

Final Project Proposal
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Overview/Abstract

For the Final Project in NT504, I will be putting together a PowerPoint presentation to be used in an Adult Bible Study context in my church. In this presentation I will analyze the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 with the aim of discovering any sectarian biases Jesus may or may not have had in relation to the major Jewish sects of his day. I will pose the question of whether or not Jesus was aligning with one of the Jewish sects more than another and to what extent his teachings were novel and revolutionary in comparison to the teachings of the Jewish sects. I will teach this course in person as part of a 6-8 week course on the historical Jesus that I will be creating alongside a young woman in my ministry who is aspiring to be a professor in the near future. For the sake of submitting the project, I will record myself presenting the lesson with the powerpoint visible in the video.

I will define the topic by simply posing the question: “When teaching the Sermon on the Mount according to Matthew 5-7, did Jesus side with any of the major Jewish sects of his day, or did he teach something altogether new and different?” I will research several of the highly respected authorities on the Gospel of Matthew as well as scholars who have written on the influence of sectarian Judaism on Jesus’ teachings in order to present the major options according to the viewpoints of scholars today. I will consider the whole Sermon on the Mount, but my research will narrow my focus to 2 or 3 passages within the Sermon that are most relevant to the discussion of sectarian Judaism. Unless my research steers me in a different direction, I plan to ultimately highlight Jesus’ ability to honor the correct traditions and viewpoints of his day while transcending strict adherence to any of the Jewish sects of his day.

As an application point, I will end my presentation with some insights into the current political climate that is so highly charged and divisive and begin a discussion about what we can learn from Jesus' posture toward the heated debates and divisions of his day. I will wrap up the discussion with a devotional thought about our ultimate allegiance to King Jesus, and how seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness ought to lead us to a similar posture as Jesus toward a world of divisions and clashes of perspective.

Target Audience

My audience will ultimately be adults who attend Grace Church in Middleburg Heights Ohio. Since I will be co-teaching this class with a young woman in her twenties, and my role at the church is the Pastor of Young Adults, we will naturally have several people ages 18-30 in the class, though all ages will be welcome. I'd imagine about 15-20 people will be present from various stages in their spiritual and intellectual journeys. We will market this class as an opportunity to learn more about the life of Jesus, in order to understand His teachings more clearly.

Desired Outcomes

The more we know someone, the better we can love them. The goal of this lesson will be to help people fall more deeply in love with Jesus by understanding His world more deeply. As a secondary outcome, I hope to draw some parallels between the sectarianism of Jesus' day and the divisiveness that is present in the United States today regarding politics, religion, and almost any matter of opinion and by drawing these parallels, challenge people to reflect the posture and attitude of Jesus as they deal with others. One of my main motivations for receiving more education has been to understand Jesus better. This course has directly fulfilled that desire, and studying this specific topic is an opportunity to learn what I can about the religious climate that

Jesus grew up in and ministered to. Offering an adult class on this topic in my church will serve to address a gap in our discipleship. In my church (and I'd venture to say in evangelicalism broadly) people are well-versed in the gospel, learn Pauline theology well, and are presented with strategies for living out Christian morals in the modern world. What is lacking is a solid grasp of the life that Jesus lived while He was on earth. If Jesus the gift of the incarnation is truly that in Jesus we can know God—it's such a shame that we haven't every bit of effort that we possibly can into studying, exploring, and understanding everything we can about the life and times of Jesus.

Preliminary Bibliography

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