

Section Two: The Life of Christ, I

December 24 - February 13

THE LIFE OF CHRIST begins with Creation, with the Word of God in forming life (John 1:1-14), thus our attention to the life of Christ must move beyond a simple reflection on the past. It must move into the ongoing act of God in forming and creating now. And so we observe (quickly) Jesus grow up, enter into ministry, and challenge the status quo.

Reader's Notes:

There are several books, Gospels, that didn't get included in our Bible. They are known as "extra-canonical" Gospels, that is outside the canon (a fancy word for what was decided to be accepted Scripture). We touch on what these books have to offer in Appendix C.

Remember, don't get frustrated when you find the readings jumping around.

Dec 24	Luke 2:1-7	Jesus' Birth
Dec 25	Matthew 1:18-25	Birth of Jesus
Dec 26	Luke 2:8-20	Announcement to the Shepherds
Dec 27	Luke 2:21-38	Jesus' Circumcision, naming and temple presentation
Dec 28	Matthew 2	Coming of the Magi; Escape to Egypt; Murder of the Bethlehem Children & Return from Egypt
Dec 29	Luke 2:39-40 & Matthew 2:22-23 (Make note of extra canonical stuff, Appendix C)	Childhood of Jesus at Nazareth
Dec 30	Read Luke 1 & 2 in a sitting	
Dec 31	Read Matthew 1 & 2 in a sitting	
Jan 1	Catch Up Day	
Jan 2	Matthew 3:13-17 & Mark 1:9-11	Baptism of Jesus
Jan 3	Luke 3:21-22 & John 1:29-34	Baptism of Jesus



Reader's Notes:

A "Catch Up Day" is positioned in several places of the reading plan in order to help facilitate reviewing something again or reading a day you might have missed. however you use the day, be reading!

Pay close attention to the places where the Gospel writers make reference to Jesus fulfilling something from the Old Testament. What does this tell you about the audience to which they are writing?

Jan 4	Matthew 4:1-11 & Mark 1:12-13	Temptation of Jesus
Jan 5	Luke 4:1-13	Temptation of Jesus
Jan 6	Matthew 4:12-17; Isaiah 9:2; Mark 1:14 - 15; Luke 4:14 - 30; Isaiah 61:1-2, 58:6	Move to Galilee; Jesus' message; Jesus Announces Good News to the Poor
Jan 7	John 1:35-51 & Luke 6:12-16	Jesus calls apostles
Jan 8	Matthew 4:18-22 & Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11	Call of the first Disciples
Jan 9	Matthew 4:23-Matthew 5:12; Mark 3:7-12; Luke 6:17-26	Ministry to the crowds; Happy People (Beatitudes Matthew Beatitudes Luke)
Jan 10	Matthew 5:13-16 (Mark 4:21, 9:49-50; Luke 8:16, 14:34-35)	Salt and Light Talk about scholars view that Mark is primary source material - use 4:21 and 8:16 as examples
Jan 11	Matthew 5:17-26 (Luke 16:16-17, 12:57-59)	Jesus and the Law & Law of Murder
Jan 12	Matthew 5:27-32 (Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18)	Law of Adultery & Law of Divorce
Jan 13	Matthew 5:33-48; Luke 6:27-38	Law of solemn pledges; Law of retaliation; Law of Love
Jan 14	Matthew 6:1-15 (Mark 11:25; Luke 11:1-4)	Showy Religion, Showy prayer, Proper prayer (The Lord's Prayer)
Jan 15	Catch Up Day	

Jan 16	Matthew 6:16-24 (Luke 11:34-36, 12:33-34)	Showy Fasting; Earthly and Heavenly Treasures; Seeing and serving
Jan 17	Matthew 6:25-34 (Luke 12:22-34)	Worry about necessities
Jan 18	Matthew 7:1-12 (Mark 4:24-25; Luke 6:31, 37-42, 11:9-13)	Judging; Asking, seeking, knocking; Golden Rule
Jan 19	Matthew 7:13-23 (Luke 13:22-30, 6:43-45)	Narrow Gate; Tree and Fruit; Entrance Requirements
Jan 20	Matthew 7:24-29 & Luke 6:39-49	Two Foundations; Crowd's response
Jan 21	Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16	A Man with a skin disease
Jan 22	Matthew 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10	Healing of the centurion's servant
Jan 23	Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-39; Luke 4:38-44	Healing of many people
Jan 24	Matthew 8:18-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25, 9:57-62	Discussion about Following; Calming a storm
Jan 25	Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39	Jesus Frees demon-possessed men
Jan 26	Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26	Healing of a man who was paralyzed
Jan 27	Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17 & Luke 5:27-32	Calling of Matthew
Jan 28	Matthew 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22; Luke 5:33-39	Question about Fasting

Reader's Notes:

As you read the advice Jesus gives, does a theme emerge for you?

As you read the descriptions of Jesus' activities, try to picture in your mind the events as they happened. What do you see? Bear in mind, if the reaction of the people around is any indication, what they saw from Jesus was remarkable but it wasn't 'strange'. It was so far out that they stopped seeing him as human.

Video Links:

https://youtu.be/OSGXP_JKA3E

To see a video featuring the *Gospel of John* in its entirety (based on the NRSV version, word for word) you can check out the DVDs from the church library or view the YouTube video here: <https://youtu.be/BYrvOsc-rCU>

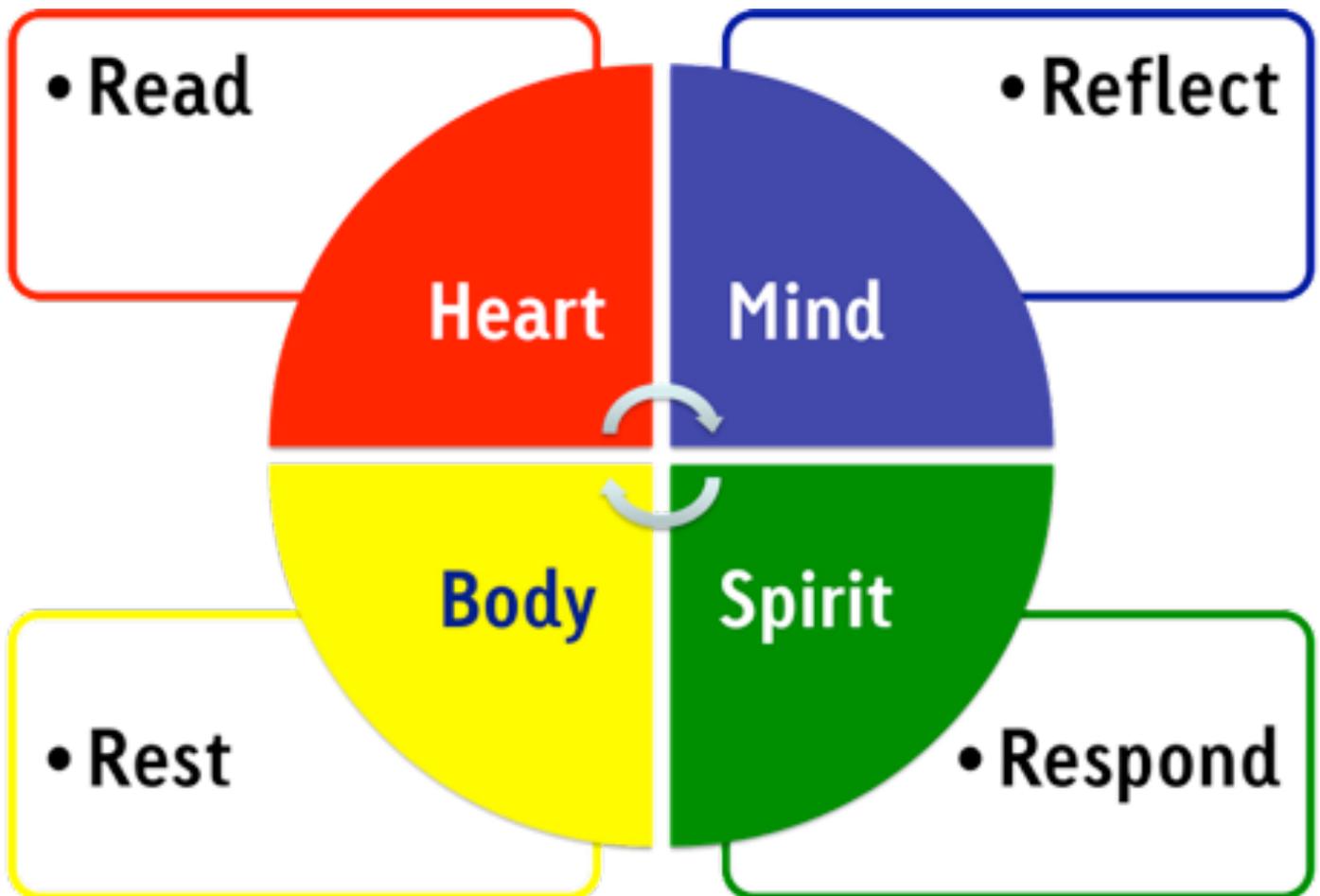


Jan 29	Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56	A Ruler's daughter and the woman who touched Jesus' clothes
Jan 30	Matthew 9:27-38	Healing of a man unable to speak & Compassion
Jan 31	Catch Up day	
Feb 1	Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43	Healing of two blind men
Feb 2	John 2:1-25	Wedding at Cana; Jesus in Jerusalem at Passover
Feb 3	John 3:1-21	Jesus and Nicodemus; John's final witness
Feb 4	John 4:1-42	Jesus leaves Judea & Jesus in Samaria
Feb 5	John 4:43-54	Jesus arrives in Galilee; Jesus second miraculous sign in Galilee
Feb 6	Matthew 10:1-15; Mark 6:7-13, 3:13-19	Mission of the Twelve; Commissioning of the Twelve
Feb 7	Luke 6:12-16, 9:1-6	Jesus Chooses apostles
Feb 8	Matthew 10:16-25, 24:9-14; Luke 21:12-19 (Mark 13:9-13; Luke 12:11-12)	Response to harassment
Feb 9	Matthew 10:26-39; Luke 51-53 (Luke 12:2-9)	Whom to Fear; Confessing Christ to People; Trouble in the family
Feb 10	Matthew 10:40-42; Mark 9:41; Luke 14:25-27	Rewards

Feb 11	Luke 9:10 - 17; Matthew 14:13-36	Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand
Feb 12	Mark 6:30-56; John 6:1-25	Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand
Feb 13	Luke 7:11-17	Jesus raises a widow's son

Spiritual Practice at Home

There are, of course, many approaches to reading Scripture, especially in a devotional way. Below are two approaches. Both take time and practice to do well. Determine to make time with a practice for at least a month.





<http://elevationwaterloo.org/lent2017/>

LECTIO DIVINA goes back to the 12th century where a monk named Guigo described four stages of spiritual reading, which are very different from the way we tend to read for information or to finish a section. In lectio divina, we don't read a lot, but it's kind of like the way you might eat a delicious caramel – letting the flavour develop slowly in your mouth, chewing on it for a while, before eventually swallowing it and letting it become part of us.

Lectio divina starts with reading. We read the passage of the Bible slowly and reflectively, letting God have the first words of the conversation. The next step is to reflect on the words. What do they mean? What jumps out at us? What's new? What might God be saying? Then it's our turn. Just as we listen to a friend in conversation and reflect on what they say and then respond, so part of this reading is to respond to what God has said to us. Our response comes from the heart and from our reaction to our reflection on what God has said. Finally, we take a few minutes to rest with God and in God's Word. We listen to anything God might say to us about how we might take this conversation into the rest of our lives, into the conversations we have with the world around us in the days to come.

It's as simple and as profound as that. It doesn't have to take tons of time. It just takes letting go of our busyness, our own thoughts and plans—and entering into a conversation with the God who wants to talk to His beloved people.

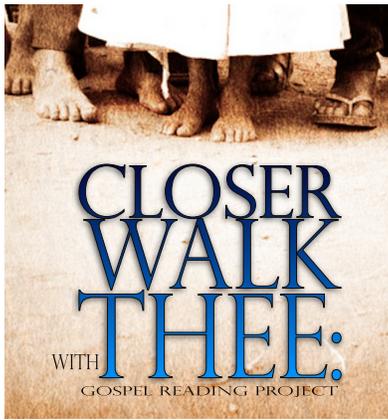
Steps to pray:

- **1. INVOKE**
Invite the Holy Spirit to guide the reading of the Scripture.
- **2. READ**
Ask yourself: What is this passage saying? If you can, use a Bible commentary.
- **3. MEDITATE**
In a moment of silence, try to listen to the voice of God.
- **4. PRAY**
Begin to dialogue with the Lord and open yourself to his will.
- **5. CONTEMPLATE**
Listen closely with your heart and put into practice what he has told you.

Reflections from Reading Group

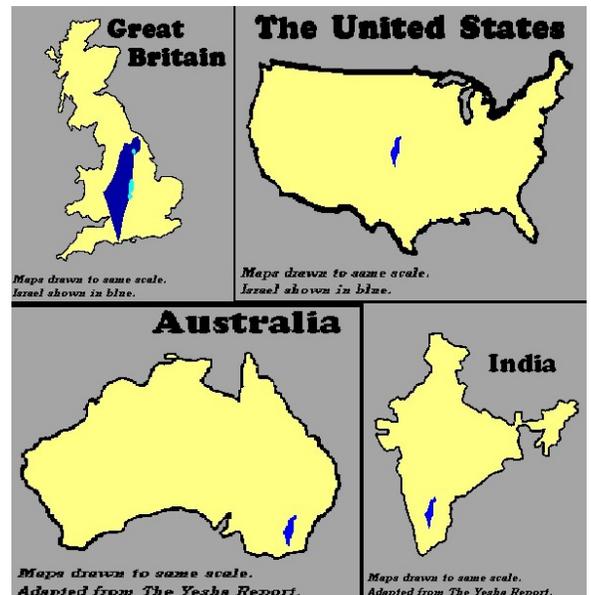
USE THIS SPACE to reflect on what you've read. Add pages to your binder if needed.

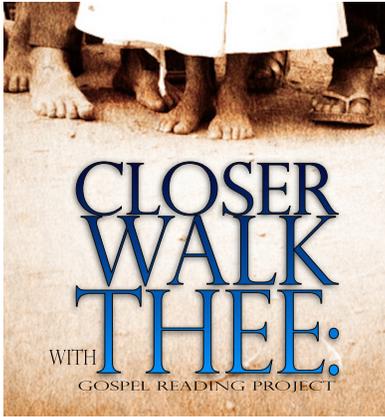
A large, empty rectangular box with a thin red border, occupying the majority of the page below the text. It is intended for users to write their reflections on the readings.



Appendix B: Walking the Path

JESUS' MINISTRY WAS LARGELY ON FOOT. This necessarily limits the scope of his ministry. These images are meant to convey those limits.





Video Links:

For a pretty fair summary of the Bible's formation history, this video may help: <https://youtu.be/nFEBwfYZBJY>

For a fairly academic view of the history of the Gnostic Gospels and the Gospel of John, this video may help (warning, it's pretty long): <https://youtu.be/TavH955eg8k>

For a pretty good presentations of the Church's history of the Bible try this video: <https://youtu.be/S1DBYlqp6aM>

Appendix C: Outside Approaches

THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY (also known as the "Chenoboskion Manuscripts," or as the "Gnostic Gospels") is a collection of early Christian and Gnostic texts discovered near the Upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi in 1945. Thirteen leather-bound vellum codices buried in a sealed jar were found by a local farmer named Muhammed al-Samman. The writings in these codices comprised fifty-two mostly Gnostic treatises, but they also include three works belonging to the Corpus Hermeticum and a partial translation/alteration of Plato's Republic. In his introduction to *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, James Robinson suggests that these codices may have belonged to a nearby Pachomian monastery and were buried after Saint Athanasius condemned the use of non-canonical books in his Festal Letter of 367 A.D. The discovery of these texts significantly influenced modern scholarship into early Christianity and Gnosticism.

The contents of the codices were written in the Coptic language. The best-known of these works is probably the Gospel of Thomas, of which the Nag Hammadi codices contain the only complete text. After the discovery, scholars recognized that fragments of these sayings attributed to Jesus appeared in manuscripts discovered at Oxyrhynchus in 1898 (P. Oxy. 1), and matching quotations were recognized in other early Christian sources. Subsequently, a 1st or 2nd century date of composition circa 80 AD or earlier has been proposed for the lost Greek originals of the Gospel of Thomas. The buried manuscripts date from the 3rd and 4th centuries.

The Nag Hammadi codices are currently housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Egypt.

...Although the manuscripts discovered at Nag Hammadi are generally dated to the 4th century, there is some debate regarding the original composition of the texts. A wide range and the majority of scholars date authorship of the Gnostic gospel of Nag Hammadi to the 2nd and 3rd century. Scholars with a focus on Christianity tend to date the gospels mentioned by [Irenaeus](#) to the 2nd century, and the gospels mentioned solely by [Jerome](#) to the 4th century. The traditional dating of the gospels derives primarily from this division. Other scholars with a deeper focus on pagan and Jewish literature of the period tend to date primarily based on the type of the work:

- 1 The Gospel of Thomas is held by most to be the earliest of the "gnostic" gospels composed. Scholars generally date the text to the early-mid 2nd century. The Gospel of Thomas, it is often claimed, has some gnostic elements but lacks the full gnostic

- cosmology. However, even the description of these elements as "gnostic" is based mainly upon the presupposition that the text as a whole is a "gnostic" gospel, and this idea itself is based upon little other than the fact that it was found along with gnostic texts at Nag Hammadi. Some scholars including Nicholas Perrin argue that Thomas is dependent on the Diatessaron, which was composed shortly after 172 by Tatian in Syria. A minority view contends for an early date of perhaps 50, citing a relationship to the hypothetical Q document among other reasons.
- 2 The Gospel of the Lord, a gnostic but otherwise non-canonical text, can be dated approximately during the time of Marcion in the early 2nd century. The traditional view holds Marcion did not compose the gospel directly but, "expunged [from the Gospel of Luke] all the things that oppose his view... but retained those things that accord with his opinion" The traditional view and dating has continued to be affirmed by the mainstream of biblical scholars, however, G. R. S. Mead His Gospel was presumably the collection of sayings in use among the Pauline churches of his day. Of course the patristic writers say that Marcion mutilated Luke's version.[16][17] have argued that Marcion's gospel predates the canonical Luke and was in use in Pauline churches.
 - 3 The Gospel of Truth and the teachings of the Pistis Sophia can be approximately dated to the early 2nd century as they were part of the original Valentinian school, though the gospel itself is 3rd century.
 - 4 Documents with a Sethian influence (like the Gospel of Judas, or outright Sethian like Coptic Gospel of the Egyptians can be dated substantially later than 40 and substantially earlier than 250; most scholars giving them a 2nd-century date. More conservative scholars using the traditional dating method would argue in these cases for the early 3rd century.[citation needed]
 - 5 Some gnostic gospels (for example Trimorphic Protennoia) make use of fully developed Neoplatonism and thus need to be dated after Plotinus in the 3rd century.

(The complete article is worth exploring if you're really interested in this topic. The full article lists all of the manuscripts and summarizes their contents. You can find it at the link below.)

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Hammadi_library