

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is meant by the nature of the Gospels being a two-level document?
2. Why should a person think horizontally when reading the Gospels?
3. What does it mean to think vertically?
4. What are the purposes of Narratives in the Gospels?
5. Is it important to know the historical context of Jesus in the Gospels?

## ANSWERS:

1. The meaning of the Gospels being two-level is 1. Thinking of Jesus in his own context, and 2. Thinking of the “author of the gospel, written with the original reader in view”.
2. One should think horizontally with the thought that this similar story or outlook will be recorded across the Gospels. This idea is not to make it more than what it is, however due to it being recorded in other gospels could mean it was intentional.
3. When one thinks vertically they may think that it is thinking about the relationship of God with Jesus or Jesus with his disciples. Although this not a wrong way to think, in the context of the Gospel thinking vertically can bring a deeper meaning to a scripture when you can tell the difference between the meaning of scripture and why the writer may have included a break or a different outlook.
4. Narratives have many functions and depending on the story, depends on the narrative. Most if not all narratives are illustrative in nature. For example, miracle stories can illustrate faith, fear or failure and the wealthy man story illustrates how difficult it is for a person to give up their possessions and follow Jesus.
5. It is important to know the historical context of the gospels because there are scriptures that allude to there being some Hebrew and Greek background. Having knowledge of the historical context can assist in understanding the audience to whom the sayings were directed to, whether directly from Jesus or indirectly through the evangelists.

## DEFINITIONS:

**Hermeneutics** - the branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts.

**Existential** – relating to existence

**Pericope** - an extract from a text, especially a passage from the Bible, an individual story or saying

## SUMMARY:

Understanding the writing of the Gospels means realizing the many dimensions that come with reading the text and learning the context behind the meaning. One must think horizontally as with ones relationships in life. You want to not only understand what you add to others but what other people in your circle can contribute to you. In the same way the Gospels each added to the other in various ways. In the same way the literary context is important because it is the purpose of why you tell the story to whom and in the way that it will be most important and effective. When looking at the Four Gospels one tends to notice that there are a lot of similarities to

Matthew, Mark and Luke but that John has many differences and starts in a different manner. In essence, the Gospels should be looked at as a whole and not in fragments because it contributes greatly to the teachings of Jesus and gives a bigger understanding to the way he taught and his motives behind. Motives of compassion, love, peace and joy which would prove as a blueprint of do's and don't among other things for the lives of all readers throughout the world and at all times.