

## ***The Chosen***

### **Season 1 - "What Does It Mean to Be Chosen?"**

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## Episodes 1 and 2

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from the Book of Isaiah (43:1-2, 19).

Thus says the Lord who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" Amen.

### Introduction

*Can everyone introduce themselves by saying their name and how far have you watched The Chosen?*

Let's begin with a brief message from the Director, Dallas Jenkins.

[Show Introduction from Director - <https://youtu.be/0E-8-NcL7tc> (0:00 - 2:27)]

So we see Jesus through the eyes of those that met him. The point is to make these Biblical figures that you read about and see in art and statues, real human beings with hopes, dreams, emotions, questions, stress, faults, and doubts that need God's love and mercy...just like you and me.

### Season 1

Season 1 asks the question: What does it mean to be chosen? Season 1 examines this question through the eyes of four Biblical characters: Mary Magdalene, Nicodemus, Matthew, and Simon Peter.

Mary Magdalene is introduced in Luke 8:2: "Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out...". Mary represents the lost sheep; those who had some Christian upbringing, but encountered traumatic or tragic events to make them feel unworthy to have a relationship with God. Hence, they have allowed sin to overtake their life.

Nicodemus is introduced in John 3:1: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews." Nicodemus represents those who grew up and remain confident in their spiritual status. They know God and are confident they will be saved. But this pride may hinder their ability to see their need for reconciliation with God. That is, does God know them?

Matthew is introduced in Matthew 9:9: "As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth." Matthew represents those who had some

Christian upbringing, but have grown to love material things and strive for personal gain. They embrace the world and do not see the need for faith.

Simon (Peter) is introduced in Matthew 4:18: “While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew casting a net into the sea.” Simon represents those who have faith but use it only when it is convenient. They are Sunday only Christians. For the most part, they rely on themselves.

Episodes in Season 1 focus on “the calling”: Jesus choosing his disciples and how they reacted. Each episode has a theme regarding “being chosen”:

1. You Are Called
2. You Rest
3. You Are Cherished
4. You Change Course
5. You Are a Witness
6. You Are Made New
7. You Are Established
8. You Are Carried

Tonight, we will cover You Are Called and You Rest

### **Episode 1 - You Are Called**

Synopsis: The opening shows Mary Magdalene as a child praying with her father. Later, we learn her father died while Mary was young. Then, we see Mary Magdalene is living in Capernaum and haunted by demons, both literal and figurative. When a man flees her home and calls her possessed, the Romans ask Nicodemus, a rabbi visiting from Jerusalem, to perform an exorcism on her — but it fails. Meanwhile, Simon and Andrew are worried that they will lose their fishing boat because they cannot pay their taxes — so Simon stalls for time by lying and telling the tax collector Matthew that he is secretly working for the Roman praetor. Mary Magdalene considers throwing herself off a cliff, but holds back and goes to a pub, where she is about to have a drink when Jesus shows up and reveals that he knows who she is, and he heals her.

### **Episode Talking Points**

- *With which of these four flawed-but-still-called characters do you identify?*
- *Did you learn or feel anything new about these Biblical characters?*
  - *What is the symbolism behind Mary Magdalene using the name “Lilith”?*
  - *Did Simon’s marriage surprise you?*
  - *Did the people’s hatred for Matthew surprise you?*

Let’s watch a scene from Episode 1. On a personal note, I have watched this scene probably 10 times. I still get choked up every time I watch it.

[Watch Mary’s healing - <https://youtu.be/0E-8-NcL7tc> (50:22 - 54:44)]

- *What was your reaction to Jesus healing Mary?*
- *From what do you need to be rescued? A difficult personal history or pain? Too much pride? Financial insecurity? A world view that we must rely on ourselves? Something else?*
- *Did you notice the sitar playing during certain times in the episode? Have you ever noticed when the Holy Spirit is active in a situation or event? Pray that you will notice when the Holy Spirit is being active in your life.*
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### **Read John 3:16-18**

- We choose to do our own thing, to go our own way, and to defy the boundaries that were meant for our good and God's glory.
- By sending Jesus, God made a way (1) for sin to be atoned, and (2) for us to know Him the way He intended

**Notable quote:** "What if [God] is more beautiful and strange than we could ever imagine?" (Nicodemus)

**Episode 1 prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for creating me, for wanting to have a relationship with me, for making me one of your chosen. My thoughts, words, and actions show that I am unworthy to be called. But you pursue me relentlessly. Thank you for sending Jesus to search for me, to rescue me, and to guide me back to your heavenly home. Let me realize the Holy Spirit in my life like the sound of a sitar. Amen.

### **Episode 2 - You Rest**

Synopsis. The opening is Chinnereth 948 BC (1 Kings 15:20) to show that the Jewish people were celebrating the Shabbat over 1000 years before the current storyline. The newly-exorcised Mary Magdalene gets ready to host her first Shabbat dinner in a long, long time. Matthew tells the praetor Quintus that Simon might be lying to the Romans about his ability to help them catch merchants who are dodging their taxes.

Nicodemus learns that Mary is no longer possessed and asks her who cast out the demons, but she does not know. Jesus shows up unannounced at Mary's house for Shabbat dinner, along with two of his disciples. Mary, Nicodemus, Simon attend very different Shabbat dinners, while Matthew eats alone. The episode ends with Simon standing by the shore of Galilee as several Roman soldiers approach.

### **Episode Talking Points - Shabbat (sabbath)**

- *What is the Shabbat and why is important to the Jews?*
- *Why did the writers create a storyline that has Simon and Andrew being very delinquent on their taxes?*
- *Why is Nicodemus so confused by Mary's healing?*

[Watch the different Shabbats - <https://youtu.be/0E-8-NcL7tc> (1:25:15 - 1:30:58)]

Did you notice how the different celebrations reflect the four characters?

- Mary: Humble and imperfect but true worship of the presence of God
  - Nicodemus: Ritually respectful but potentially an act of recitation instead of an act of prayer and worship to God
  - Matthew: Striving for personal gain often isolates us from the people we love and leads us away from God
  - Simon: Worldly concerns can make one distracted, even wonder if God still cares, and thinking “I got this” instead of applying one’s faith
- *Which shabbat celebration do you identify with the last mass or service you attended?*
  - *What is the symbolism of Mary saving the chair for Elijah?*
  - *Did you notice the quote from John 1:46 about “Nothing good can come out of Nazareth?” (Nathaniel to Philip)*
  - *Who was the last person you invited to church or to your home for the purpose of hearing about what God has done in your life?*

**Read Exodus 14:26-31, Joshua 3:14-17, Daniel 3:19-25, then Isaiah 43:2**

- *How does the wording from Isaiah relate to the events in Exodus, Joshua, and Daniel?*
- *How do these readings challenge your own notion that somethings are impossible?*

**Notable quote:** “I don’t understand it myself. I was one way and now I’m completely different. And the thing that happened in between - was Him. So yes, I will know him for the rest of my life!” (Mary Magdalene)

**Episode 2 prayer:** Thank you, Lord, for the soul rest you offer through Jesus. Thank you for providing us our daily bread and for your constant presence that allows us to endure and overcome hard circumstances this side of eternity. We humbly ask that you teach us more and more how to rest in your presence. We excitedly await the everlasting joy of eternal life. Amen.

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## Episodes 3 and 4

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us continue to read from the Book of Isaiah 43:3-7.

“For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life. Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Today we are covering episodes 3 and 4: *You are cherished* and *You change course*.

Before we start Episode 3, **does anyone have any reflections on Episodes 1 and 2 that they were unable to share last time?**

### Episode 3 - You Are Cherished (Matthew 11:25)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Children

Synopsis. The opening finds Jesus in the wilderness, praying in anguish that the Father speak through him. Jesus is living in a tent on the outskirts of Capernaum. He cooks his own food, he bandages his arm, he plies his trade as a craftsman, and he says his prayers. A young girl named Abigail discovers his tent and plays with some of the objects she finds, but she runs away when he returns. The next day she comes back with a boy, and they introduce themselves to Jesus. The two children return the next day with other children, and as time goes by, Jesus tells them stories and teaches them how to pray. Eventually Jesus packs up and goes, but not before leaving some toys and a note behind, just for Abigail.

**Notable quote:** “I hope my next students ask the same questions. I hope when the time comes they will tell others about me like you have.” (Jesus)

[Watch reason for being here - <https://youtu.be/0DPzq53O4DI> (24:39-27:25)]

### Episode Talking Points

In Sunday’s gospel, we heard from Matthew 11:25, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, you have revealed them to little ones.”

- *What does it mean to have the faith of children?*

Pope Francis tweeted, “The little ones are those who, like children, feel their need and are not self-sufficient. They are open to God and allow themselves to be amazed at his works. They know how to read the signs, to marvel at the miracles of his love!”

Consider the childhood of our four characters.

- *How did the childhood of our four characters impact their adult faith life?*

- Mary: Magdala was a morally corrupt town. Adding life's traumas and tragedies, Mary likely didn't feel cherished by anyone. Hence, wickedness and demons had a stranglehold on her life.
- Nicodemus: Pharisees probably had a solid Jewish upbringing and education. Nicodemus probably felt pride over his accomplishments and felt cherished by God.
- Matthew: Although he likely had a solid Jewish upbringing and education, Matthew's family would have been damaged by his open display of disloyalty. By pursuing wealth, Matthew willingly gave up any sense of being cherished for who he was.
- Simon: Being a fisherman, Simon had meager learning. But Simon did stay faithful to the God of his fathers. From the Bible, we know that Simon suffered from both pride and self-sufficiency. Simon probably would have been uncomfortable with the notion of being cherished.

- *How did your childhood impact your adult faith?*

- On the surface, this episode can seem meaningless. *How did the writers use the children as a literary device for telling the story of Jesus?*

- In this episode, Jesus is seen doing camping chores, even hurting himself. *Have you ever seen Jesus portrayed doing chores before? How did it make you feel?*

- In this episode, Jesus is seen praying routinely and passionately (meal times, bed time). *What is your prayer life like? How does this portrayal of Jesus' prayers encourage you?*

- Abigail invited her friends to meet Jesus. *Is there someone in your life who needs to "come and see" Jesus? If yes, pray for that person. Invite them to a church or to a church event.*

## Reading

Let's read from 1 Peter 1:18-19. For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

God cherishes His chosen people so much, that he gave himself to get them back.

**Episode 3 prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, for sacrificing yourself in our place in order to bring us back to our Creator. We humbly ask to empower us to have a childlike faith and to trust that you will keep us through the hardships of life. In the words of Jude, "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

## Episode 4 - You Change Course (Mark 1; Matthew 3-4; Luke 3, 5; John 1)

Biblical Characters - Jesus, Matthew, James & John, Andrew & Simon, Nicodemus, John the Baptist, Joseph of Arimathea, Zebedee

Synopsis. In the opening, Simon is guiding the Romans in a boat at night, looking for fishermen who are working on the Sabbath to avoid paying their taxes, but he steers the Romans into a sandbar when he realizes they are on the verge of catching Zebedee and his sons, James and John. The Romans suspect that Simon has double-crossed them, so Matthew tells him to pay his taxes now. Simon goes fishing at night, hoping to catch enough fish to cover his debts, and he is joined by Andrew and the Zebedees — but they don't catch anything. In the morning, they see Jesus, who joins them in one of the boats and gives them a miraculous catch of fish, after which he tells them to follow him. Meanwhile, the Pharisees debate what to do about John the Baptist. John is thrown into prison by the Romans, and Nicodemus, who is still looking for the person who cast the demons out of Mary Magdalene, pays John a visit and says he has a question about miracles.

**Notable quote:** “You have not pursued the Lord lately...You're off to try to fix it again... No more talking. Maybe God can get your attention now.” (Eden)

[Watch “I got this” - <https://youtu.be/0DPzq53O4DI> (46:04-48:20)]

### **Episode Talking Points**

- Where is your faith? Think about a recent experience where either you thought you felt helpless or needed a miracle. *Did you turn to God...or turn to yourself and the world?*
- Eden says she will not let Simon punish her mother for Simon's sins. The church teaches that there are no private sins...that every sin harms the Body of Christ. *How can sin, even private sin, harm others?*
- Near the end of the episode, we see Nicodemus taking to John the Baptist. *Why did Nicodemus want to know if John had performed miracles? What did he suspect?*

[Watch Simon's calling - <https://youtu.be/0DPzq53O4DI> (01:12:21-01:13:34)]

- “Depart from me. I am a sinful man. You don't know who I am and the sinful things I have done.” *Have you ever come to the Lord with such a contrite heart? In Confession or at Mass, are you truly repentant for your sins?*
- Each of us is desperate for a Savior, but to change course, we need to repent and return to God. **I was...But God... and Now.** *What are the “I was...but God...and Now” stories of our four characters?*
  - **Mary:** **was** broken and ruled by evil. **But God** rescued her, and **Now** she is remembered for being among the disciples and the first person to whom Jesus revealed himself after the resurrection.
  - **Nicodemus:** **was** self-centered, proud, and confident in his leadership. **But God** humbled him and was patient with his questions, and **Now** he is remembered for seeking answers and assisting with Jesus' burial.



- Matthew: **was** rebellious, isolated, and hated for serving the enemy. **But God** called him to follow him, and **Now** he is remembered for serving Jesus and writing a gospel.
  - Simon: **was** self-sufficient, brash, and impulsive. **But God** called him to follow him. And **Now** Simon is known as the Rock of Faith on which Jesus built his church.
- Each of us can look back on a life situation and think: **I was** [lost, in trouble, in despair] **but God** [gave me comfort, wisdom, hope, a miracle] **and now** [my faith is stronger, my life has meaning, I am not afraid]. When we repent and return to God, giving Him control, our lives change and we become the people He intended for us to be. *Do any of you want to share a “I was...but God...and Now” story?*

### **Read Deuteronomy 10:20-11:7**

“You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. And consider today (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land, and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea flow over them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord has destroyed them to this day, and what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place, and what he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel. For your eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord that he did.”

**Episode 4 prayer:** *Dear Lord, thank you for dying for my sins, for raising me to new life in Jesus, and for patiently and faithfully leading me. I humbly ask that you give me specific direction for the decisions you have to make and for the way you need to go. I pray for humility and resolve to keep following you. Amen.*

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## Episodes 5 and 6

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from the Book of Isaiah 43:8-13.

“Bring out the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears! All the nations gather together, and the peoples assemble. Who among them can declare this, and show us the former things? Let them bring their witnesses to prove them right, and let them hear and say, It is true. “You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.” I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior. I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and I am God. Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?”

Today we are overing episodes 5 and 6: You are a witness and You are made new

The Old Testament tells us again and again that nothing is impossible for God. This episode begin Jesus’ public ministry and a reminder that truly, nothing is impossible for God.

### Episode 5 - You Are a Witness (Luke 2; John 2)

Biblical Characters. Jesus, Mary the mother of Jesus, John the Baptist, Nicodemus, Thomas and the disciples so far (Simon, Andrew, Mary Magdalene, John, Big James, Little James, and Thaddeus)

Synopsis. The episode opens with Mary looking for 12-year-old Jesus in the streets of Jerusalem. Joseph finds him in the Temple, and Mary asks Jesus to help them “get through all this” as he matures into his spiritual destiny. Eighteen years later, Mary goes to Cana to help Dinah, an old family friend, prepare for her son’s wedding. Simon goes home and tells Eden he has left his nets to follow Jesus; to his surprise, Eden is happy to hear this. Simon and Andrew join Jesus and the other disciples as they go to Cana to attend the wedding. The wedding runs out of wine, and Mary asks Jesus to intervene. Jesus, after some initial resistance, fulfills her request and changes some water to wine, knowing that he is now inaugurating the public part of his ministry. Thomas, the man who provided the wine, is puzzled by what he has seen, and Jesus tells Thomas to meet him in Samaria in 12 days. Meanwhile, Nicodemus doesn’t get the answers he’s been looking for from John the Baptist.

**Notable quote:** “He is here to awaken the earth, but some will not want to waken. They are in love with the dark. I wonder which one you’ll be?” (John the Baptist)

### Episode Talking Points

- *Did you notice the two mysteries of the rosary that start and end the episode?* [Joyful - Finding Jesus in the Temple; Luminous - Wedding at Cana]
- *Did you notice the juxtaposition between the Mary and Jesus in the opening scene and Mary and Jesus when the wine runs out?*
- *Did you notice the Jewish prayer being said before drinking the wine?* ["Blessed are you Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth the fruit of the vine..." vs "Blessed are you Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine..."] Much of the prayers at Mass are based on Jewish prayers.
- *Have you ever thought what it must have been like for Simon and his wife after Simon said "yes" to Jesus? What did you think about Eden's response?*

Thomas sees something he cannot unsee. Each of our characters sees or experiences something they cannot unsee, but not everyone went out and told others. Jesus instructs his disciples to testify on his behalf, to spread the good news of God's salvation.

- Mary: was healed of the 7 demons and continued to witness subsequent miracles. She was the first witness of the resurrection, and Jesus instructed her to tell the others.
  - Nicodemus: saw that Mary was healed which is an act only a person from God could do. Although he saw, he stayed partially blind in not believing that Jesus was the Messiah. Hence, he kept his thoughts secret and even met Jesus at night, symbolizing that Nicodemus may have preferred the dark.
  - Matthew: saw miracles that he could not explain, but instead of remaining blind, Matthew's eyes were opened. He went on to tell people by writing his gospel.
  - Simon: experienced a miracle that changed his life. He went on to lead the church, preaching on Pentecost, and evangelizing the good news all the way to Rome.
- *Have you ever had a personal experience with Jesus? Have you ever testified to others what God has done for you?*
  - *What are some factors that cause you or others to resist having faith in God?*

Many things vie for our attention. We set goals and 5-year plans, opinions and political affiliations, needs and responsibilities, relationships and reputations to maintain, and specific ways we want our lives to unfold.

- *Has God's plan ever interfered with your plan in such a way that you yearn to remain in the dark?*

[Watch miracle of the wine 46:00 - 47:15]

- *Did you ever wonder why Jesus waited until he was 30 to perform a public miracle?*
- *How is this public miracle by Jesus like an artist cutting into a stone?*
- *Did you ever wonder how much pain and suffering Jesus and his family saw and experienced before the Wedding at Cana, knowing that Jesus could help but it was not his time?*

Mary says “Do whatever he tells you.” That is Mary’s instructions to us as well: Do whatever Jesus tells you.

### **Read John 10:30-33, 37-39**

Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” Again his Jewish opponents picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?” “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.” Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

**Episode 5 prayer:** Dear God, thank you for the Bible, our written record of history and the testimony of your actions in the world. Thank you for your intervention in my life and in the lives of those around me. Thank you for Jesus, your only Son, who was willing to exercise your power and love on earth — not for his sake, but for ours. I humbly ask for courage and opportunities to tell others what I’ve come to know, believe, and understand about you. Amen.

### **Episode 6 - You Are Made New (Mark 1-2; Matthew 8-9; Luke 5)**

Biblical Characters. Jesus, Mary the mother of Jesus, Nicodemus, the Leper, the Paralytic, and the disciples so far (Simon, Andrew, Mary Magdalene, John, Big James, Little James, and Thaddeus)

Synopsis. The episode opens with us learning Shmuel ordered the arrest of John the Baptist without consulting his teacher, Nicodemus. Jesus and his followers return to Capernaum. On the way, they are met by a leper who has heard about the miracle in Cana and asks Jesus to heal him if it is his will. Jesus does this, and the healing is witnessed by a woman named Tamar. Jesus then goes to Zebedee’s house, and a crowd gathers to hear him teach. The crowd attracts the attention of the Pharisees, who come to see the new teacher for themselves, and it also attracts the Romans and Matthew, the latter of whom is still puzzled by the miraculous catch of fish that he witnessed. Tamar shows up with some friends who are carrying a paralytic on a stretcher. Since they cannot push their way through the crowd, they go up to the roof and let the paralytic down into the house through an opening. They ask Jesus to heal him if it is his will. Jesus forgives the paralytic’s sins — which shocks the Pharisees — and tells the paralytic to get up and walk. As the Romans disperse the crowd, Nicodemus tells Mary Magdalene he needs to speak to Jesus, while Jesus makes eye contact with Matthew just before leaving with the disciples.

**Notable quote:** “If God did something that you felt contradicted the Torah, would you tell him to get back in that box you have carved for him, or would you question your interpretation of the Torah?” (Nicodemus)

## Episode Talking Points

- *Over the years, are there examples of parts of the Church putting God into our carved Biblical box?* [Sun revolves around the Earth, slavery is not wrong, religious war is good, God's language is Latin, women cannot be lectors nor eucharistic ministers]

Matthew tells Quintus, "Conquest is not simply conquering nations, but imposing a new way of life."

- *How does this quote relate to Jesus as the Messiah?*

[Watch miracle of the paralytic]

- *Why did the writers place Matthew next to Abigail and her friend?*
- *Why did Simon say to Matthew, "At least you brought your tablet"?*
- *Although Shmuel and Nicodemus are both Pharisees and claim to have faith in God, why were their reactions to the miracle so different?*
- *What is your reaction to hearing about a miracle today? How does it differ from others that you know?*

In this episode, before each miracle the person with great faith asks the same question of Jesus: "If you are willing..." How many times do we ask God for something but fail to ask, "If you are willing..." Remember that phrase since it becomes a focal point in Season 3.

The topic of this episode is transformation. Sometimes it's easier to come to Jesus than to stay with Jesus. We experience a crisis or need that drives us to Jesus. But then our old patterns of behavior reemerge.

The cycle of sin: God's plan, we deviate, we need to be rescued, we repent, God forgives, and we follow God's plan...but then we deviate.

As we follow the stories of the disciples, we find each disciple at a different level of growth regarding their faith in God and in Jesus. Transformation happens slowly in some and faster in others, depending on the circumstances or season of life. But Jesus is patient with each of us because He knows that when God declares and saves and proclaims, no one can turn it back. But we also do not know the hour of our death, so do not delay your transformation.

Let's look at our 4 characters and their cycle of sin and transformation:

- Mary: was demon possessed and governed by darkness, but in an instant God rescued her and forgave her. Now she is a disciple. *Is Mary's transformation finished? Will she never sin again?*
- Nicodemus: As he witnesses the people around him being transformed, Nicodemus remains skeptical but recognizes that maybe he has deviated from God's plan. *Will Nicodemus remain resistant to transformation? Will he become a disciple?*
- Matthew: As he witnesses the unexplainable that could only be acts from God, Matthew becomes open to the possibility of transformation. *Why will Matthew's transformation be slower than Mary and Simon?*

- Simon: Like Mary, Simon's transformation was rapid. *Will Simon struggle to retain his transformation?*

**Read Jeremiah 31:31-34**

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

**Episode 6 prayer:** Dear God, you are the good shepherd. I hear your voice, and I follow you, for you give me eternal life. Yet sometimes, I lack trust in you, and I go astray. Seek me out when I am lost, for I do not forget your voice. Please help me to see what is true and to make the right decision. Help me to stay the course. Amen.

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## Episodes 7 and 8

### Opening Prayer

To open our Bible study on The Chosen, let us read from the Book of Isaiah 43:14-19.

“Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'For your sake I send to Babylon and bring them all down as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships in which they rejoice. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: 'Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert?'”

Today we are overing episodes 7 and 8: You are established and You are carried

### Episode 7 - You Are Established (Mark 2; Matthew 9; Luke 5; John 3)

Biblical Characters. Moses, Joshua, Jesus, Nicodemus, Matthew, Simon, Mary Magdalene

Synopsis. In the opening, it is the 13th century BC, Moses is making a bronze serpent, so that all of the Israelites who have been attacked by poisonous snakes can look at it and be healed. In the 1st century AD, Jesus tells his followers that they will start moving from town to town, now that the miracles he did are attracting lots of attention. Mary Magdalene tells Jesus that Nicodemus wants to meet with him. Matthew, who has been estranged from his family since he took up tax collecting, has an awkward meeting with his mother. Simon warns Jesus that the meeting with Nicodemus could be a trap, so Jesus takes a few precautions but goes ahead with the meeting anyway. Jesus explains his mission to Nicodemus — comparing himself to the bronze serpent in Moses' day, and telling him that people must be born again — and he asks Nicodemus to join his movement. Nicodemus is clearly interested but says he cannot. The next day, Jesus is walking past Matthew's tax booth. He calls Matthew, and Matthew follows him at once.

**Notable quotes:** “[To Nicodemus] We want rules followed. We want order. Soldiers, money, votes...that's my world. Demons, prayers, oddballs...that's yours. I need to know if our worlds are on a collision course?” (Quintus)

- *2000 years later, these two worlds are still colliding. Which world is your world, the one about money and power? Or the world of prayer...and “oddballs”?*

Keep a listen to the statements and questions from the Roman characters in episodes. The writers use the Romans as a literary tool to show how “odd” being Jewish,

Christian, or even Muslim appears to those who do not have faith in the God of Abraham.

### **Episode Talking Points**

Many Christians do not know the connection between Moses and the bronze snake and Jesus and the cross.

- *What was your reaction to seeing the the story of Moses in the first scene and Jesus' explanation to Nicodemus?*

We live in an unpredictable world. There are natural disasters, terrorist attacks, car crashes, cancer, and global pandemics. While there's order in creation (math, science, patterns, logic), there's also chaos and complexity. We cannot grasp the complexities and connections of everything. We want our needs to be met. We want to be safe. We want to feel solid ground beneath our feet. But in Episode 7, the ground is shifting. We cannot control the world. But there is one who is in control. God will accomplish His purpose.

Let's look at our 4 characters:

- Mary: Her world was a flood until Jesus grabbed hold of her and placed her on the rock of his church. As she follows Jesus, she has faith that there is stability no matter the circumstances.
  - Nicodemus: He felt the flood, but will he be ready to abandon his plot of sand? He'd been waiting and watching for the Messiah, but is he unwilling to relinquish the safety of his worldly stature to follow the uncertainty of the heavenly path?
  - Matthew: He relinquished his beachfront property for holy ground. He reached the conclusion that Jesus was the Redeemer they'd been waiting for. He turned away from fleeting worldly treasures and took hold of the promised eternal treasures of heaven.
  - Simon: He stood firmly on the stability of a rock, his rock, which began to crumble. He found a new rock, one that never changes, never fails, and outlasts the sands of the earth.
- *How does the Bible teach us that God is in control even when we think wicked people are in power?*
  - *How is having faith in God so much more than just believing in God? In what ways have you built your house on sand?*
  - *Simon asks, "Do you know him?" Have you ever been like Simon, judging someone who says they are following Jesus? Who is the only one who knows a person's heart?*

Let's read from John 3 and see whether this episode influenced your interpretation and understanding of the passage.

### **Reading John 3:1-15**



Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

- *Did the episode influence your understanding?*

[Watch Jesus and Nicodemus 29:10 - 32:50]

As Nicodemus struggles with the decision to follow Jesus, he quotes Psalm 2:12: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way." Indeed, to die in the midst of sin, in the midst of not knowing and not following Jesus would be tragic. But Jesus responds to Nicodemus with the rest of the psalm: "Blessed are all who take refuge in him."

- *What do you think it means to "take refuge" in Jesus, and how does it relate to His teaching on building your life on the Rock?*
- *Did you notice that John was taking notes?*
- *Does Jesus promise zero storms by following in him?*
- *Who lives in us after Baptism? Does it give you comfort knowing they are going through the trials and tribulations with you?*

**Episode 7 prayer:** Dear God, thank you for your redemptive work in the Old Testament lives of the Israelites, as they pictured the coming Messiah. Thank you for sending Jesus, the ultimate Redeemer, upon whom my life can now be established. Please send me ever-lasting faith to stay on firm ground in gratitude to the Holy One, the Creator, the King. Please send the Holy Spirit to those whom I know still live on shifting sands. Amen.

**Episode 8 - You Are Carried (Mark 1-2; Matthew 8-9; Luke 4-5; John 4)**

Biblical Characters. Jacob, Jesus, Nicodemus, Simon, Mary Magdalene, Andrew, Simon's mother-in-law, Samaritan Woman

Synopsis. The opening is in the 20th century BC. Jacob and his sons dig a well on some land that he has just bought near Shechem. In the 1st century AD, a Samaritan woman named Photina goes to that well, alone, for water. Meanwhile, in Capernaum, Matthew hosts a dinner for Jesus and his followers, and the Pharisees complain that Jesus is associating with sinners. Shmuel confronts Nicodemus for failing to condemn Jesus' blasphemy. Jesus heals Simon's mother-in-law so that Simon and his wife will have less to worry about while Jesus and the disciples are traveling from town to town. Quintus is upset when he hears that Matthew has left his post to follow Jesus, and he posts signs around town saying Jesus is wanted for questioning. Jesus and his followers leave town and walk as far as Samaria, where Jesus meets Photina by the well and reveals to her that he is the Messiah. Jesus tells the disciples they will stay in Photina's town for the next couple of days.

**Notable quotes:** "Listen, if we are going to have a question and answer session every time we do something you are not used to, this is going to be a very annoying time together for all of us." (Jesus)

### **Episode Talking Points**

This episode is about how God chooses, then carries you. Bishop Robert Barron from Word on Fire often comments on how very strange our religion is to those who are not from the Judeo-Christian faith. Let's see how the writers state that fact in the beginning of this episode

[Watch Jacob at the well 37:00 - 39:36]

"[To Jacob] From all the gods you could possibly choose from, you pick an invisible god, whose promises take generations to come true, who make you sojourn in strange places, and broke your hip? That is a strange choice." (Asib)

- *Jacob says, "We didn't choose Him...He chose us." Did you first choose God, or did God first choose you?*
- *Did the opening help explain the historical and religious significance of the well in which Jesus met the Samaritan woman?*

Compare Jacob's "He chose us" to God choosing the Samaritan people...again. Jesus knows he is going to meet the Samaritan woman at the well and plans for it. God is calling all his people to follow Him again, as prophesied in Isaiah 43 that we've been reading. Jesus knows meeting a Samaritan and a woman, alone during the day, is culturally taboo in the same way eating and conversing with sinners is culturally taboo. But like God's messages through the prophets in the Old Testament, God is not interested in cultural taboos. God is interested in saving souls. God knows us, the choices we make, and the sadness that results from our sins. And He searches to call us back anyway.

On the subject of choosing, let's watch Nicodemus' choice.

[Watch Nicodemus choice 1:08:45 - 1:10:48]

- *“You came so close.” Have there been times in your life when Jesus would have said the same about you? What calls from the Lord did you ignore or tried to ignore?*
- *Do you think there was any symbolism in the gifting of money instead of going on mission with Jesus?*

The unknown is scary, strange, uncomfortable, and unpredictable. The disciples experienced radical change by following Jesus. They went from living in houses to pitching tents. From earning their way to depending on Jesus to show them the way. From making plans for their lives to having no plan other than serving God.

- *What new thing are you afraid Jesus might lead you to? Could it be missionary work, ending a toxic relationship, repairing a broken relationship, sharing your faith, leaving your job?*

In Isaiah 43:16-19, God reminds us of all his marvelous deeds He has done in saving and blessing the Israelites. Then, God promptly tells the people to forget it. God didn't want them to think God was a thing of the past. God wanted them to follow the One who does new things, forges new paths, and carries His chosen people along. From Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David, God called people to do things that should've been impossible, but God made the impossible possible.

We've been following 4 characters this season. What faith did they show?

- Mary: A single woman with a traumatic personal history followed Jesus from town to town, trading the familiarity of home for the unknown, relying on Jesus to carry her. And over time, she became less like her old self and more like Jesus, carrying others as we'll see in future episodes.
  - Nicodemus: He didn't get to experience the walking with Jesus part. He did not have faith to let Jesus carry him. But that does not mean he didn't eventually learn to trust in letting his Lord carry him.
  - Matthew: Nothing made sense anymore to Matthew. But he had faith that only God makes the impossible possible. So, Matthew let Jesus carry him. And becoming like Jesus, Matthew helps carry us to God in his gospel.
  - Simon: Self-sufficiency would have made being carried a foreign and unattractive concept to Simon. Throughout the New Testament, we see attempts from Simon to follow Jesus using his own strength...only to stumble and fall. But Jesus persisted with Simon because learning to depend on Jesus is wholly necessary to be the rock on which Jesus built his church. We'll see Simon's full acceptance in a future episode.
- *How has God been faithful to you in the past? When did God carry you?*

- *What impact does your faith plus God's willingness and ability to carry you have on your faith journey?*

A quick note about the scene with Jesus and Eden. The writers wanted to portray that wives made great sacrifices keeping the home running while their husbands went on journeys for work. There is an unnamed woman who sacrificed to let Simon Peter go on mission. They wanted to both put a name to this person and to thank her for making the sacrifice.

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

"For consider your calling, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

Next season, we'll meet Philip, Nathaniel, Simon the Zealot, and Judas. We'll follow Jesus on his early missions. We'll experience his disciples wrestle with both Jesus' message and with each other. The stories include the Good Samaritan, the Good Shepherd, the healing of the paralytic at the pool, the Lord's prayer, and the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount...the beatitudes.

**Episode 8 prayer:** Dear God, Just as you made a way through the wilderness and rivers throughout the desert in the Old Testament days, and just as Jesus made the lame to walk and the blind to see in the New Testament days, you continue to make the way today. Indeed, the God of miracles is not a thing of the past. Lord, you are doing new things in and through us, building your kingdom and accomplishing your good and perfect will, from the beginning of time to the end. Thank you for your promise to keep and carry your chosen people. I humbly ask Jesus to continue changing me from the inside out, making me more like Him every day. Send opportunities to do hard things in Jesus' name. I praise you for allowing me to be a part of building your kingdom, just like those who've gone before me. Amen.