

Four Gospels: Four portraits of Jesus





The core learning of this activity is for students to understand how each of the Gospels is theologically positioned and how a knowledge of this can assist in interpreting specific Gospel texts.

Students form small learning teams and select one of the four Gospels to investigate. They gather and record their data using a class **Retrieval Chart Strategy** [@](#) that summarises the essential, distinctive features of each of the four Gospels. A sample retrieval chart has been provided below. Students research information from standard texts, from Biblical commentaries, or from the Internet. The following website may be useful in this task:

http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Four_Gospel_Chart.htm

(This site contains a variety of excellent, user-friendly tables of information)

The retrieval chart below suggests categories under which information may be summarised.

	 Matthew	 Mark	 Luke	 John
Author				
Date				
Place				
Intended community and its background				
Sources of the text				
Structure of the Gospel				
Literary Style of the Gospel				

See also: [Introducing the Gospels | Together At One Altar](#)

Students now examine the theological slant of the authors/editors of each Gospel. The following Fact Cards will support this activity.



Mark's Gospel

- ☐ Jesus is seen as the suffering Messiah
- ☐ Passion and resurrection is the key to understanding Jesus
- ☐ Uses geography with a theological purpose
- ☐ Gives a very human portrait of Jesus



Matthew's Gospel

- ☐ Jesus is a teacher
- ☐ Jesus is seen as the new Moses
- ☐ Jesus is seen as a law giver and Messiah
- ☐ Use of Old Testament references
- ☐ Jesus as fulfilment of the Law
- ☐ Criticises the Scribes and Pharisees
- ☐ Highlights 'Church' and Peter's role
- ☐ Galilee is seen as important for Jesus' ministry



Luke's Gospel

- ☐ Jesus is seen as a prophet and saviour of the oppressed
- ☐ Concerned with the gentiles and marginalised
- ☐ Prominence of the Holy Spirit
- ☐ Greater prominence given to women and other evangelists
- ☐ Emphasises proper stewardship of wealth
- ☐ A gospel of compassion, mercy and universal salvation



John's Gospel

- ☐ Jesus seen as the Word
- ☐ Jesus seen as Son of Man, Light of the World, the Way, the Truth and Life
- ☐ Emphasises community
- ☐ Signs and symbols used
- ☐ Theme of eternal life
- ☐ Shows some reflection over time because it was last to be written
- ☐ More complex in style and content than other Gospels
- ☐ Use of metaphoric language

Students divide into four learning teams. Each team is allocated one of the four Gospels. Each team consults the relevant Fact Card provided and using their Bible or the Bible Gateway website locates scripture passages that provide evidence of the theological concerns listed on the card. These are then discussed at the whole class level. The Bible Gateway website is located at:

www.biblegateway.com