENES IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES [Lutheran Church Supply Store P.O. Box 60207, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles CA 90060]

CHRIST IN THE ART OF AFRICA, CHINA, INDIA, JAPAN [Presbyterian Distribution Service, 200 West Adams St., Chicago IL]

60606]

FIVE PARABLES OF JESUS [United Church Press, 1505 Race St.,  
Philadelphia PA 19102]

FOUR GOSPELS KIT [Family Films, 5823 Santa Monica Blvd.,  
Hollywood CA 90038]

IMAGES OF CHRIST SERIES [Thomas S. Klise Co., P.O. Box  
3418, Peoria IL 61414]

WRITE IT IN A BOOK [Graded Press, 201 8th Ave., South,  
Nashville TN 37203]

RECORDS:

THE BIBLE TODAY [United Church Press, 1505 Race St.,  
Philadelphia PA 19102]

GODSPELL [Bell Records No. 1102]

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR [Decca Records No. 7206]

OTHER:

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL TODAY [John & Mary Harrell,  
P.O. Box 9006, Berkeley CA 94709] highly recommended