

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST

A GUIDED LEARNING BOOK

BY
WELDON E. VIERTEL

NEW TESTAMENT

1

THE LIFE and MINISTRY OF CHRIST

**FIRST COURSE
NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES**

by Weldon E. Viertel

CARIB BAPTIST PUBLICATIONS



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RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS

Although supplementary and advanced activities for this study guide are not based on any particular commentary, the following are suggested:

Level 2:

A.W. Argyle, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (CBC)*
Paul S. Minear, *The Gospel According to Mark* (LBC)*
Donald G. Millar, *The Gospel According to Luke* (LBC)*

Level 3: The above commentaries or—

The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. VIII: General Articles, Matthew-Mark
The Broadman Bible Commentary, Vol. IX: Luke—John

Any good, concise commentary on the Synoptics will be acceptable. Each student will also need a copy of the study guide, *The Life and Ministry of Christ*, and a modern translation of the Bible. *The New English Bible* or *New American Standard Bible* is recommended.

If the student is interested in doing a more thorough comparison of the Synoptics, Robertson's *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ** and Guy's *The Life of Christ** should be available.

*Publication data on these books may be found in the **Bibliography** on pages 157-158 of this Study Guide.

PREFACE

A study of the life and ministry of Christ is basic to pastoral training and Christian living. The Gospels, which set forth Christ's life and ministry, are the centre of the Bible. The Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Christ, and the Epistles explain the meaning of Christ and His ministry. The nature of the Church and its functions are determined by the meaning of Christ's nature and activities. All theological writings of the Church are based on the life and ministry of Christ. A mastery of the Gospels is a most important undertaking.

Various methods have been followed in presenting the life of Christ. Conservative scholars of the past have attempted to reconstruct a history or biography based on the four Gospels. Harmonies of the Gospels attempt to construct a historical approach to the life of Christ. Scholars of the critical schools insist that the Gospels do not contain pure history; therefore, a historical reconstruction of the life of Christ is impossible. The frame of reference for their studies is a particular theological theme emphasized by the early Church or a topical study of the various areas of Christ's ministry.

The fact that the Gospel writers gave a theological interpretation to the activities of Jesus makes a history difficult to reconstruct; however, the teachings and activities of Jesus are historically grounded. The expression 'theological interpretation' means to interpret the purposes of God in the historical events of the life of Christ as well as to describe the events. If too much emphasis is placed on historical reconstruction and the problems encountered in such an endeavour, the message of the Gospels is likely to be neglected. If the theological message is emphasized and the historical elements are discredited, the gospel message tends to lose reality and relevance for man's life.

The approach followed in this study guide is based on the general historical framework set forth in Mark's Gospel with attention given to important teachings in Matthew and Luke which are not included in Mark. No attempt is made to reconcile the differences in order of events in the Synoptics or the differences in John's Gospel with the Synoptics. The historicity of the events recorded is taken seriously, but a reconstruction of a biography of Christ is not emphasized since that does not appear to have been the primary purpose of the authors.

Students will be introduced to some of the critical problems, such as the Synoptic Problem and methods of interpreting the Synoptics, but the primary emphasis will be on interpreting the message of the Synoptics. Objectives of the course are:

1. to become acquainted with the introductory critical matters;
2. to learn the historical framework of the ministry of Jesus; and
3. to understand the message of the teachings and activities of Christ.

Two types of books will be used in the study of the Synoptics. New Testament introductions discuss the critical problems and give a historical outline of the life of Christ. Commentaries give attention to the interpretation of the words and activities of Christ. Since much material of each type is available, this study guide will not attempt to give a detailed treatment of either.

Weldon E. Viertel

El Paso, Texas
December, 1977

EDITOR'S NOTE

Carib Baptist Publications, a Department of Baptist Spanish Publishing House, was formed to meet the need for texts for Decentralized Theological Education in the English speaking world. We have always sought to provide tools which will be usable and useful for students at various levels of formal theological education. We have sought to maintain costs at as low a level as possible in order to make the texts available to those who need them.

When a reprint of this text became necessary, we were able to correct the few errors which had come to our attention. We took the opportunity to reset the text into our current style, hoping to make it even more useful to students. This also had the advantage of making the book shorter without sacrificing any of the content. We hope that this will help to offset the inevitable effects of constant inflation. The text that you have in your hands is the result of that effort.

We strive to the best of our ability to be of service to those who are seeking to prepare themselves in order to better serve the kingdom of our Lord, heeding Paul's admonishment to Timothy: 'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.' (2 Tim. 2:15 NIV).

Donna Enge

El Paso, Texas
May, 1994

MINISTERIAL TRAINING BY GUIDED STUDY

Ministerial Training by Guided Study is designed to introduce students on various levels of academic preparation to the Bible and related areas. This is not a correspondence course, nor the traditional lecture to make quality theological training available to all students. Family and church responsibilities and lack of academic prerequisites and finances prevent many men and women who have been called of God from improving their ministry through training. These obstacles can be overcome by an approach which emphasizes self-study and weekly small group discussions. The study guides are designed for students on three levels of preparations:

1. Students with some primary education
2. Students with some secondary education
3. Students with some university qualifications

Although this course is designed primarily for pastors and ministerial candidates with no seminary training, laymen and lay preachers can also benefit from some of the courses. Pastors with divinity degrees might use some of the study guides as refresher courses while serving as leaders of study groups and conveners of the weekly seminars.

Study guides are used to direct private and group activities in the mastery of the content of a subject. They contain the basic content for each subject and recommend supplementary sources for a more advanced study. Questions are included to direct the attention of the student to the important facts in the lessons and to provide an immediate response to the material read. Weekly seminars of approximately an hour for each subject provide opportunities for the discussion of issues related to the subjects and their practical application in contemporary life. A teacher or tutor guides the seminar discussions, but the students from all three levels present and discuss their ideas. When students come to the seminar with a basic understanding of the lesson, the seminar can be dedicated to enrichment of the subject and to discussion of the practical use of the material in the life of the Church.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE STUDY GUIDE

Text and learning activities

The study guide is designed primarily for home study. When the guide is opened, the text appears on the left side of the page, and questions requiring an immediate response to the material read are on the right. The student should read a paragraph before reading and answering the question or questions for that paragraph. If there are no questions for a paragraph, he may wish to make a few notes on that paragraph and move on to the next. The questions and answers should be covered with a strip of paper (see following page) until the paragraph has been read and the student is ready to answer each question. Then the cover sheet should be moved down the page far enough to enable the reading of the question and the writing of the answer. The answer according to the text appears immediately under the question. After the student has written his own answer, he may then compare it with the given answer. If the two are not the same, the paragraph in the text should be read again.

Home study exercises

A **home study exercise** appears at the end of each lesson. The study guide contains the basic content for each lesson, and the questions of the **basic assignment** are to be answered by all three levels. After reading the text and doing the learning activity on each page, the student should be able to answer most of the home study questions without further reference to the text. These questions are self-testing exercises. If a student is unsure of the correct answer, he has not adequately learned the material in that particular section, and he should review until he is sure that he understands the content. Some questions call for more extensive answers and require concentrated effort for mastery. The completed questions serve as a summary of the lesson and should be helpful as a review.

Students on *Levels 2 and 3* are required to do **supplementary assignments** in addition to the basic exercises. The supplementary activities sometimes include a reading assignment in another book with questions to be answered.

Level 3 is required to do **advanced assignments** in addition to the basic and supplementary work. This work will vary according to the availability of library resources. Sometimes there will be questions over a parallel reading assignment in a recommended resource book. At other times, the questions will require independent or individual research. Bible dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and books on the subjects of the study guide are sources which should be consulted. A **bibliography** at the end of the study guide indicates where additional material may be found.

Seminar

It is suggested that the students of all three levels in a geographical area meet for an hour each week with a teacher or tutor to discuss the lesson with reference to—

1. problems encountered in home study in answering questions or in understanding the textual material;
2. the application of the lesson to the practical work of Christian ministry and conduct;
3. the significance of the lesson as a whole and its place in the total programme of ministerial training.

The fragmentary questions of the lesson may sometimes be answered without getting a picture of the lesson as a whole. It is also possible to learn the facts about Christianity without seeing their application in the life of the Church. The student is responsible for getting the detailed information of the lesson in his home study. Understanding the overall meaning of the lesson and its practical application should be the goal of the seminar.

Some seminar questions have been included with each lesson. Their purposes are—

1. to stimulate interest (some are controversial questions which have not been resolved by scholars);
2. to guide in the beginning of the seminar discussions;
3. to direct attention to problems related to the materials studied;
4. to require original thinking which will lead to suggestions for the practical application of the material.

Teacher or tutor

The teacher or tutor may offer other seminar questions which are more relevant in a given situation. He should feel free to use any approach he chooses as long as the discussion remains related to the material of the lesson. It is his responsibility to prevent the seminar discussion from departing from relevant issues.

The teacher may find that a brief test at the beginning of the seminar will be helpful. The test will encourage students to more adequately prepare their home study assignments and enable the teacher to evaluate the progress of each student. Two or three questions from the basic studies should be sufficient. Students who are not making satisfactory progress may need personal help and encouragement in preparing their lesson. They should not be overlooked!

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Use this sheet of paper to cover the learning activity on each page.

When you have finished reading each paragraph, slide the sheet down just far enough to expose the learning activity for that paragraph.

If there is no activity, continue to the next paragraph.

Write your answers

Then slide the sheet down farther to expose the suggested answers.

Compare your answers with the suggested ones.
If they do not agree, reread the paragraph.

Continue to the next paragraph.

Cut to separate

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Use this sheet of paper to cover the learning activity on each page.

When you have finished reading each paragraph, slide the sheet down just far enough to expose the learning activity for that paragraph.

If there is no activity, continue to the next paragraph.

Write your answers

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If they do not agree, reread the paragraph.

Continue to the next paragraph.