

Hard Questions in the Four Gospels

Day and Time: Wednesdays 7:00-8:00 PM ET

Teacher: Sam Faulk

Class Size: Limit of 15

“For in the full abundance of the Holy Scriptures we feed upon the plain parts, we are exercised by the obscure: by the one, hunger is driven away, and daintiness by the other.”

—Augustine of Hippo

The Scriptures are full of passages that offer clear insight, causing a ready believer to grow up into salvation. Other portions hid more obscure meanings, known only when determined students of the Bible wrestle with its contents until they receive its blessing. Yet even beyond these exist passages that seem to challenge or contradict the broader teachings of Scripture, presenting what we will refer to as “hard questions.” In this class, we will engage with nine challenging passages from the four Gospels, each presenting a difficult question that has historically sparked varied interpretations within Christianity. Answering these questions demands a diligent and thoughtful approach, and their answers can expand our understanding and equip us to address concerns within ourselves and among fellow believers.

Each class session will focus on a specific passage and its associated question. We will (1) identify and articulate the challenges each question poses, (2) analyze and compare different interpretations through the centuries, and (3) work toward developing a reasoned answer that reconciles the passage with the full breadth of Scripture. By the end of the class, we hope to be better equipped to understand and answer these difficult questions—not necessarily because the answers are essential to the Christian faith, but more so to enhance our ability to engage with Scripture in a thoughtful and precise manner, deepening our understanding of the Word.

Structure:

1. Study the verses to get facts.
2. Identify and articulate the challenges each question poses. Look at verses from other parts of the Bible. We should all feel, “Yes, this really is a hard question!”
3. Analyze and compare different interpretations through the centuries.
4. Develop a reasoned answer that reconciles the passage with the full breadth of Scripture.

Classes:

Class 1: What does it mean for the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit to not be forgiven (Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-30, and Luke 12:10)?

Class 2: What does Jesus mean when He says, “But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:33)?

Class 3: What does Jesus mean when He says, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37)?

Class 4: Who are the “called” and who are the “chosen” (Matthew 22:14)?

Class 5: What does it mean for a branch to be taken away and pruned (John 15:2)? What does it mean for a non-abiding branch to be thrown away, dried up, gathered, and cast into the fire and burned (John 15:6)?

Class 6: What is the outer darkness and the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth, and what does it mean for those who are sent there (Matthew 8:12, Matthew 13:42, Matthew 13:50, Matthew 22:13, Matthew 24:51, Matthew 25:30, Luke 13:28)?

Class 7: Does Jesus describe the rapture in Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-37?

Class 8: Did the Father actually separate Himself from Jesus when He said, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me” (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34)?

Class 9: What does Jesus mean when he says, “If you don’t forgive, My Father will not forgive you” (Matthew 6:15, Mark 11:26)