

Can we trust the Gospels?

Eyewitnesses, set down in order.

In short. The Church holds firmly that the four Gospels, “whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms,” faithfully hand on what Jesus really did and taught.¹ They are the heart of all the Scriptures, our principal source for His life and teaching.²

Key points

- The Church unhesitatingly affirms the historicity of the four Gospels.¹
- They were formed in three stages: the life of Jesus, the apostles’ oral tradition, and the written Gospels.¹
- God is the author of Scripture, and the human writers were true authors.^{3,4}
- They were written so that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.⁵

Try this, this week

1. **Read Luke 1:1–4 slowly.** Notice the words “eyewitnesses” and “in order”.
2. **Read Mark in one sitting.** It is the shortest Gospel.
3. **Note one thing about Jesus that surprises you.**
4. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:3–8.** Paul lists witnesses who saw the risen Christ, many still living when he wrote.

“Since many have undertaken to set in order a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write to you in order, most excellent Theophilus; that you might know the certainty concerning the things in which you were instructed.”

Luke 1:1–4, World English Bible

Watch out: what this does not mean

- Scripture is not read in isolation: it must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written.⁹
- Truth is presented differently in historical, prophetic and poetical texts, so the reader must take literary genres into account.¹⁰

Common questions

Who wrote the Gospels?

Video answer: Catholic Answers, stoneandincense.com/en/questions/who-wrote-the-gospels/

The Catechism says the Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith and wanted to share it with others.⁶ Luke writes that many had set forth a narration of these things, as they were delivered by those “who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.”⁷

Who decided which books are in the Bible?

Video answer: Catholic Answers, stoneandincense.com/en/questions/who-decided-which-books-are-in-the-bible/

It was by the apostolic Tradition that the Church discerned which writings are to be included in the list of the sacred books, called the canon of Scripture.⁸ It includes 46 books for the Old Testament and 27 for the New.⁸

Remember: Read one whole Gospel before deciding what you think.

Sources

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|------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. CCC 126 | 6. CCC 515 |
| 2. CCC 125 | 7. Luke 1:1–2 (World English Bible) |
| 3. CCC 105 | 8. CCC 120 |
| 4. CCC 106 | 9. CCC 111 |
| 5. CCC 514 | 10. CCC 110 |

Quotation above: Luke 1:1–4, World English Bible. Catechism: official text on [vatican.va](https://www.vatican.va).

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