



Uncovering the Hidden Riches of Christian History

Online Course Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR

Lenny Esposito
Come Reason Ministries

SUBJECT FOCUS

History/Theology/Apologetics
3 Credits

CREDITS

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PRIMARY TEXT

Justo L. Gonzalez,
The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1

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COURSE RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION

This course will give students a better understanding of their Christian heritage, help them grow in their faith, and deepen their beliefs. This eight-unit, sixteen class study will take us from the Resurrection to the Reformation, demonstrating how God's Spirit has been at work building His church and changing the world.

AIMS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will:

1. Know the what's and why's of the early Church Councils.
2. Identify important heretics and their primary saintly correctors.
3. Be able to explain important shifts, divisions, and movements that have shaped western civilization.
4. Appreciate their wonderful historical heritage.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Reading Assignments:** There is an optional reading assignment associated with each unit. We recommend for the most effective pedagogical strategy that students are tasked with reading each portion of the book or article and provide a one paragraph summary of their reading prior to watching. Reading assignments are from Justo L. Gonzalez's [*The Story of Christianity, Vol. 1*](#).

Included in the assignment are three sources that are independent from the text but are available online. This syllabus has included those links below as well as being accessible on that unit's class page.

2. **Online Quizzes:** After each unit, the student will be presented with a short online quiz to ensure the student has absorbed the key points presented in that unit. These will be automatically graded and count towards earning the class certificate. All quiz questions are drawn from the lectures specifically. For Bible study groups or casual learners, you may skip these if you wish.
3. **Discussion Questions.** Each class holds at least two discussion questions at the class midpoint and additional questions after the end of each video. These are meant to spur discussion and reflection. Individual students may choose to use these as writing exercises or engage in conversation with the parent or facilitator.
4. **Final Exam.** We recommend students complete the final exam within seven days of the last class, comprised of eight short essay questions. Answers should be 3-4 paragraphs in length with 5-6 sentences each paragraph. Include all relevant information. Grading is on your own. A teacher guide may be downloaded for homeschooling instructors to use as a guideline in grading these answers.

RECOMMENDED RUBRIC FOR GRADING THIS COURSE:

COMPONENT	WEIGHT (%)
Discussion Questions	40%
Final Exam	30%
Quizzes	30%
<i>TOTAL:</i>	<i>100%</i>

COURSE SCHEDULE:

UNIT	UNIT TITLE	READING ASSIGNED
1	Eleven Breaking Into the Upside-Down	N/A
2	Are We Living in the Matrix?	pp. 42-51;53-55
3	The Canon Heard 'Round the World	pp. 59-62;69-73
4	The Most Interesting Man in the World	pp. 73-81; "Lost Gospels' are to the Gospels as Sci-Fi is to Shakespeare"
5	He Came in Through the Bathroom Window	Chapter 17
6	The Continental Divide	Chapter 24
7	Blackbird Singing in the Dead of Night	pp. 289-293;345-356
8	The Rebellion vs. The Empire	"What are the five solas?"; Podcast: "The Reformation: A Great Schism or Necessary Change?"
	-----	Final Exam

LINKS TO ONLINE ASSIGNMENTS:

- “Lost Gospels” are to the Gospels as Sci-Fi is to Shakespeare”
<https://apologetics-notes.comereason.org/2015/05/lost-gospels-are-to-gospels-as-sci-fi.html>
- “What are the five solas?” <https://www.gotquestions.org/five-solas.html>
- Podcast: “The Reformation: A Great Schism or Necessary Change?”
<https://apologetics-notes.comereason.org/2017/10/the-reformation-great-schism-or.html>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (CONCISE)

Larry W, Hurtado, [*Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*](#).

Larry Siedentop, [*Inventing the Individual: The Origins of Western Liberalism*](#)

Alvin J. Schmidt, [*How Christianity Changed the World*](#)

Mark A. Noll, [*Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*](#)

Bruce L. Shelly, [*Church History in Plain Language*](#)

EVALUATION

After the last class, an anonymous evaluation for your course and instructor will become available for you to fill out. We rely on these to improve our courses and add additional material where interest is high. Note that all students who receive a passing grade will be rewarded with a Come Reason Academy Certificate of Completion within the system.

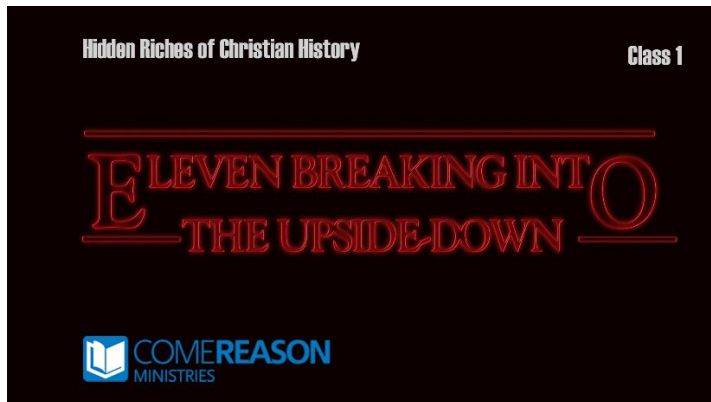
CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Complete integrity is expected of each student in all academic endeavors. Any work you submit must be your own. Any outside help or source material must be truthfully, accurately acknowledged and cited. Documentation of sources must conform to the guidelines in the Style Guide. You are encouraged to study and discuss the course material with other students. You can give and receive “consulting” help with each other, but copying and sharing work is prohibited. No student should ever possess a printed or electronic copy of another student’s work. If collaboration on assignments is allowed in this course, your instructor will inform you and provide detailed guidelines. During examinations and quizzes, each student must work alone with no help from others. The use of any printed or electronic materials is prohibited unless specifically allowed by the instructor. Relying upon artificial intelligence technologies is forbidden.

About the Hidden Riches of Christian History Series

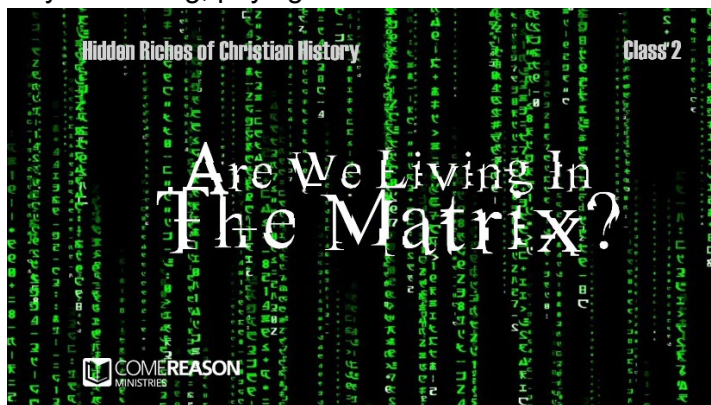
The Hidden Riches of Christian History lecture series takes you on a journey of exploration from the Resurrection to the Reformation. Along the way, we will hear remarkable stories and discover incredible insights into some of the most significant people and events that helped shape our faith into the world-transforming force it is today.

The course holds 8 units, broken into 16 classes. Descriptions are below:



Unit 1 – Eleven Breaking into the Upside-Down

The first Christians were part of a world that was so different to our own that we would hardly recognize it. Not only did they battle persecution and discrimination, the very values we now take for granted like individuals being equal were considered strange and dangerous. Rome saw the teachings of Christianity a threat to their culture and they were right. The eleven apostles took the Gospel of Jesus and broke through the upside-down culture of ancient Rome to establish a new way of thinking, paying for it with their blood.



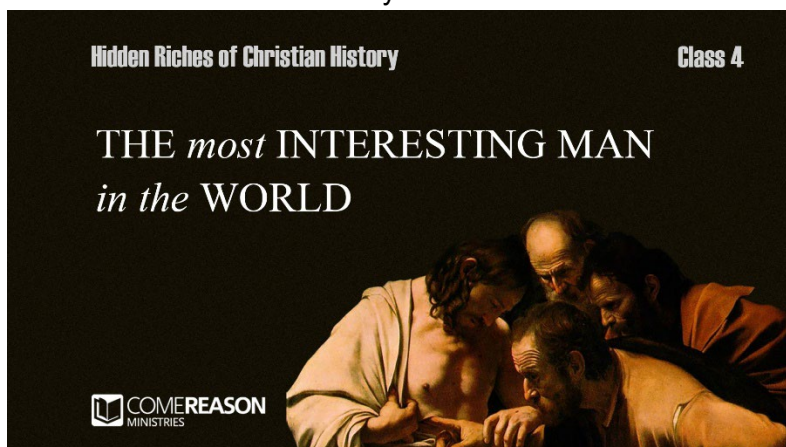
Unit 2 – Are We Living in the Matrix?

As Christianity gained more and more adherents in the second and third centuries, another threat rose against it. This time, instead of persecuting from without, new cults sprang up threatening to corrupt it from within. The most prevalent of these were the various forms of Gnosticism, each of which denied the reality of the physical world and held up the spiritual as a higher level of being. In this session, Lenny will discuss the tenets of Gnosticism and show why the early church held that God is God of the material world—including our bodies and our biology—as well as the spiritual!



Unit 3 – The Canon Heard 'Round the World

Today, we hear a lot about the so-called “lost books” of the Bible. The charge is made that somehow the church hand-selected only those documents that would keep them in power and other equally valid texts were ignored. Is this true? In our third lecture series, Lenny looks at how the Bible canon developed, why there are good reasons to leave others out, and just how we know these 66 books are truly the word of God.



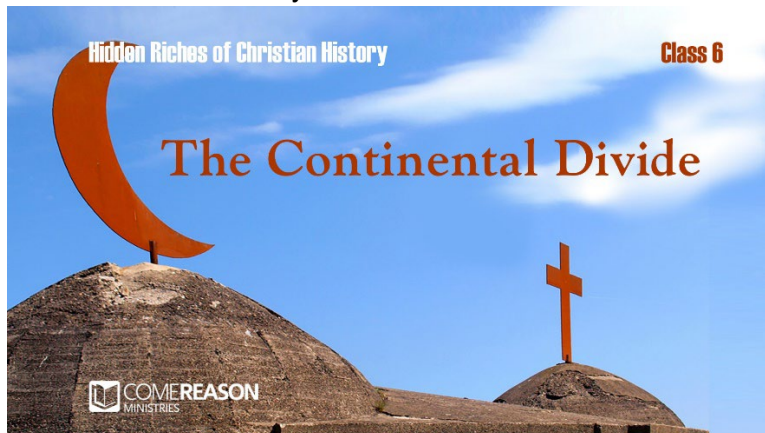
Unit 4 – The Most Interesting Man in the World

What beliefs define a true Christian? That was a key question after Constantine barred Christian persecution, lifting them from prisons to palaces. In the fourth and fifth centuries, the key questions of the faith centered around the divinity and humanity of Jesus. Was he God like God the Father or a created man? How did that work out specifically? In this part of our lecture series, we will explore how the early church affirmed Jesus’s full humanity as well as his full divinity and why these things are crucial even for us today.



Unit 5 – He Came in Through the Bathroom Window

Most Christians have heard about the twelve ragtag followers Jesus picked out to be his disciples. But many don't know about those he saved in the subsequent centuries. In this fifth installment of our class, Lenny looks at two key figures who both had a tremendous impact in shaping Christian thought. Athanasius was a staunch defender of the Trinity, even though he faced decades of resistance and persecution. Augustine went from a carnal pagan to a cultist to one of the most influential thinkers in all Christendom—one whose arguments even shut down the New Atheists today.



Unit 6 – The Continental Divide

Why is the church so fractured? Christianity today is known by its various denominations and groups, but that hasn't always been the case. In this lecture, Lenny explains how both political division within Christian hierarchy and the rise of Islam and the Crusaders helped cleave the Christian world in two. He also examines the dangers that exist when faith becomes more focused on formality than function.



Unit 7 – Blackbird Singing in the Dead of Night

Although it's popular to caricature the medieval period with the label "The Dark Ages," it was filled with brilliant thinkers who made significant advancements in human knowledge. Listen in as Lenny explains how the modern university was birthed from this time and how with Thomas Aquinas's use of Aristotelian reason, the stage was set for modern science to flourish.



Unit 8 – The Rebellion Versus the Empire

Coming out of the Middle Ages, Christianity was again in a state of transformation. Christian teachings had taken hold throughout Europe, but the church hierarchy had become political and corrupt. Reformers like Wycliffe, Hus, and Luther sought to return Jesus's teachings to the people. In this last set of talks, Lenny outlines the seeds of the Protestant Reformation, the motivations of the reformers, and those five key points that mark modern Protestant faiths today.