

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #1

Quick Facts about the Book of Matthew:

- Written by one of Jesus' disciples – Matthew (who was a tax collector)
- Originally believe to be the first Gospel –though now many scholars believe Mark is the oldest now. Was written in the first century AD and was in completed for within a few decades of Jesus' death. A very fresh history.
- Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience (whereas Luke wrote to a very Greek audience). Note the many references to Old Testament prophecy (very important to Jews) and that the genealogy in Matthew 1 only goes back to Abraham (the Father of the Israelite people). Luke's genealogy goes all the way back to Adam to emphasize Jesus' universal impact.
- The famous Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5-7

Quick Facts about the Book of Acts:

- Really the Acts of the Apostles (those who saw the resurrected Jesus)
- Best history of the early church – from a handful of believers in Jerusalem to 5,000 in just a short time to having Christianity spread all across Asia Minor and into Europe in less than one generation. Unprecedented spread of a faith by a persecuted people through peaceful means.
- First half focuses on Peter. The last half focuses on Paul and his journeys.
- Was written by Luke who was a doctor and went with Paul on several of his mission trips.
- Acts is really Part II of the Gospel of Luke (continues the story) that we will read later this semester.

Matthew 2 – Jesus and family relocating

1. From Joseph's responsiveness of going to Egypt what do you learn about faith and obedience? How long would it take you to say "yes" if God asked you to relocate?

Matthew 3

2. How do you handle temptations? How did Jesus? What did he tell the Devil?
3. Who has been a John the Baptist in your life? How did he or she prepare you to meet Jesus? Is there someone who is pointing you to Jesus as you consider Him?

Matthew 5 – Sermon on the Mount

4. This past week, did you feel more blessed or stressed? What can you do to be more focused on God's blessings in your life?

Matthew 6 – Sermon on the Mount

5. What causes you the most worry? What is God saying to you through this passage about handling your particular worry or disappointment?

Acts 14

6. What was one of the biggest misunderstandings about Christianity you had to overcome before you could believe?

Matthew 11

7. In what specific way can you be an encourager to someone in church leadership? In your family? Among your friends?
8. How often do you judge other people, and what does the Bible say to do?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #2

Ice Breaker Game Idea:

Play “2 Truths & a Lie” – Go around to everyone in the group and let each person share 3 things about themselves with the group...2 of which are true and one of which is a lie. Then let the rest of the group guess which of the 3 is the lie. It’s a great way to learn some interesting facts about people in the group and it’s fun to try to guess the lie 😊

Quick Facts about the Book of Romans:

- Paul probably wrote Romans around 58 AD from Corinth. He was about to return to Jerusalem with an offering he had raised from the churches he had planted to give to the church in Jerusalem which was suffering from severe persecution.
- Romans is the only letter Paul wrote to a church he had nothing to with starting and which to this point he had not been in contact with. Thus, note how Romans seems impersonal compared to Paul’s other letters to churches. There are few details of practical problems in Romans because Paul does not personally know the church.
- Romans is the most theological and least practical of Paul’s letters. Another reason (see the first reason above) is that Rome was the center of the known world at this time and a capital of intellect. Romans is laid out more as a theological treatise perhaps in part because Paul wanted to lay out the intellectual validity of the faith to those in Rome.
- Paul desperately wanted to visit Rome (which he would later do in chains and eventually he would die there)...so this letter introduces himself to the church in Rome. Paul’s passion was spreading the Good News of Jesus as far as he could. Like New York today, what influenced Rome influenced the world. But besides wanting to share in Rome – Paul also may have wanted to establish a base from which to take missionary journeys further west (maybe as far west as Spain).

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matt. 20)

1. If you had been one of the first hired workers, how would you have felt at pay time?
2. How do you feel about recent converts getting the same benefits as you in the kingdom?
3. Does being gracious to the workers at the eleventh hour equate to being unfair to the workers who were hired early in the morning?

The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25)

4. What were the master’s expectations of his servants while he was away?
5. Why do you think the master became angry with the servant with one talent?
6. What are some talents either material or immaterial in your life that Jesus expects you to steward well and multiply?

Paul Sails for Rome (Acts 27)

7. What is the danger of equating comfort with God's will for your life?

All Things Working For the Good of Those Who Love Him (Rom. 8:28)

8. What situation could this verse be applied to in your life presently?

Being a Living Sacrifice (Rom. 12)

9. What do you hear when Paul says do not conform to the world? How do we stay engaged with our culture and those around us while remaining faithful to this command?
10. What does it mean to offer your body as a living sacrifice?
11. What are some ways that you have been able to practice the renewing of your mind?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #3

Ice Breaker Game Idea:

Play the “What’s Your Name Game.” In this game go around and ask everyone in the group to share their entire name (first, middle, last, etc.). Then ask them to explain the significance of their name, how they got their name or who they got it from. You’ll learn a lot about the people in your group – plus, you’ll hear some really weird names 😊

Quick Facts about the Book of Mark:

- Mark is believed to be the earliest of the 4 Gospels. It was written within a few decades of the death of Jesus and in circulation among the early church. It is the earliest account of Jesus’ life that has survived.
- There are sections of Mark that appear almost word for word in both Matthew and Luke (written just a few years later). This leads scholars to believe that both Matthew (one of Jesus’ disciples) and Luke (a doctor who traveled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys) had the Gospel of Mark sitting in front of them and were using it as a reference as they wrote their own Gospels.
- It is believed that Mark is Peter’s account of Jesus’ life and that Mark wrote down the account from listening to Peter tell stories about Jesus (perhaps from Peter’s sermons).
- Mark was the nephew of Barnabas and traveled with Paul and Barnabas on Paul’s first missionary journey. But Mark abandoned the journey. Later when Paul and Barnabas were about to go on a 2nd missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take Mark, but Paul didn’t. So, Barnabas and Mark went together and Paul and Silas went together. Later on Paul and Mark reconcile and Mark travels with Paul again.
- Mark is the shortest Gospel in length. In fact, there are only 24 verses in all of Mark that don’t also appear somewhere in Matthew or Luke.
- Notice that the Gospel of Mark is all about action. It has fewer of Jesus words, but tells story after story of Jesus in rapid fashion.
- Notice that in Mark the disciples seem to always lack faith and never seem to understand who Jesus is until the very end. Compare that to the blind man Jesus heals in Mark 8:22-26. Note that the blind man can’t see clearly at first...and then later the picture becomes clear. That is a picture of the disciples faith in Mark – gradual.

Quick Facts about the Book of 1 Corinthians:

- Paul stayed longer with the church in Corinth than he did in any of the other churches he started.
- It was in 55 AD (25 years after Jesus’ death) that Paul learned that things were not all well in Corinth and wrote to the church there from the city of Ephesus. Paul is very personal and

straight-forward in this letter because he knew the people of the church so well (contrast with Romans where he didn't know them well at all).

- Paul wrote several letters to Corinth (at least 4). Remember that his letters existed on scraps of papyrus and it wasn't until 90 AD that they were all collected together. So, some authors believe that part of Paul's letters to the Corinthians got thrown in together when they were copied. In 1 Corinthians 5:9 Paul refers to a previous letter he wrote to the church. Some scholars believe it is lost. Some believe that part of it is contained in 2 Corinthians 6:13 – 7:2. (Remember, originally there were no verses and chapters – just Paul's writings grouped together.) Then in 2 Corinthians 7:8 Paul refers to a previous "severe" letter that he wrote. Some scholars believe it lost – others believe it to be 2 Corinthians 10-13.
 - *So there are a couple of possibilities with the 4 letters we know Paul wrote to Corinth:
 - We have lost the 1st one. The 2nd one is 1 Corinthians. We lost the 3rd (severe) letter. The 4th one is 2 Corinthians.
 - Letter #1 is 2 Corinthians 6:13-7:2; Letter #2 is 1 Corinthians; Letter #3 is 2 Corinthians 10-13; and Letter #4 is 2 Corinthians 1-9.

John the Baptist Beheaded (Mark 6:14-29)

1. What would this story say to someone facing persecution, then and now?

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10: 17-26)

2. Why do you think Jesus told him to sell everything and give to the poor?
3. What is one thing you can do this week to let go of material things and embrace God's kingdom more fully?

Marriage (1 Cor. 7)

4. What do you consider the most important ingredient in a good marriage and why?
5. In what ways can God use singleness for His kingdom?

Love (1 Cor. 13)

6. How does love described here compare to love as typically defined in our culture?
7. In your opinion, what is the best way to develop the ability to love others?
8. How do we settle disputes as compared to what Jesus said to do?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #4

Ice Breaker Game Idea:

Play the “*What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up.*” In this game go around and ask everyone in the group to share what they most wanted to be when they grew up and what they are doing now. It’s interesting to see who is doing what they dreamed about when they were kids and how people ended up with the careers they have now. You’ll learn a lot about the careers and dreams of the people in your group ☺

Quick Facts about the Gospel of Luke:

- Luke was a Gentile and had the distinction of being the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew.
- As a Gentile (a non-Jewish person), Luke’s gospel is targeted primarily to Gentiles. Note that in Luke’s genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 is different from Matthew’s in Matthew 1. Matthew traced Jesus back to Abraham because it was important for him to communicate to Jews that Jesus was the promised Messiah from the line of Abraham and David. But Luke traces Jesus all the way back to Adam. Why? So, that Gentiles can see that Jesus died for everyone from the line of Adam (everyone in the world) – not just Jews.
- Note that in Luke Jesus talks more about women and the poor than in any other Gospel writer. Luke is clear that Jesus is empowering to women and compassionate to the poor. Mary is emphasized more in Luke whereas Joseph is emphasized more in Matthew. Also note that in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew when Jesus gives the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) Jesus says blessed are the “poor in spirit” but in Luke when Jesus gives the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6 Jesus has a slightly different message and says blessed are the “poor.” Jesus gave two different sermons, but Matthew and Luke chose to record different ones. Although they were both concerned with both spiritual and physical redemption, Matthew was more focused on the spiritual and Luke the physical.
- Remember, Luke is also the author of Acts, and the Gospel of Luke is book 1 with Acts being book 2. Luke was a physician (which might explain his passion for what Jesus said about physical pain and suffering) who traveled with Paul on many of his missionary journeys.
- Also note as you read Luke – the special emphasis on prayer. Jesus is continually getting away from the people and commotion to find a secluded place to be with God and pray. If Jesus needed that on a continual basis – how much more do we need it?

Quick Facts about the Book of 2 Corinthians:

- Paul stayed longer with the church in Corinth than he did in any of the other churches he started. As a result, his letters to this church are very personal and straightforward.
- It was in 55 AD (25 years after Jesus’ death) that Paul learned that things were not all well in Corinth and wrote to the church there from the city of Ephesus. Paul is very personal and

straight-forward in this letter because he knew the people of the church so well (contrast with Romans where he didn't know them well at all).

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The Temptation of Jesus (Luke 4)

1. What is the significance of Jesus being tempted after He had fasted for 40 days?

The God Who Comforts Us (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

2. What is the relationship between God's ability to comfort us and our ability to comfort others?
3. How can distress in your life be viewed in light of this passage?

We are the Temple of God (2 Cor. 6: 14-18)

4. What is the difference between being yoked with unbelievers and having relationships with unbelievers?
5. What does it mean that you are the dwelling place of God?

No Longer Under the Law (Galatians 3)

6. What "additions" to faith might outsiders sense in Christian circles that would serve as barriers to their faith?
7. How is attempting to be right with God through keeping the Law like being in prison?

Generosity (2 Cor. 8-9)

8. How does our culture feel about generosity? What does Paul say about this subject?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #5

Galatians

Be ready – Paul is very angry in this book. He is writing to the church at Galatia that he helped start. In his absence, some “Super Apostles” have come and are speaking against Paul and his teachings. Some of them are telling the Galatians that everyone has to follow the Jewish law to be saved. Paul’s response is...how should I say it...very confrontational.

Ephesians

- Ephesians was written while Paul was in prison...probably very near to the end of his life.
- Some believe that Ephesians was a circular letter that was originally written to be passed from church to church.

Philippians

- Paul wrote this letter to the church when he was in prison in Rome.
- Note that the famous passage in Philippians 2:5-11 about having the same attitude of Christ was probably an early hymn recited or even sang in the early church.

Colossians

- The town of Colosse was the smallest and least significant town or city to which we have a letter from Paul.
- Colossians is perhaps the most different of all of Paul’s letters. If you put them side by side it would stand out as not fitting in as much. The reason is that in Colossians Paul is writing to counteract a heresy (we don’t know exactly what) and Paul speaks in spiritual language he doesn’t use in his other letters. We get to see another side of Paul here.

The Cost of Being a Disciple (Luke 14)

1. When has a family relationship or close friendship been a hindrance to your whole-hearted devotion to Christ?
2. What are some things you are currently doing that keep you from losing your saltiness?

Made Alive in Christ (Ephesians 2)

3. What does it mean to you that your salvation moved you from being dead to being alive? How is this different than being moved from bad to good?

Imitating Christ’s Humility (Philippians 2)

4. How do you balance meeting the needs of others with meeting your own needs?

5. Jesus “making himself nothing” is one of the more theological passages in the Bible. What does it say about God that He would include a theological truth in the context of a command for us concerning our attitudes? How do you balance studying theology with practical obedience in simple areas of life?

Jesus’ Triumph Over Sin (Colossians 2)

6. How can these verses help you fight the spirits/thoughts of accusation and/or guilt in your life?

Ephesians 5

7. How does God say husbands and wives should act toward each other?

I Corinthians 8&9

8. Let's discuss the spirit of giving as Paul tells us.

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #6

Quick Facts about First Timothy:

- Timothy was a young man who was probably converted during Paul's first missionary journey
- When Paul returned to the area a year or two later, Timothy was recommended to him as a faithful disciple of Christ who would make a good traveling companion.
- Timothy is always associated with Paul in a mentor, apprentice relationship
- Paul addresses the false teachers who were characterized as proud, arrogant, contentious and greedy. These teachers were more involved in speculating about obscure matters rather than exposition about Christ and the Christian lifestyle of love.

Quick Facts about Second Timothy:

- Although similar to First Timothy, Second Timothy is far more personal in tone. Paul wishes to pass on the commitment of a life lived for the cause of Christ to a younger man who will carry the torch further.
- Paul writes this letter waiting for his full trial but he did not expect to be released.
- Whether he ever saw Timothy again is unknown
- According to tradition, Paul was beheaded shortly after this letter was written

Luke 8

1. Where do we fit in the Parable of the Sower.

Luke 11-38

2. How do you feel about Martha and Mary? Who do you identify with? Why?

Galatians 3

3. Throughout Luke, how does Jesus deal with the Old Testament Laws that the Pharisees loved? Explain how the laws work and how grace works.

Colossians 3&4

4. What are the rules for Christian households?
5. How do you personally deal with them? What is easy for you? What is hard for you?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #7

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The Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

1. Of the two brothers, which reminds you of your own story?
2. Why do you think the Father did not take time to get an explanation from his son?
3. Have there been seasons of your life where you were in the pig pen? If so, how did you feel God received you when you returned?

The Lord's Grace to Paul (1 Timothy 1: 12-20)

4. How do you feel about talking about your past life when you share your faith?
5. Why is someone like a Paul such a good witness to unbelievers?
6. How can you incorporate Paul's story into your habit of witnessing?

Leadership in the Church and for Each Believer (1 Timothy 3)

7. Although applied specifically to leaders here, why are these qualities important for all Christians?
8. Of these qualities, what are two or three you have made progress with in this past year?

Love of Money (1 Timothy 6)

9. Why do you think we struggle with our finances?

A Workman Approved by God (2 Timothy 2:14-26)

10. How do you know if you are “quarreling about words” or standing up against false teachings?

11. Which do most Christians spend more time doing?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #8

Quick Facts about John

- John refers to himself in the book as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”
- John was the only disciple who did not die a martyr's death
- He wrote The Gospel of John at the end of life. It is the last of the four gospels to be written and more than likely he had read Matthew, Mark, and Luke...
- John's Gospel is the most theological of the four and he uses imagery a lot like calling Jesus the light of world, the bread of life, the door, the vine, etc. There are also the seven “I AM” statements from Jesus
- John takes 6 chapters to cover the scene between Jesus and His disciples the night before His crucifixion as they celebrated Passover, which we now celebrate as Communion

Quick Facts about James

- He was the brother of Jesus. He did not believe in Jesus divinity until after Jesus resurrected and ascended into Heaven.
- He was one of the first leaders in the early church.
- Many scholars believe James was the first book written chronologically speaking in the New Testament
- Some scholars believe that James is a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5.
- James was one of the first Christian martyrs when the persecution of the church began.

Quick Facts about 1st and 2nd Peter

- Both are written by Peter towards the end of his life
- Peter references Paul's letters in his letters and refers to them as equal with Old Testament scripture.
- Context of these letters: In the 64 AD a great fire destroyed much of Rome. It was widely believed that the Emperor Nero was responsible for the fire. However, he blamed the Christians for it and this began their persecution. Peter writes this letter to offer hope in the midst of suffering.
- Soon after he wrote these letters, Peter was crucified upside down.

The Death of Lazarus (John 11)

1. Why does Jesus deliberately delay in traveling to see Lazarus (v. 6)?
2. Why do you think Jesus wept?
3. How did Jesus respond to Martha when she questioned him for taking so long to get there?
4. How did Jesus respond to Mary when she questioned him for taking so long to get there?

5. How are the responses different? How do they demonstrate the heart of Jesus in identifying with others?

When You Face Trials (James 1)

6. What are some ways that you have been able to “consider it pure joy” when you were faced with a difficult circumstance?
7. How does perseverance play into this type of attitude? What difficult situation have you had to demonstrate perseverance in?
8. James says “every good and perfect gift is from above” (v. 17). What are some good gifts that God has given you over this past year?

Living for God (1 Peter 4)

9. What type of changes began to take place in your life after you gave it to Christ?

False Teachers (2 Peter 2)

10. Why do you think it easy for people to follow false teachers?

NTC Discussion Questions – Week #9

Quick Facts about 2nd John and 3rd John

- They are both very short only having one chapter each
- Written by the Apostle John in A.D. 80's or early 90's
- Address the issue of hospitality for itinerant teachers who were serving to spread the Gospel as well as how to handle false teachers who were looking for a free stay from well intentioned believer.

Quick Facts about Jude

- Jude was one of Jesus' biological brothers whom like James (another brother) came to believe in Jesus after the resurrection and ascension
- The theme of the book is to contend for the faith against false teachers
- Dated anywhere from 65 to 80 A.D.

Quick Facts about Revelation

- Written by the Apostle John while he was in exile on the Island of Patmos
- The focus of Revelation is Jesus and that He shall overcome
- Interpreted many ways over the centuries, however, the book's central purpose is not to arouse speculation about the future. Rather, it is meant to encourage Christians in every age to maintain their faith despite opposition, and to do so in the confidence that they will share in Jesus' ultimate victory over all forces that oppose Him and His people.

Hospitality (2nd John and 3rd John)

1. How have you shown hospitality to others in the past?
2. Why do you think John links love and obedience to Jesus' commands in 2nd John?

Being Aware of False Teachers (Jude)

3. How can you defend the teachings of Scripture without offending those who do not believe them?

The Church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)

4. What good things characterized this church?
5. How might its strengths have been the cause of its failure?

The Church in Laodicea (Revelation 2: 14-22)

6. How does wealth keep us from seeking Jesus? Why would He say, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich (verse 18)?

7. Is your life characterized more by a thermometer (you reflect your surroundings) or a thermostat (you regulate your surroundings)? What would Jesus say concerning this (verse 15-16)?