

## THE GOSPELS

LIBBY

GROUPIE: So, what are you reading?

KAI GROUPIE: Oh, I'm reading Aron Ralston's autobiography. He's the guy who got trapped in a canyon and had to ...

LIBBY

GROUPIE: Oh, yeah. He had to cut off his own arm to get out. It's crazy.

KAI GROUPIE: Yeah. Did you read it?

LIBBY

GROUPIE: Oh, yeah. No, I saw the movie, well, parts of it, the parts in the trailer. I saw the trailer. I get the gist.

KAI GROUPIE: Oh, well, you really should read it. It's a firsthand account, totally inspiring. What are you reading?

LIBBY

GROUPIE: Oh, The Gospels, the New Testament.

KAI GROUPIE: Oh, yeah. Great. Great.

LIBBY

GROUPIE: Yes. Yes.

KAI GROUPIE: Yeah. Yeah. Those are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

LIBBY

GROUPIE: Yeah. Sure. You betcha.

KAI GROUPIE: That's most important books to Christians in the whole Bible.

LIBBY

GROUPIE:

That's right. And for the same reasons, firsthand account of the teaching and life and death of Jesus. You've read them.

KAI GROUPIE: Oh, yeah. I saw the TV miniseries, parts of it. I get the gist.

LIBBY  
GROUPIE: Oh, heavens.

#### CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

KAI: I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby. Welcome to Catholic Central. Today we're taking a look at the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

KAI: You might think the Catholic translations of the Bible have a whole lot of books.

LIBBY: 73 books.

KAI: 73 books on a whole lot of different topics. So, what's the big deal for Christians about these four books? And why should even non-religious people care about them?

LIBBY: Unlike all the other books of the Bible, the Gospels are accounts of Jesus' life and ministry here on earth.

KAI: And they're based on the experiences of people who knew Jesus personally and were eye witnesses to His resurrection around 33 AD. At first they were passed down orally, then written down in stages by the early Christian community between 70 and 100 AD.

LIBBY: And unlike most of the Old Testament, which was written in Hebrew, the Gospels were written in Greek.

KAI: And that's because both Jews and non-Jews could read it that way. Back then, Greek was a common language like English is today.

- LIBBY: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are called the Evangelists, from the Greek meaning good messengers.
- KAI: And the word gospel itself comes from the Old English god-spell, meaning good news.
- LIBBY: So, what the good messengers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote wasn't just lists of things Jesus did, but it was good news to share with the whole world.
- KAI: And the good news was this: that the whole universe was made my an infinitely loving Creator, who came to earth and became one of us, Jesus.
- LIBBY: Catholics call this the Incarnation.
- KAI: And more good news, while on earth Jesus taught that the Kingdom of God is at hand. That God is with us here and everywhere, now and forever. In other words, life does have ultimate meaning.
- LIBBY: Catholics see this good news as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, where God promises to send an Anointed One, the Messiah, to transform the world.
- KAI: The Gospels show God keeping that promise through the person of Jesus.
- LIBBY: But the biggest part of the Gospels is the part that makes a lot of people uncomfortable, that Jesus says He is God and offers eternal life to those who take up their cross and follow Him.
- KAI: It made the leaders of His time so uncomfortable that they condemned Him to death and crucified Him for blasphemy. Plot twist though, three days after His death, eyewitnesses confirmed that He rose from the dead, as He had promised.

HIPSTER: But wait a minute, don't Catholics believe the whole Bible was written by God? Then why do the Gospels have to be based on eyewitness accounts?

LIBBY: We never said that God literally wrote the Bible word for word. Instead, Catholics believe that the Gospels were written by human beings with inspiration from God.

KAI: This means that God influenced each of the core authors, as well as the community of followers that each author had to help, to complete the Gospels as we know them today.

HIPSTER: But what about all the discrepancies? If God inspired all the Gospels, why don't they agree on all the facts?

KAI: The man has a point. I like this guy.

LIBBY: Matthew said that Jesus preached His famous sermon on a mountain, but Luke says it was on a plain. I like to think about it this way. If you take four painters to the Eiffel Tower and tell them to paint what they see, you'll get four different impressions and four different styles. One might include details that others missed or captured a different quality of lighting or portrayed a different mood.

KAI: If you want to understand the Eiffel Tower, the next best thing to going to Paris yourself is looking at as many different paintings as you can, or at least four.

LIBBY: That's why the leaders of the early Christian Church decided to put these four Gospels in the Bible. Each one contributes a valuable perspective on who Jesus is and what He means.

KAI: So, let's take a quick look at each one, starting with Matthew.

LIBBY: Matthew's Gospel was aimed at early Jewish audiences. It was written to answer questions about Jesus from a Jewish point of view. So it stresses how Jesus fulfilled the promises of the Hebrew Scripture.

KAI: What we call the Old Testament was the only Testament back then. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill." Mark was the first Gospel to be written and focuses on the suffering of Jesus. Mark shows us how, through Jesus, God shares our pain and carries us through it. Mark also shows how even good people really struggled to realize who Jesus is and what His message was.

LIBBY: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."

KAI: And Luke ... Don't make a Star Wars joke. Don't make a Star Wars joke. Luke's Gospel is written more to non-Jews who were hearing the good news about Jesus, but without having a background in Hebrew scripture. Luke focuses on ideas like mercy, justice and compassion for the poor.

LIBBY: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor."

We call these three, Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Synoptic Gospel.

KAI: From the Greek for "seen together."

LIBBY: Because they're so similar to each other and drew on a lot of common source material.

KAI: And then there's John.

LIBBY: Oh, yes, John.

KAI: John's is the most philosophical of the four Gospels. Instead of focusing on the this happened then that happened narrative of events, John emphasizes the spiritual significance in Jesus.

LIBBY: But there's another side to John, too. In the Bible accounts, he's often called the Disciple Jesus loved, Apostle and best friend of Jesus. Best friends often know a lot about us and that's how it is in John's Gospel, which shows us a deeply human personal side of Jesus, while also describing Jesus as the divine pattern of all creative things.

KAI: For example, the intimate moment John reveals in chapter 11, verse 35, which by the way is the shortest verse of all 31,173 verses in the Bible, "And Jesus wept." Fully human, Jesus weeps when He sees his friend Lazarus in the grave. Fully divine, Jesus will raise him from the dead. So, John knows his friend Jesus well, the foster son of Joseph, the son of Mary, the son of David, the Son of Man, the Son of God.

LIBBY: By reading all four Gospels you can see Jesus through each of these different lenses.

KAI: So, here are the take aways: What are the Gospels? Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the books of the Bible that present stories from the life of Jesus, describe His ministry and teaching and give accounts of His death and resurrection.

LIBBY: Why is that such a big deal? Because the Gospels provide the starting point for Christian faith and spirituality. All of the books of the Bible are understood in light of these.

KAI: Catholics believe the Gospels are inspired by God, but reflect the different personalities of the authors and their communities.

LIBBY: And the Gospels have in turn inspired some of the greatest artists and philosophers throughout history. You can't understand the art and culture of Europe and the Americas without knowing the Gospel.

KAI: So, no matter what your faith or belief system, if you want to understand the Christian world view, Gospel's at the heart of it.

LIBBY: See for yourself. Just read one Gospel all the way through, not the miniseries, the book and encounter all of this first hand.

KAI: Like in Luke, God basically reminds us, "I am your Father."

LIBBY: Just couldn't hold it in.

KAI: I went rogue.

For Catholic Central, I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby.

KAI: See you next time.

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