

## **“The Gospel According to Them: The Story of Jesus”**

by  
Carrie Varnell

**What** In this comedic play, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John take turns telling the story of Jesus, from His genealogy, through His ministry and His resurrection.

Themes: Gospel, Life of Christ, Bible, Good News of Jesus, Christmas, Easter

**Who** Matthew  
Mark  
Luke  
John

\*These roles can be played by women by changing the name to “Book of Matthew”, etc.

**When** Present-ish

**Costumes  
and  
Props** 4 podiums or music stands  
4 black binders with scripts

Clothes can be casual, but neutral or earth tone colors are recommended to create a sense of timelessness.

**Why** The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John

**How** This is written as part reader’s theatre and part dialogue driven. It’s important for each actor to have their parts mostly memorized in order to hit the comedy. The dialogue said to each other should definitely be memorized.

Give yourself plenty of time to practice so you can find the rhythm to the story. There are parts that will be more driven and parts that require more thought, care, and emotion. This is one story, but from four different perspectives and four different personalities.

**Time** Approximately 15 minutes

*Matthew is a lovable character that is obsessed with names and genealogy. Mark is straight to the point and doesn't have time for all of the details of the story. Luke is the leader of the group and drives the story. He's just trying to keep everyone on track. John (oh John), bless 'em, he marches to the beat of his own drum and goes in and out of a bad British-Shakespearean accent.*

*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John enter, find their podiums, open their folders with their scripts, and address the audience.*

**Matthew:** The Gospel of Matthew. This is the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

**Mark:** The Gospel of Mark. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet.

**Luke:** The Gospel of Luke. Now many have undertaken to compile an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, like the accounts passed on to us by those who were eyewitnesses and servants of the word from the beginning.

**John:** *(with flourish and drama and a bad British accent, loudly, as if he was quoting Shakespeare)* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created. In Him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it.

**Luke:** That's really...wordy, John *(or "Book of John" if John is played by a female)*.

**John:** *(just a little defensive, in a normal voice)* Pretty sure it's just right.

**Luke:** Moving on. Let's see, where were we...ah yes...Zechariah, Elizabeth, Zechariah couldn't talk...Elizabeth was going to have a son named John...

**Mark:** As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

**Matthew:** Abraham was the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah the father of Perez and Zerah—by Tamer—Perez the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab...

**Luke:** In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendent of David, and the virgin's

name was Mary. The angel came to her and said, "Greetings favored one, the Lord is with you!"

**Matthew:** ...Salmon the Father of Boaz (by Rahab), Boaz the father of Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king...

**Luke:** *(trying to be diplomatic)* Hey, I think we're good on the genealogy.

**Matthew:** *(wounded)* But...it's important.

**Luke:** I know it is. I have His genealogy too. In fact, mine goes all the way to Adam. But we have a lot to cover.

**Matthew:** *(pause; hurt; mimics under his breath)* Mine goes all the way to Adam...

**John:** *(interrupting)* Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth who came from the Father...

**Mark:** *(interrupting)* All in favor of moving past the birth of Jesus... *(raises hand)*

*Mark raises his/her hand. Matthew does so reluctantly. John is in his own world.*

**Luke:** Oh no, we're not moving past it, *(sharply)* Mark. This is the start of it all! Four hundred years of silence. Of people wandering in the darkness like our predecessor, Isaiah, says...and then—

**John:** *(with much drama and flourish)* LIGHT!

**Luke:** See? He gets it.

*They all look at John. He's looking off into the distance, lost in thought, seeing things in the distance, wandering off, then wandering back.*

**Matthew:** *(to Mark)* His writer was on an island. Alone. *(beat; looking back at John)* He's seen some things...

*They all look at John sympathetically.*

**Luke:** *(continuing)* An angel appeared to a virgin girl named Mary and said, "Do not be afraid! You have found favor with God and you will give birth to a Son, God's Son, and you will call His name Jesus."

**Matthew:** An angel also appeared to Joseph, who Mary was betrothed to, and said, "Don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. She will give birth to God's Son and you will name Him Jesus and He will save the people from their sins."

**Luke:** *(skipping ahead)* They went to Bethlehem...no room in the inn...ah! There were shepherds in the field watching over their flocks by night, when angels appeared and said, "Fear not! We bring you good news of great joy! This very night a Savior has been born to you in Bethlehem! You will find Him there lying in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes." So the shepherds followed a star to Bethlehem and found Jesus.

*Luke is very pleased with himself. He looks to the others, big smile on his face.*

**Luke:** I love that story.

**John:** It's a good story.

**Luke:** And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

**Mark:** In the wilderness John the Baptizer began preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

**Matthew:** He proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!"

**Mark:** Priests and Levites came to ask of him, "Who are you?"

**John:** John said... *(needing to clarify)* John the Baptizer, not John as in the writer of this book, this was a different John...

**Luke:** We know, John. We know.

**John:** Kay. Just making sure. Where was I?

**Luke:** They asked him—

**John:** Oh! "Who are you?" They asked. John said, "I am the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,'" as Isaiah the prophet said.

**Mark:** John wore a garment made of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

*John makes a gagging noise like he's about to throw up.*

**Luke:** John.

**John:** Sorry.

**Mark:** Then Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptized by him in the Jordan River. But John tried to prevent him, saying,

**Matthew:** "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?" So Jesus replied to him, "Let it happen now, for it is right for us to fulfill all righteousness."

**Luke:** So John baptized Jesus and a voice from heaven said, "You are my one dear Son; in you I take great delight."

**Matthew:** From there, Jesus was led to the desert to be tested. For forty days, he went without food all while the enemy, Satan, tried to tempt Him.

**Luke:** "If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread."

**Matthew:** "Man can't live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

**Mark:** During Jesus' ministry, He called disciples to follow Him. As He was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw brothers, Simon and Andrew, casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen. Jesus said, "Follow me, and I will turn you into fishers of people."

**John:** Andrew the brother of Simon Peter, found his brother and said, "We have found the Messiah!" So Andrew brought Peter to Jesus—

**Mark:** Nuh uh.

**John:** What? Yes. It's right here.

**Mark:** No, this is the famous story of when Peter and Andrew dropped everything and followed Jesus. Remember? He said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men—"

**John:** Yes, I remember! I was an original, *(slightly mocking)* remember?

**Mark:** Oouch...

**Matthew:** Fight! Fight! Fight!

*John and Mark argue over who's right. Matthew's kind of enjoying this.*

**Luke:** *(breaking it up)* People! People! That's enough. Decorum, please. Matthew, you were also an original. What say you?

**Matthew:** *(thumbs through papers, mumbling)* Peter...Peter...Peter...let's see... AH! Here it is. As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brothers—

**Mark:** HA!! I was RIGHT!

**Luke:** Listen. Just because it's a little different doesn't mean you aren't both right. If the Book of John's writer says that's how it went, then that's how it went. There was a lot going on and different points of view. It's not a contradiction. *(A little fed up)* The Bible is like a football game. You have the player's perspective, the coach's perspective, the fans perspective, and the people at home watching it all on TV. Everyone is watching the same thing, but they're watching it from different angles and perspectives. It all happened.

*Beat.*

**Mark:** *(he's sorry)* Sorry.

**John:** Yeah, sorry.

*Pause.*

**Matthew:** What's football?

**Luke:** Now, everybody good? Can we get back to it?

**Mark:** I guess.

**John:** Yes.

**Luke:** Good.

**Matthew:** Uzziah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz—

**Luke:** Matthew! No!

**Matthew:** Sorry.

**Luke:** *(deep cleansing breath)* Since you like listing names so much, why don't you tell us who some of the other disciples were.

**Matthew:** *(thumbs through pages)* Let's see, there was Peter and his brother Andrew. Then two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John, his brother, shout out *(John poses or raises his hand)*.

**John:** Jesus also called Philip and Nathanael...

**Mark:** Matthew, shout out *(Matthew acknowledges with a wave or salute)*, Thomas, Thaddaeus, another James, Simon and... *(a little darkly)* Judas.

**John:** *(dramatically)* Dun dun dun!!

**Luke:** John.

**John:** Sorry.

**Luke:** *(sighs heavily pinching the bridge of his nose)* It'll be a miracle if we get through this.

**Mark:** What was that?

**Luke:** Miracles! During Jesus' ministry He did many miracles. He fed five thousand people.

**John:** He turned water into wine and healed a nobleman's son.

**Luke:** He raised the widow's son from the dead.

**Mark:** He cast out unclean spirits and cured Peter's mother-in-law.

**Matthew:** That guy was married?

**Mark:** I know, right? *(Looking at Luke's scolding expression)* He healed a leper.

**Matthew:** He stilled the storm.

**John:** Ooooh that was a good one, I remember that.

**Matthew:** He raised the ruler's daughter from the dead. He cured a demon-possessed man. He cured a deaf and mute man.

**John:** He raised Lazarus from the dead.

**Luke:** Not only did Jesus perform miracles to prove He was who He said He was, the Son of God, He also taught the people a better way of living.

**Matthew:** He gave the Sermon on the Mount, teaching about how those who are poor in spirit, mournful, meek, and merciful are blessed. That as God's followers, we are the light of the world. He taught how to live right in your marriage. How to keep your promises and how to love your enemies.

**Luke:** And the blind came. The lame. The sick. People who had never heard of anyone like Jesus before...and He healed them.

**Matthew:** "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."

**Luke:** He came to show us that the kingdom had come among us and taught us to pray about it.

**Matthew:** "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

**Mark:** He taught the people through parables, telling them stories so they could remember what's right and wrong and how God expects us to behave.

**Mark:** "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who casts seed upon the soil..."

**Matthew:** "The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field..."

**Luke:** He was rejected in many places, including His own hometown of Nazareth.

**John:** "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

**Matthew:** He was challenged at every turn by the Pharisees. They accused Him of being false, teaching lies, and for leading people astray. Jesus threatened their way of life.

**John:** They sought to stone Him for blasphemy and tried to arrest Him. However, many Jews were beginning to believe in Jesus because of the things they had seen Him do.

**Luke:** Jesus' popularity rose and things grew to a fever pitch. *(Beat)* Until it was time...

**Mark:** "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."

**Matthew:** "And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."

**John:** The time came...the beginning of the ending that turned out to be only the beginning. *(Beat)* Jesus found a donkey and rode into Jerusalem, just like the scriptures foretold.

**Matthew:** "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

**Luke:** As Jesus entered the city, the whole multitude of His disciples waved palm branches, rejoicing and saying...

**Mark:** Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

**Matthew:** (*overlapping*) Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

**John:** (*overlapping*) Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

**Luke:** (*overlapping*) Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

**Mark:** When He arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus went into the temple and drove out those who had turned it into a marketplace.

**Matthew:** (*with passion*) “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers.”

**Luke:** He taught in the temple, where the priests plotted to destroy Him. But listening to His words, they couldn’t find any fault in Him.

**Mark:** Jesus continued to teach the people through parables about how the prophets foretold of God’s Son coming, and how the people rejected Him.

**Matthew:** Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

**Mark:** “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

**Luke:** He warned them of the end times and about the destruction of the Temple. He told them how others would try to trick them and claim that they were the Messiah.

**Matthew:** When He had finished teaching, He told His disciples that His time was near. That after the Passover, He would be crucified.

*Beat.*

**Mark:** When Passover came, Jesus instructed His disciples to find the room where they would observe the Passover feast. The disciples and Jesus gathered in a room to observe the Passover.

**Luke:** And Jesus took the bread and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

**Matthew:** And then he took the cup filled with wine and said, “Drink this. It represents the blood that will be spilled for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

**Mark:** "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant of my blood." Jesus also told them that someone right there in the room would betray Him.

**John:** The disciples looked around at each other, wondering who Jesus meant. Judas leaned back towards Jesus and asked him, "Lord, is it me?"

**Matthew:** And Jesus answered him, "Yes."

**John:** "What you are about to do, do it quickly."

**Mark:** After the Passover feast, they went to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus said to the disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

**Luke:** And he went a little further, about a stone's throw, and he knelt down and prayed...

**Matthew:** My father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless...

**Luke:** Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.

**Mark:** "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

*John takes delight in telling this next part.*

**John:** Meanwhile, Judas had gone and assembled a band of soldiers to come and arrest Jesus. When they came to him Jesus asked them, "Whom do you seek?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I...am...He." When he said this, they stepped back and then they fell on the ground. Like...they just fell down.

*Other three are looking at him. They don't have this in their books. There's a beat, then **Matthew** starts thumbing through his book trying to see if he missed something, while **Luke** and **Mark** are still staring at **John**. **John** is smiling, he's so proud of this point, that Jesus spoke and soldiers fell down.*

**Mark:** *(whispers/under his breath)* That's really cool.

**John:** *(beaming)* I know, right?

**Matthew:** I don't have that. That's...that's amazing.

**John:** Well, I mean, the Holy Spirit led me to focus on the divinity of Jesus. See, this is what we call an "I Am" statement and—

**Luke:** Guys, we're so close. Can we just keep going? Lots of heavy stuff to get through.

**Mark:** Somebody's jealous...

**Luke:** I'm not jealous.

**Matthew:** Then say it's cool.

**Luke:** *(rolls his eyes, conceded)* It's very cool. Now can we move on.

**Mark:** Wow. Touchy.

**Luke:** Where were we...?

**John:** *(loudly, dramatically, Shakespearean)* Violence!

**Matthew:** SOMEbody took out his sword and cut someone's ear off.

**Mark:** I wonder who THAT was.

**John:** *(tattletale)* Peter. It was Peter. Peter did it.

**Luke:** Listen, stop ratting out Peter. He felt bad enough as it was, AND Jesus healed that guy too. *(beat)* Everybody good? Are we ready to move on?

*They've been scolded. Answer "yeah, I guess"; "sure we can keep going"; "just saying, it was Peter..."*

**Luke:** *(deep breath)* The soldiers arrested Jesus. He was tried before the high priests, Herod, and finally Pilate, the governor.

**Matthew:** Pilate questioned Jesus but wasn't quite sure what to do with him.

**John:** "I find no guilt in him," Pilate said to the Jews who were dead set on killing Jesus.

**Mark:** So Pilate, desperate to appease the Jews and settle the mob, handed Jesus over to be crucified.

*Somber and sorrowful.*

**John:** They beat him and made a crown of twisted thorns, shoving it down onto his head.

**Matthew:** They put a scarlet robe on him and mocked him saying, "Hail the king of the Jews!" They spit on him and struck him on the head.

**Luke:** They took him to the place called The Skull. There they crucified him. They nailed him to a cross between two criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

**John:** They stripped him of his clothes and cast lots for his garments. They hung a sign above his head that read "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

**Matthew:** At the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And Jesus cried out with a loud voice,

**John:** *(simply, sadly)* "It is finished."

*Lights begin to dim slowly over the next few lines.*

**Mark:** *(slowly)* Jesus breathed his last...

**Matthew:** ...and gave up his spirit. The curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook. Many who witnessed these things proclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

**Luke:** Jesus' body was buried in a tomb cut out of stone.

**Matthew:** They sealed the tomb with a large stone and set guards over it to watch.

*Lights finally fade out. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John come out from behind their podiums. The rest of the script is from memory.*

*Lights up! All 4 begin talking at once, excited! These lines are spoken at the same time.*

**Luke:** It was early in the morning and the women—Mary, Jesus' mother Mary, and Joanna all go to the tomb and the stone! It was rolled away! And they didn't find the body of Jesus, and they were confused...

**Matthew:** It was the day after Sabbath, just as the sun was coming up, the two Mary's went to the tomb to see it and an earthquake happened and there was an angel! Came right down from heaven and he looked like lightning—his clothes were as white as snow!

**Mark:** Mary and Mary and Salome all went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices and they were wondering how they would get into the tomb since the stone was so heavy. But guess what?? When they got there the stone was already rolled away!

**John:** Mary Magdalene got to the tomb early in the morning, but when she got there the stone was rolled away. So she ran! She ran to go tell Simon Peter and the disciple that Jesus loved (that's me)...

*Matthew's voice finally emerges.*

**Matthew:** An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb. He sat on the stone and he said to the women...

**Mark:** Don't be afraid, Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified... He isn't here. He has risen.

**Luke:** So they ran back to the disciples and told them what they had seen and heard. Peter got up and ran to the tomb to see for himself.

**John:** But the other disciple ran faster.

**Matthew:** It wasn't a race, John.

**John:** What? I'm faster than Peter. That's how it happened. I'm just sayin'. Anyway, when we got there—

**Matthew:** I have no mention here of John getting there first.

**John:** Yeah, but you weren't even there.

**Mark:** Ooooooo...oh no he didn't.

*They all break out into an argument, each talking over the other, claiming that their account is right and arguing over who got to the tomb first and who actually went to the tomb, etc. Finally, **Luke** breaks it up.*

**Luke:** Guys...guys! Hey! Guys! *(They settle, looking at **Luke**. Beat. **Luke** breaks out slowly into a big smile, and with great emotion and reverence ...)* He. Is. Risen.

**Matthew:** *(slowly, agreeing)* He is risen.

**Mark:** *(slowly)* He is risen.

**John:** *(smiling, with emotion)* He is risen indeed.

*They smile, patting each other on the back or hugging. Joyful, tears, etc. Their next lines are said to each other with joy and awe and emotion, but with reverence (not over-the-top). They say this as if to remind one another and to speak it out loud that Jesus has risen. It's as if it just happened all over again.*

**Matthew:** Jesus is risen.

**Mark:** Just as he said.

**John:** He is risen.

**Luke:** He is risen...just as he said.

*Any argument or conflict they had over the events is gone. They are united on this most important point. They each make their way back to their podium.*

**Luke:** Jesus appeared to many of His disciples. He was hard to miss. Any doubts that anyone had...

**John:** cough Thomas cough.

**Luke:** *(side-eye to John)* ...were gone. Jesus had risen.

**Matthew:** The disciples met Jesus on a mountain in Galilee. He said to them,

**Mark:** "Go out into the world and preach the good news to all creation."

**Matthew:** "Go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I've commanded you. I am with you always. To the very end."  
*(beat)* That ends the gospel of Matthew. *(he closes his book)*

**Mark:** That ends the gospel of Mark. *(he closes his book)*

**Luke:** That ends the gospel of Luke. *(he closes his book)*

**John:** That ends the gospel of John. *(he closes his book; beat)* But begins His good work in you.

*Lights out.*

*Optional ending.*

*Lights start to fade as if the play is over. Once John starts talking, the lights come back up. Matthew, Mark, and Luke start to exit. John stays in place.*

**John:** *(grandstanding)* Jesus did so many other things, and I suppose if you wrote them all down, they'd fill up a lot of books. So many books. But I don't even think the whole world could hold them all—

*Luke notices John isn't with him, turns around and says to John...*

**Luke:** John!

**John:** Coming. *(exits quickly)*