

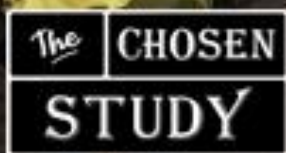
The Chosen Study

-Season One-

Water for the Thirsty

Ten Studies based on
the popular TV series

THE CHOSEN



The Chosen Study

Water for the Thirsty

*A welcoming and
Interactive experience for everyone:
observers... skeptics... learners... seekers... followers.*

Chosen Study Team

Bill & Teresa Syrios, Dietrich Gruen, Bill Ditewig,
Tori Foss, Don & Cathy Baker and Anne Galick



*TheChosenStudy.org
Watch > Discover > Relate
the Most Compelling
Story ever told.*



If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

-Jesus (John 7:37)



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The Chosen Study is not affiliated with The Chosen TV series or Angel Studios.

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The Chosen is a television drama based on the life of Jesus Christ, created, directed and co-written by American filmmaker, Dallas Jenkins. It is the first multi-season series about the life of Christ, and season one was the highest crowd-funded TV series or film project of all time.

The series' creators stated that they had hoped to distinguish the new series from previous portrayals of Jesus by crafting a multi-season, episode-based story. The series portrays Jesus "through the eyes of those who met him."
-*The Chosen*, Wikipedia



The
Chosen

Download ***The Chosen App*** on your device and cast it to a TV.

Access ***The Chosen*** on a computer with this URL: TheChosen.tv

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Welcome to The Chosen Study: Season One

Like the man himself, the accounts of Jesus' life and ministry are unique in the field of literature. Ancient writings include historical accounts, personal memoirs, and mythological stories. But none of these styles describe how Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote.

They combine the roles of historian, biographer, theologian, and pastor. These "reporters" are not simply neutral observers but men who had been deeply influenced by the message they desired to communicate. Lacking literary precedent, second-century Christians called them *Evangelists* and their writings *The Gospels*.

The English word "gospel" comes from the Greek term, *evangelion* which means "good news." The four Evangelists wanted their readers to not only know how remarkable Jesus was, but to know how good his message becomes in the lives of those who embrace it.

To understand that message better, we have selected key Bible passages portrayed in *The Chosen*. So, wherever you may be spiritually—an **observer... skeptic... learner... seeker... or follower**—we're glad you've joined in to learn from those who knew Jesus best.

The Chosen Study = Food + Film + Scripture + Discussion

Season One includes ten studies. We typically:

- Meet weekly* to watch>discover>relate and to develop friendships.
- Start with a meal*, potluck or finger food to relax with each other.
- Have no need* to bring Bibles. This guide includes all Scripture used.
- Share* at our comfort level. No one is asked to sing, pray or read aloud.
- Are facilitated* by a leader who guides group discussion and pace.

To simplify the process, we suggest you **buy the guides** (for a volume discount: TheChosenStudy.org/order) and the **BIC pens** (6/12-packs available through Amazon). Feel free to charge a nominal fee of \$10-\$20 to cover costs which should include buying extras for late comers.

Flexible Size Options: How large is your group?

One-on-One
Get-Togethers

or

Small Group
Meetings

or

Small/Large (8+)
Group Gatherings



Flexible Time Options: How much group time do you have?

Longer: WATCH > DISCOVER > RELATE with food as set out in this guide takes **2½ to 3 hours**. **This format is most impactful and cited below.***

Medium: If limited to **1½ to 2 hours**, you will need to skip questions or eliminate a “Discover” section to condense and keep up the pace.

Shorter: If the group has less time, say **an hour**, you could: 1) watch the episode and, 2) study the passages before coming. Then, as you meet, you would discuss what you watched / studied in preparation. (This option is less than ideal if members’ preparation is inconsistent.)

Note: All studies have a WATCH section. Studies #1, #3, #4, #6, #7, #8 and #9 include two passages and TWO DISCOVER sections. If you are short on time, you could ask the group to study the first passage on their own and then study the second passage together.

#2, #5 and #10 have one passage: WATCH > DISCOVER > RELATE. Plan on pacing yourselves to leave adequate time for the RELATE section at end of each study.

***EXAMPLE: Midweek Evening**
5:45 ARRIVE: 15 min. to gather
6:00 DINNER: 30 min. to relax/eat
6:30-8:45 THE CHOSEN STUDY

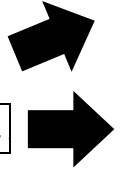
***EXAMPLE: Saturday Morning**
8:45 ARRIVE: 15 min. to gather
9:00 LITE BREAKFAST: 15 min.
9:15-11:30 THE CHOSEN STUDY

Each Study has Six Sections

1) **INTRO** Preview Episode/Passage . . .

2) **WATCH** View the Episode > Discuss . . .

3) **DISCOVER** Read > Mark It Up > Discuss . . .



Ask the “W” Questions:

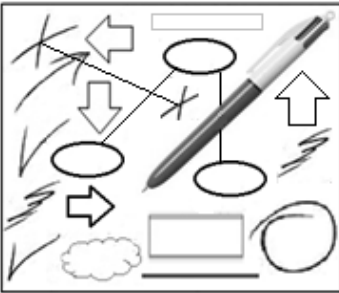
WHO is involved | **WHEN** did it happen | **WHERE** is it happening |

WHAT is taking place | **HOW** is it happening... and then ask...

WHY questions regarding what the author’s message is about.

Mark It Up: Use a four-colored BIC pen or other markers.

Don’t worry about getting it perfect, just Mark It Up!



Use BIC Pen to Draw:

- Circles around people or places.
- Boxes around whatever you’d like.
- Lines under key words and phrases.
- Clouds wherever you feel like it.
- Identify change of scene, watch for contrast, repetition, key words, etc.
- Write notes

4) **RELATE** to God / Life / You > Discuss . . .



These two sections are for reference, not to discuss, unless time allows:

5) **NOTES on the STUDY** Background and Historical Context

6) **REALISTIC But REAL?** The Chosen’s use of Artistic License

Note: Have guides on hand for those who come to the group after the first week and for those who forget to bring their guides. **Write EXTRA on the back cover to re-use** for those who forget theirs in later weeks. **The guide pdf can be accessed.** See the website under *Chosen Series*.

WATCH View Episode 1 Together (54 min.) > Discuss

Example from Study #1, Episode One: *I Have Called You by Name*

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

Example from Study #1: *Jesus, Simon and the Woman*: Luke 7:36-50

Example from LUKE 7: ³⁶One of Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man was a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."...

To check Jesus out

Uninvited & Compelled

Note the action words

Inappropriate in public

"sort" of woman

Inappropriate to Simon

Very deliberate personal address

RELATE How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss



Express Your Thoughts:

Write/discuss how this passage applies to your life, your relationship with God, your priorities with God, your career, values, future goals, etc.



Not into studying? Please read this.

What do you think about when you hear the word “study?” Yeah, thought so. It’s bad. Well, how about when you hear the term, “Mark It Up?” Not so bad, right? Think of a Mark-It-Up study format as the adult version of drawing with crayons.

When young children use crayons they don’t care about much except enjoying the process. That’s the idea! Be like a kid. (We’ll talk about this more in Study #3!) Just swap crayons for a four-color BIC pen!



We learn through our five senses like hearing something read aloud. So, plan on having someone who reads well read the passages.

Marking up Scripture passage also has us using another sense we would otherwise not: the sense of touch. And if we do so colorfully (enter the four-color BIC pen—very inexpensive in a 12-pack from Amazon), we add just a bit more to the learning process through the sense of sight.

And don’t worry about “drawing within the lines” or “color coding.” Even if you tried, you just can’t mess this format up. There’s no right and wrong, there’s just engagement. Hands on...literally.

*So, think of this guide as a
SCRATCH PAD.*

*Not to study it of course, but
to apply the M-I-U format and have fun with it.*

Yes, exactly like you did drawing those childhood masterpieces!

How to Watch The Chosen

Go to TheChosen.tv to view it on a computer. To watch on a smart TV, download *The Chosen* app on your phone/device and cast it to your TV. If you are unsure of how to do this, do a search on YouTube for a video on how to cast to a TV, or purchase an inexpensive Roku device.

Always **turn on the TV's closed captions** to better follow the narrative, and **darken the room** to better follow the action. A big TV also helps!



Note: We identify the length of each episode (from 23 to 59 minutes, including credits) in the WATCH sections to help you pace the study. It's much better to leave things unsaid than to bog down!

How to Use the Guide's Questions

Unlike most Bible studies, take into account that your group has just spent time studying (or watching). So, instead of using the guide's specific questions first, **start with "general questions,"** like:

- ... **Set the scene, who's involved, and what are they doing?**
- ... **What did you see (observe/notice/appreciate) in this section?**
- ... **What strikes you (surprises you/is something new to you) here?**

Such questions often lead to an extended back-and-forth dialogue. That's your discussion goal. If this happens, **you do not need to use many or any of the guide's more specific questions.** So, if/when the dialogue wanes or wanders from the main points, then you can use some of the guide's **more "specific questions,"** such as:

... *What does vv. 5-9 say about _____?*

... *Why do you think vv. 5-9 says _____ about _____?*



Guide Overview

The Chosen Study, though not affiliated with *The Chosen* TV series, focuses on “filling out” the series with Scripture in a way that everyone can meet friends, participate and get to know Jesus better.



PRIOR

The

STUDY

How to Lead the Study

Tips for current (and future) leaders to prepare.

WATCH

View Episode Together > Discuss

Questions take us deeper into the episode.

FROM

The

CHOSEN

DISCOVER

Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

Questions for complimentary Scripture passages.

FROM

The

BIBLE

RELATE

How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss

Questions to help us apply the passage(s) in our lives.

These two sections are for reference, not to discuss, unless time allows:

NOTES on the Study

Background & Historical Context

The biblical passages' context and meaning put into perspective.

REALISTIC

But

REAL?

That's plausible but did it happen?

The Chosen's artistic license put into perspective.

Notes on the format that apply to you/your group:

PRIOR

To

STUDY

How to Lead the Studies

Leader's Notes: Study the passage(s) and take notes on the episodes ahead of time.

Spend time in preparation with *Prior To Study* on page 12 and 17. All studies follow this pattern.

PRIOR

To

STUDY

How to lead Study #1

Begin your gathering by exchanging names and interesting personal info. Put together a sign-up sheet. (See also page 116.)

- Have members put names on the back cover for easy identification.*
- Identify how you will operate regarding the group's features (page 4), whether you meet as a small group or as a small/larger group and how much time you have for your study (page 5).*
- Go through the Eight Ground Rules on page 115. Have fun with it!*
- Spend time discussing the study format regarding how to ask the "W" questions and mark up the passages. Go through pages 6 to 11 so that everyone has a feel for the M-I-U study format.*
- Have a volunteer(s) read aloud the introduction and the passages (pages 14-16).*
- Give members some time for personal study on passages using the BIC pens. Monitor to end study time when appropriate.*
- Discuss passages by first asking general discussion questions, then, if needed, the specific ones in the guide (see page 10). First discuss in small group(s) and then, if available and time allows, the larger group.*
Keep up the pace.
- Watch the episode and discuss (page 16).*

The Shepherd

Study #1

INTRO: From the beginning *The Chosen* has been unusual. Born out of the seeds of a Hollywood box office flop, the creator, Dallas Jenkins, wondered if he had what it took to make an appealing movie.



Dallas’s church asked him to create a short film for Christmas (aka, *The Shepherd*), and from this film he and the Angel Studios’ team went on to initiate the largest crowdfunded media production in history—to the tune of over 10 million dollars given by 75,346 enthusiastic fans: Season One of *The Chosen*.

The plan continued: Have each season crowdfund the next one until they complete all seven seasons. The series is free and funded by people interested in “paying it forward.” And now it’s time to watch it, study it, discuss it and live it forward.

DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss*

INTRO: Old Testament prophets anticipated the coming Messiah. In Episode 0, or Pilot Study, we are introduced to three such prophets quoted from the following texts in the synagogue scenes.

But there's a problem: Were the Jewish leaders looking for the *right* Messiah? (For historical background, see NOTES on pages 20.)



The Ruler to Be Born in Bethlehem

MICAH 5 ² But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,

from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.

³ Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth;

then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel.

⁴ He shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And he shall be their peace.

For to Us a Child Is Born

ISAIAH 9 ² The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;

you have increased its joy;

they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest,

as they are glad when they divided the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The Ransomed Shall Return

ISAIAH 35 ³ Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart,
“Be strong; fear not!

Behold, your God will come with vengeance,
with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Parts of the above three prophetic passages are read in this episode.

1. *How do the prophets describe the Messiah?... his appearance?... and the result of his coming?*

WATCH [View Pilot Episode 0 \(23 min.\) > Discuss](#)

Note: *The Shepherd* (pilot episode) is accessible on *The Chosen App* under Season One “Extras” or you can find it at [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com).



2. From the film, how would you describe the shepherd’s encounter:

... *with the religious leaders?*

... *with Joseph and Mary?*

... *with the angelic hosts?*

... *with the baby Jesus?*

PRIOR

The

STUDY

How to lead Study #1

-Have a volunteer read aloud the Intro and passage (pages 17-18).

-Give members some time for personal study using BIC pens. Monitor group(s) to end study time when appropriate. **Keep up the pace.**

-Discuss passage by first asking general discussion questions, then, if needed, the specific ones in the guide (see page 10). First discuss in small group(s) and then, if available and time allows, the larger group.

-End by spending a few minutes of reflection/writing and discuss the Relate questions (see page 19).

DISCOVER

Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

INTRO: The affairs of state get interrupted by the affairs of heaven in a Bethlehem manger. An unprepared world receives a unique baby boy.

FROM

The

BIBLE

The Birth of Jesus Christ

LUKE 2 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

⁸And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. ²¹And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

3. There are both *ordinary* and *cosmic* elements to the story of Jesus' birth. *What stands out to you most about his birth?*

4. Bethlehem is about six miles south of Jerusalem and 90 miles from Nazareth (see map on page 107). *What do you expect Joseph and Mary's journey and accommodations were like?*

5. *If known, what about his birth would serve to correct misconceptions about who the Messiah would be?*

RELATE *How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss*

6. Let's say you had never heard the story of Jesus' birth. *What would surprise you about it or even make you uncomfortable?*

7. The word "audacious" means surprisingly bold, risky, imprudent, even lacking respect. *In what way was Jesus' birth audacious?*

8. *Does Jesus' birth story make him more appealing to you? If so, how?*

NOTES on Study #1

Micah 5:2-5—The Ruler to Be Born in Bethlehem

- Micah proclaimed his messages to Samaria and Jerusalem during the reigns of Jotham (742-735 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC) and Hezekiah (715-686 BC). The spiritual decay of the nation led to weakness and defeat, as the Assyrians conquered Israel's northern ten tribes in 721 BC and deported many of her citizens. In the face of failure and desperation, Micah raises the hope of God's mercy and salvation, embodied in a coming ruler to be born in a small backwater village.

Isaiah 9:2-7—For to Us a Child Is Born

- As the northern kingdom was about to be attacked and taken into captivity, the southern kingdom under King Ahaz, entered a time of increasing distress and darkness as a vassal state of Assyria (then eventually conquered by Babylon in 586 BC). With national collapse on the horizon, Isaiah proclaimed the coming of the Messiah to lead his people to victory and to bring an era of light, joy, and peace.
- Who would be the one to overthrow these oppressors and banish war? It is surprising that God would raise up a child—a newborn, no less—to deliver his people and establish justice. This child is not part of the government or its eventual leader, but one oppressed by the government. In Isaiah 7:14 (also quoted in the episode), that child is further identified as virgin born and named, *Immanuel*: God with us.

Isaiah 35:3-6—The Ransomed Shall Return

- Jesus begins his ministry in Nazareth by claiming the redeeming power that Isaiah prophesied 700 years earlier would attend the Messiah's coming (compare Isaiah 35:3-6, page 15 with Luke 4:18-19, page 44).
- Jesus makes this clear to John the Baptist who, in prison, wondered if he really was the Messiah. When John's disciples put this question to Jesus, he answered them, *Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me* (Matthew 11:4-6).

Luke 2:1-21—The Birth of Jesus Christ

- Jesus' story is unlike Greek mythology. It is rooted in history during the noteworthy reign of Caesar Augustus (31 BC – 14 AD), the great-nephew of Julius Caesar. After eventually besting his rivals, Augustus brought about a peaceful and thriving rule, the *Pax Romana*.
- “When Quirinus was governor of Syria” (2:2) is another historical anchor. Joseph and Mary, who is pregnant, travel about 90 miles from Nazareth to their ancestral home, Bethlehem, to register for the census. Luke tells the story in a very matter-of-fact way, given the grand cosmic dimensions of the unfolding events.

REALISTIC

That's plausible but did it happen?

But

REAL?

Was there a once-lame shepherd who first saw Jesus? We have no such reference. One would not be surprised, however, if the Messiah's arrival could have had made such an impact on those who encountered him (Isaiah 35:3-6; compare Matthew 11:4-6; Luke 4:18-19).

Did that shepherd also share water with Mary before the birth of Jesus? That's quite speculative. Such human kindness, however, fits the theme of God providing water for the thirsty and foreshadows a theme developed in Episode 8, with a role reversal of sorts.

Did a shepherd get the chance to hold the baby Jesus? Let's speculate with a “yes” on this one, as that's what new moms do for adoring family and friends. Later, Mary (likewise) gave Simeon the baby Jesus to hold (Luke 2:25-32).

Notes | Quotes | Emotions | Prayer Concerns | Commitments

PRIOR
To **STUDY**

Getting ready for the next study.

-Always begin with having new people introduce themselves to the group.

-Briefly acquaint your group with the study format on pages 6-7 as well as the ground rules on page 115.

-Some people like to do prior preparation. The Chosen Study is not written with the expectation of such preparation unless your group, including you, wants to do so. That being said, here's an exception: Because Episode 1 is longer than most, it would be helpful to watch the episode AND study Luke 7:36-50 before your group meets, or at least read it and look at the questions (pages 25-27).

Also the more time you invest in the content, the better, and there is background material in the guide you will not have time to work on during the meeting.

Note to everyone: Keep inviting new people. One of the beauties of *The Chosen Study* is that new members can come in at any time and binge watch on their own to catch up.

I Have Called You by Name

Study #2

INTRO: We begin in 2 BC with **Mary Magdalene** as a little girl being being comforted by her father. The episode then transitions to 28 AD with Mary as a woman in trouble and possessed by many demons, so much so that her name in *The Chosen* has been changed to Lilith.

FROM

The

CHOSEN

Along the way, we meet several characters that develop the storylines further: **Quintus**, the Roman Praetor of Galilee; **Nicodemus**, a Jewish Pharisee, both concerned about fishing on *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) but for different reasons; Nicodemus' wife, **Zohara**; **Matthew**, a despised Jewish tax collector; his Roman centurion escort, **Gaius**; the fisherman brothers, **Andrew** and **Simon**; plus Simon's wife, **Eden**.

WATCH *View Episode 1 Together (54 min.) > Discuss*

1. *From The Chosen's depiction, what stood out to you about each person, their situation and dilemma?*

... Simon and Andrew:

... Matthew:

... Nicodemus:

2. *How would you characterize Mary's situation when we first meet her as young girl and now, 28 years later?*

3. Note the Scripture that Mary's father used to comfort her as a girl, and that Jesus speaks to her (leaving off "O Jacob" and O Israel"):

"Thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

What struck you about Mary's encounter with Jesus in the tavern and his quoting of Isaiah 43:1 to her?

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

INTRO: Mary Magdalene is from Magdala, a fishing town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. She is referenced twelve times in the New Testament. In Luke 8:2-3, the author lists her as one of the women who traveled with Jesus and helped support his ministry. That same passage says that seven demons were driven out of her. Mary ends up being a witness to the Crucifixion, the empty tomb and the first to see the risen Christ. Possibly, she is the woman described in the this passage. Whether it was actually her or not, this story well describes the kind of person Mary Magdalene became.

**Jesus' Message: A Debt, Forgiveness and Love**

LUKE 7: ³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷ And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸ and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man was a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them ⁴³ will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered, "The one, I suppose,

for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

4. *What stood out to you about this the dinner party?*

5. *A 500 denarii debt equals about two years' of salary and a 50 denarii debt about two months' of salary. How did Simon and the woman differ in their debt? ... in their recognition of their debt?*

6. *How does the response to forgiveness differ from one to the other—as evident in the responses to Jesus that each of them made?*

7. How does the parable illustrate the debt, forgiveness offered, and the response made? Also chart your thoughts here, if that helps.

<i>Simon</i>	<i>Woman</i>
Amount of Debt (Recognized)?	
Forgiveness Offered/Received?	
Response Made?	

8. Was the main issue the debt owed by each, or the recognition of the debt owed? Why?

9. What was Jesus' message to Simon?

... to the woman?

RELATE How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss

10. What has it meant, or might it mean, for you to have your debt of sin completely forgiven and be reconciled to God as your loving Father?

11. On the following continuum, place an “X” on the line in the place that best describes your relationship with God/Jesus right now.

Observer... Skeptic... Learner... Seeker... Follower...

12. Do you want to move further to the right on this spectrum? If so, what might that mean for you?

NOTES on Study #2

Luke 7:36-50—Jesus’ Message: A Debt, Forgiveness and Love

- The issue of being religious but unloving (Simon) versus being non-religious—“a sinner”—but loving (the woman) provides us the challenge of with whom we identify most. Do we come to God on our own terms, in self-righteous pride—or on his terms, in humility?
- What Simon didn’t do was considered a customary greeting when an honored guest arrived at one’s home.
- The issue that love is a result of experiencing forgiveness, not the other way around, is seen in the woman’s motivation. When it comes to God we don’t start by loving, we start by being loved.
- The gospel message is well portrayed in the story and in the parable: (1) We all have an *unpayable debt* (as sinners); (2) *debt is canceled* (through forgiveness); resulting in, (3) a *renewed response* (love).

REALISTIC

But

REAL?

That's plausible but did it happen?

Was Simon married? Yes, but we don't know his wife's name (Mark 1:29-31).

Did Matthew collect taxes from Galilean fishermen including Simon and Andrew?

We do not know from Scripture, but it's likely. Matthew was a tax collector operating around the Sea of Galilee (Mark 2:13-14). His concern about these two particular fishermen being able to "square their account" would have been an ongoing concern for any Jewish business under the heavy hand of Roman taxation.

Did Nicodemus travel to Galilee to teach students?

Maybe, but he met Jesus in Jerusalem not Capernaum (John 2:29-3:1).

Did Nicodemus try to heal Mary Magdalene?

Mary was delivered from seven demons (Luke 8:1-2), but there is no record of Nicodemus ever meeting her, nor where it took place.

Is Zohara the wife of Nicodemus?

She is not mentioned, but her character in *The Chosen* helps to demonstrate the divergence of opinion beginning to surface about Jesus between Nicodemus and others in his circle of influence.

Did Matthew approach Rome with concern about Simon?

Matthew may have been acquainted with Simon and Andrew, but we have no record of such a connection prior to following Jesus.

Notes | *Quotes* | *Emotions* | *Prayer Concerns* | *Commitments*

Shabbat Reading

This reading is recited before partaking of the *Shabbat* (Sabbath) meal, exalting God's creation and Israel's blessing.

Now the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts, and God completed on the seventh day all His work that He did. And God abstained on the seventh day from all the work He did. And God blessed the seventh day, and He hallowed it, for thereon He abstained from all the work that God created to do. Blessed are you, Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine. You have lovingly and willingly given us your Shabbat as an inheritance in memory of creation. Because this is the first day of our holy assemblies in memory of the Exodus from Egypt. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth the bread from the earth. Amen

Eshet Chayil

"Ode to Women of Valor

Proverbs 10:1-31 is also recited or sung before the Shabbat meal as praise to women and a blessing to children. Valor can be defined as a great force of courage.

A woman of valor, who can find?

Her worth is far beyond that of jewels....

Shabbat

Study #3

Intro: The *Shabbat* (aka the Sabbath) was given to Israel 4,000 years ago as a practice that celebrates God “resting” on the seventh day from the work of creation. His example is given to the Jewish people as a weekly opportunity to slow down, reassess and focus on what is really important: our family, our friends, and God himself.

FROM

The

BIBLE

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

The Seventh Day, God Rested

GENESIS 2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. ² And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done. ³ So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Remember the Sabbath

EXODUS 2 ⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

1. *What do you learn here about the origin and meaning of Sabbath?*

2. The thought of God “resting” is rather odd. *What do you think this implies?*

WATCH View Episode 2 Together (39 min.) > Discuss

INTRO: Nicodemus (*teacher of teachers*) is a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court that included 70 members of whom the **Av Beit Din** presided as its second highest-ranking member. Nicodemus's students, **Shmuel** and **Yussif**, make more of an appearance, and we are introduced to Jesus' first two students, "**Little**" **James** and **Thaddeus**.



3. *What stood out to you about each of their situations or dilemmas as expressed in the four Shabbat meals:*

... for Matthew and his dog?

... for Simon, Eden (Simon's wife), and Andrew?

... for Nicodemus, Zohara & company?

... for Mary, Jesus & company?

4. *What did you think of how Mary describes her changed life to Nicodemus, and later, her introduction of Jesus to her guests as “the man who helped me”?*

5. *What do you make of his response to her? Explain.*

- a) I was surprised that he declined to lead the Shabbat ceremony.*
- b) I was pleased that he invited Mary Magdalene to do so.*
- c) Jesus knew his place as a guest; it was another’s turn to host.*
- d) Other:*

DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss*

INTRO: Jesus’ earliest followers do something radical with the Sabbath’s day celebration: they change it from Saturday to Sunday. They feel compelled to do so because they believe something of world-altering proportion happened Easter morning which validates Jesus’ claim that he is “Lord of the Sabbath.” Here, Jesus endorses his disciples’ actions which the Pharisees claimed violated the Sabbath.



Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

MATTHEW 12 At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they plucked heads of grain to eat.² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry,

and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ If you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

6. *How do the Sabbath-keeping values of the Pharisees and Jesus differ?*

7. *Beside Sabbath keeping values, what other value differences do you see between them?*

RELATE *How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss*

8. *How do you think Sabbath rest would differ from sleep or being on vacation?*

9. *How might you make better use of the Sabbath as a weekly reset, including the reminder of God's presence and work around us? (See also the Home Assignment on page 37 and page 40.)*

WATCH *View BibleProject.com Sabbath video (5 min.) > Discuss*

10. *From this Bible Project video, how would you describe the expanded meaning and purpose of the Sabbath?*
11. *What are the implications to you that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath?*

HOME ASSIGNMENT

For more reflection on these questions, use page 40 for more space.

Set aside time (next Sabbath?!) to evaluate your schedule, pace of life and how well you are living on the basis of your priorities. Then ask yourself: *What changes should I consider making?*

How could those changes make a difference in my life?

...in my relationship with God?

... in the lives of those around me?

NOTES on Study #3

Genesis 2:1-3—The Seventh Day, God Rested

- It's hard to fathom what it means that the Creator of the Universe somehow paused to rest. As the meaning of the Sabbath becomes increasingly clear in Exodus 2:8-11 and beyond, his actions are more for us, his creatures, as a model for living life well. If we can't work 1/7 of our potential amount of work time, how will we make it? Answer: By depending on God, that he will come through for us.

Matthew 12:1-7—Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

- Jesus makes clear who the Sabbath is for, such that he repeatedly violates the Pharisees' Sabbath-keeping values. They had created a "hedge around the Old Testament Law" called *The Tradition of the Elders*. These traditions were meant to stop people from violating the core Law itself.

So, while the Law instructs God's people to refrain from work and keep the Sabbath holy, the Pharisees set up 39 detailed laws for defining work. Was it considered "work" if, for example, an animal fell into a pit on Sabbath and you got it out? This focus redirected the intended purpose of keeping the Sabbath from a means of rest to a means of merit, a system of strict religious duty.

Here, Jesus' disciples are accused of "working" when, in fact, they were eating, not actually harvesting. He cites the Pharisees' inconsistency in not condemning David's unlawful infraction of the Sabbath rules (1 Samuel 21:1-6) depicted in the introduction of this episode of *The Chosen*.

A word about The Bible Project: We use a number of Bible Project videos including one at the end of this study called *Sabbath*. These high-quality, short videos provide creative overviews of biblical themes, word studies and books. You can find them on their website at BibleProject.com.

REALISTIC

But

REAL?

That's plausible but did it happen?

Were the disciples as young as Matthew looks?

Quite likely Jesus' disciples were young—perhaps most were under age 18, some as young as

15. The reasons for this are deduced from Jewish tradition, historical context, and a few clues from Scripture. In Jesus' day, a Jewish man received a wife after age 18. Simon was the only one known to have been married. (In Matthew 8:14-15, it was his mother-in-law, named Dasha in this film, whom Jesus healed.)

So, we may presume the others were young—either teens, too young to be married, or slightly older bachelors, but still young, without the family responsibilities Simon had. The tradition of education, which formally ended at age 15 at that time, also indicates a youthful band of brothers.

Their higher education (for those wealthy enough) consisted of studying under a local rabbi who accepted them as a student; otherwise, they entered the workforce by their mid-teens, usually apprenticed under their fathers in the family business.

Was there an issue of people fishing on the Sabbath?

It's reasonable to assume so. Jews were under Roman occupation, so when it came to avoiding paying taxes, you can be assured that they searched for any possible way out which, for some, meant violating the Sabbath. Episode 4 will expand on this issue.

Did the Jews save a seat for Elijah during the Passover?

Yes, observant Jews do this during Passover (not every Sabbath) to honor the expectation that Elijah would come again to herald the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). Jesus indicates, however, that John the Baptist fulfilled this expectation of Elijah's ministry (Matthew 11:14).

Did Simon really betray the other fishermen?

There is no record that he had a "tax problem" and that motivation should not be read into the biblical record. But it is not an unfair development, given what we do know about Simon from the Gospels.

Jesus Loves the Little Children

Study #4

INTRO: Who doesn't love children? Well, for one, Jesus' disciples have issues with them. They could be quite inconvenient. Jesus disagrees. Not only is he drawn to "the least of these," he also knows the power child-like meekness and openness as an object lesson for faith.

FROM

The

BIBLE

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

Matthew 19: ¹³ Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, ¹⁴ but Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” ¹⁵ And he laid his hands on them.

Who Is the Greatest?

Matthew 18: The disciples asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” ² And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them ³ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

- 1. In a word, compare the disciples’ approach to these children with how Jesus interacts with them?*
- 2. What is it about children that make them good object lessons for faith?*
- 3. Jesus calls his disciples to “turn” in v. 18:3. What are they to turn from and turn to?*

WATCH View Episode 3 Together (30 min.) > Discuss

INTRO: The irrepressible **Abigail**, and her friend, **Joshua** “the Brave,” lead a group of children who spend the entire episode with Jesus. Losing their initial shyness, the group is put to work by Jesus and they find themselves becoming his youngest, most inquisitive students.



4. *What stood out to you about the questions the children ask Jesus?*

... about his response to them?

5. *How does he teach them in a playful and purposeful way?*

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

INTRO: When pressed by Abigail, *What is your reason for being here?* Jesus tells the children what he actually told his hometown synagogue based on the words of Isaiah (vv. 18-19), but with a different response!



Jesus Begins His Ministry

LUKE 4: ¹⁴ And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

¹⁶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²² And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³ And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Physician, heal yourself." What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.'" ²⁴ And he said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. ²⁵ But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in

Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land,²⁶ and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.²⁷ And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”²⁸ When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.²⁹ And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.³⁰ But passing through their midst, he went away.

6. Jesus returns to his hometown to inaugurate his ministry by quoting the prophecy of Isaiah. *How does Isaiah describe the ministry and impact of the coming Messiah?*

7. *What are the implications of Jesus' statement, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" and its effects on the audience?*

8. Put yourself in the synagogue as one who grew up with Jesus. *What questions would you have had about Jesus, the hometown hero?*

RELATE How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss

9. How would “childlike faith,” rather than hostility, have better served those in Jesus’ hometown?

10. Who is a “child in your life” that that models faith? How could their child-like faith serve you well in your relationship with God?

11. **Jesus encourages us to strive for greatness. Here’s the formula:** *Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.... And whoever would be great among you must be your servant* (Matthew 18:4; 28:26).

How does this “formula” help you strive to “greatness” in your life? (Feel free to use page 48 to write more on this.)

NOTES on Study #4

Matthew 19:13-15; 18:1-5—Who’s the greatest?

- The disciples can’t seem to learn this lesson: Jesus is the champion of the weak. And in that society, indeed in all societies, the weakest members are the youngest. To him, children are not distractions; their rank makes them role models of living life as a Jesus follower. So, when a dispute arose about status, what better object lesson?!

Luke 4:14-30—Jesus Begins his Ministry

- A person did not necessarily need to have a special office to read Scripture aloud in a synagogue service or to offer instruction. Jesus uses this occasion in his hometown to read from Isaiah and identify his ministry as a fulfillment of the prophet’s vision of liberation. (See Isaiah 35:3-6, page 15-16 in this guide).
- Jesus’ reception turns as he claims the prophetic mantle of Elijah and Elisha who suffered rejection in their homelands, but whose ministries helped “outsiders,” such as the widow from Zarephath (1 Kings 17) and Naaman, the Syrian (2 Kings 5:1-19). Jesus’ hometown cannot assume benefit from his ministry, if they are unwilling to reconsider their view of him as merely an ordinary hometown kid.
- Jesus’ statements offend, even enrage, his audience as Jesus expected they would (Luke 4:24). Luke’s description of his escape on the hill (4:28-30) is interestingly vague. We are left to wonder if Jesus manages to slip away—or if he is saved by miraculous means.

REALISTIC

That’s plausible but did it happen?

But

REAL?

Did Jesus hang out with children like this?

We have no record of Jesus befriending specific children, but such situations would not at all be surprising (Matthew 18:1-6; 19:13-15; 21:14-17).

Did Jesus camp out on his own, and later, with the disciples?

Again, we have no record of Jesus setting up a camp like this, but he did say, “The Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58). We know he stayed in homes at times, but we do not know much about his housing situation and expect there was a lot of camping out.

What is the “Shema” that the children recited?

The “Shema” is Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (including 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41). It is a confession that faithful Jews recited twice daily. *Shema* is the word “hear” that begins Deuteronomy 6:4.

Did Jesus pray with such anguish to the Father?

He often withdraws from crowds to be alone with the Father (Mark 1:35) so this depiction is consistent with his practice of prayer.

Notes | *Quotes* | *Emotions* | *Prayer Concerns* | *Commitments*

The Rock on Which It Is Built

Study #5

In this episode we meet fishing business owner **Zebedee** and his two sons, “**Big**” **James** and **John** (aka, “sons of Thunder,” Mark 3:17), along with a number of Pharisees and their students.

FROM

The

CHOSEN

The **Pharisees** were a lay religious order who began around 160 BC with the good intentions of reviving Israel’s adherence to Old Testament law. Unfortunately, by Jesus’ day, those intentions had turned legalistic as they followed their own traditions (see Mark 7:13) more than the Old Testament. Some have compared them to strict fundamentalists in their legalistic concerns about do’s and don’ts regarding Sabbath-keeping and other finer points of the Law.

WATCH *View Episode 4 Together (48 min.) > Discuss*

Simon lives in Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee (see map on page 107). In this episode he is stuck. Before we read about the resolution in Luke 5, consider these questions:

1. *How does this film depict Simon's crisis:*

... with the Romans/Quintus?

... with his brother, Andrew?

... with his wife, Eden?

... with God?

2. *Matthew and Nicodemus are also having their own crises of faith. Given what he witnessed, what is Matthew's dilemma?*

... what is Nicodemus' dilemma?

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

INTRO: Jesus had Simon's attention, but now he was looking for a final buy-in and a vocational change of great purpose. If Jesus could make such a difference in Simon's life, maybe there was hope for others of his contemporaries—and for us, as well! (Be reminded that *The Chosen* takes some liberties with this passage. Note: REALISTIC But REAL? on page 55.)

**Jesus Heals Many and Calls Some**

LUKE 4: ³⁸ He left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. ³⁹ And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

⁴⁰ When the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹ And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and did not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ....

LUKE 5: On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, ² and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. ⁴ And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." ⁵ And Simon answered, "Master, we

toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets.”⁶ And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.⁷ They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”⁹ For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.”¹¹ And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

3. Simon is a fisherman and Jesus, a carpenter. *Why does Jesus' request (Luke 5:3-4) make no sense to an experienced fisherman?*

4. Note the name addition in v. 8 to Simon (Peter). Describe Simon's response to the catch of fish. *Why would he react so strongly—what does sin have to do with a large haul of fish?*

5. In Luke 4:38-39, Simon had witnessed the healing of his mother-in-law. *Why do you think that he apparently did not respond to Jesus then but does so now?*

6. Note the title change from “Master” (v. 5) to “Lord” (v. 8). *Why do you think coming to grips with Jesus being Lord (even of his fishing business) is so frightening to him?*

RELATE *How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss*

7. *Have you ever suffered a crisis of faith? Explain.*

8. *Sometimes, we need to see God come through for us or someone close to us. Were you ever caught up short in that regard? How so?*

9. *Where is Jesus in relation to “your fishing business”—defined as central issues in your life—job, family, future goals, relationships:*
- a) nowhere in sight right now*
 - b) on the horizon*
 - c) approaching the boat*
 - d) one foot in, one foot out*
 - e) fully committed, all in*
- Explain your self-evaluation with reference to that “boat”:*

10. *Jesus offers Simon a new vocation—catching people—and invites him to go “all in.” What would it take for you to “join Jesus” in a similar all-in way? Be specific.*
(Use page 56 for additional thoughts.)

NOTES on Study #5

Luke 5:1-11—Receiving a Change of Vocation

- Simon sees his mother-in-law healed (Luke 4:38-44), so he knows of Jesus’ power, though maybe not fully convinced.
- Not until Jesus touched an aspect of life in which Simon considered himself an expert (fishing) did Jesus get his full attention.
- What does sin have to do with a large haul of fish? Now Simon understands who he’s dealing with (no mere fisherman) and who he is in comparison. He speaks as one who has seen God himself (see Isaiah 6:5).
- Jesus gives Simon a new, grand vocation: to join as a “fisher of men.” Fear is not appropriate, given that he has now united with Jesus.



That's plausible but did it happen?

Did John the Baptist call the Pharisees “snakes”?

Yes, a “brood of vipers,” in fact (Luke 3:7). John was eventually thrown into prison by Herod, not the Romans (Matthew 14:1–12; Mark 6:14–29). We have no record of Nicodemus visiting him in prison.

Did the Romans hire Matthew to “spy” on Simon?

Doubtful. We know that Matthew collected taxes in the region of Galilee, where Simon and Andrew lived. We do not know if they knew each other before Jesus called them together, although it is possible.

Did Andrew try to convince Simon, his brother, about Jesus?

Yes. “The first thing Andrew did after meeting Jesus was to find his brother and tell him ‘We have found the Messiah!’” (John 1:41). However, unlike the plot of *The Chosen*, Simon goes right away to Jesus, and Jesus changes his name to “Peter” (1:42).

What about *The Chosen’s* timeline regarding the disciples?

Simon (aka Peter) and Andrew, along with other disciples, followed Jesus *before* the miraculous catch of fish recorded in Luke 5. So, although *The Chosen* depicts the catch as Simon’s first meeting with Jesus, he had prior encounters.

Likewise, *The Chosen* depicts Simon’s mother-in-law healed *after* the catch but (spoiler alert for Episode 8), this actually took place *before* the catch (Mark 1:30-31). We have no indication in Scripture that Simon was motivated by a tax debt. He likely wasn’t. Still, there is no doubt that Simon was transformed by the miraculous catch and, along with other fishermen, commits to following Jesus wholeheartedly with the new vocation of drawing people to Jesus’ and his message.

Was there an issue of Jews fishing on the Sabbath?

Unsure, but reasonable. Jews were under Roman occupation so when it came to avoiding paying taxes it is likely that they searched for any way possible for doing so. This choice might have, for some, meant violating the Sabbath.

PRIOR

10

STUDY

Getting ready for your last gathering.

Please read the “Prior” note on page 90. If you haven’t already done so in order to finalize your plans for your last gathering and get it on your group members’ schedules.

The Wedding Gift

Study #6

INTRO: It would be fascinating to know more about Jesus growing up in Nazareth with a humble, gracious mother, a God-fearing carpenter for a dad, and at least six siblings—four named brothers and at least two unnamed sisters (Matthew 13:55-56). Unfortunately, everything the Bible tells us about those years is found in one short passage: Luke 2:40-52. Observe all you can!

FROM

The

BIBLE

DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss*

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

LUKE 2: ⁴⁰ The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him. ⁴¹ Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.

⁴³ And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, ⁴⁴ but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, ⁴⁵ and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

⁴⁸ And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." ⁴⁹ And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. ⁵¹ And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

1. All parents can identify with the panic that comes from losing a child in a crowd. *But what do you find surprising about this story?*

2. *What do you learn about Jesus as a boy?*

... about his parents?

WATCH View Episode 5 Together (54 min.) > Discuss

INTRO: Here we are re-introduced to Jesus' mother, **Mary**. Jesus is, in effect, her "plus one" at the wedding, since Mary's husband, Joseph, had likely passed away by this time.



Jesus adds to the run-out-of-wine plot by bringing his followers, thus creating a nightmarish scenario for the wine stewards, **Ramah** and **Thomas**. (For more on Thomas, see notes on pages 65, 105.) Also **John the Baptist** languishes in prison (for more, see notes on pages 20, 39, 55, 104).

3. Focus on Nicodemus:

What is the central question he has regarding the Messiah?

4. Focus on Eden:

Why is she so affirming of Simon's new calling to follow Jesus?

5. Focus on Mary and the miracle:

Why would Jesus' fulfilling his mother's request mean "no going back"?

6. Focus on Thomas:

He is not in the actual story that we read in John 2.

However, from the film version, describe Thomas' nature and interactions with Ramah (his business partner). Describe his interactions with Jesus regarding "a solution."

7. Focus on Jesus:

Why do you think that Jesus used his divine power to produce such ordinary things as wine for a wedding or fish for one's livelihood?

8. After seeing the water become wine, John asks, “What’s next?”
How does this miracle change the focus for Jesus and all who choose to follow him?

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

INTRO: *The Chosen’s* version of the water-into-wine miracle contains plenty of lighthearted moments: tension between the bride’s relatively poor family and the groom’s rich parents, Jesus playing with children, the disciples telling stories about how they first met Jesus, and the astonishment of those who saw the miracle.



The account we find in John’s Gospel is much more concise. Of course, John could have “played it up,” but his straightforward style lends credence to his integrity as an author of historical events. *The Chosen* is “happy” to embellish his just-the-facts narrative, and we are happy to study the source while engaging our imagination as well!

The Wedding at Cana

JOHN 2: ¹On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ²Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. ³When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” ⁴And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” ⁵His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

⁶ Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ And he said to them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast.” So they took it. ⁹ When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

¹¹ This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him. ¹² After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

9. *How would you describe Jesus' interaction with his mother?*

... how this miracle plays itself out with the various people at the party?

10. What do you find most unusual about this miracle and why?

- a) The boldness of Mary in asking her son to “do something!”
- b) The agony in Jesus deciding to make this his first public miracle.
- c) The interesting tidbit that the wine was the very best.
- d) That Jesus is not above “wine-making” or having a good time!
- e) Other:

RELATE *How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss*

11. We all find ourselves wanting miracles in the ordinary course of our lives. *What is something you would like Jesus to do for you?*

12. *When God does not provide the miracle you desire, how do you process disappointment in him? By contrast, how would you like to process that disappointment?*

NOTES on Study #6

Luke 2:40-52—The Boy Jesus in the Temple

- Notice the artistic connection made in this episode between 1) the boy Jesus, at the Temple saying to his mother, “If not now, when?” and, 2) his mother asking the adult Jesus to use his divine power at the wedding, asking him, “If not now, when?”
- How could someone who is God *grow* as v. 52 indicates Jesus did? The answer: It’s another mystery. But beyond this, Jesus as a human being, didn’t just glide through on his divinity. He applied himself.

John 2:1-12—The Wedding at Cana

- In Jewish culture a wedding was seen as uniquely sanctioned by God and thus worthy of the best of all parties where, hopefully, nothing ruinous happened, such as running out of wine!
- Jesus addresses Mary as “Woman,” but is not discourteous; the word has no easy English equivalent. A phrase like, “My lady,” better captures the respect behind its use here. Jesus’ hesitation communicates they have a new relationship now, and this is such a critical decision that he must consult his Father before proceeding.

REALISTIC

That's plausible but did it happen?

But

REAL?

Did Jesus' entire family get invited to the wedding in Cana?

Cana is close to Nazareth and Capernaum (John 2:12; see map on page 107). Because of their proximity, it is possible that the family of the wedding party knew Jesus' family. If so, some or all of Jesus' brothers (he had four of them) and his sisters (he had at least two of them) were also in attendance (Matthew 13:55-56). If his siblings did come, apparently the miracle did not convince them that their brother was someone quite different than the siblings thought they knew! (Mark 3:21; John 7:2-5)

Did Jesus ever build a privy (toilet)?

Possibly, given his previous occupation. He was a carpenter (Mark 6:3) who learned his trade from his dad (Matthew 13:55). The Greek word for "carpenter" can also be translated "craftsman" or "stone mason."

All the items that Jesus made added value to others—from the *ordinary* (toy boats for children and lock-and-key inserts for doors, as depicted in the film version of reality) to the *extraordinary* (turning water to wine).

Would running out of wine have been that embarrassing?

Yes. The show sets up the rich family/poor family wedding which serves to add a degree of drama, but such an event would have been humiliating and a bad way to start a marriage! The guests often traveled for miles to come, and such parties could last for days.

Did Thomas serve wine at the wedding?

We have no record of Thomas serving at Cana, nor being called to follow Jesus then and there. The film's portrayal of Thomas as a "measurer" and "doubter" is consistent with one who later becomes known as "doubting Thomas" (John 11:16; 14:5-6; 20:24-29).

Notes | *Quotes* | *Emotions* | *Prayer Concerns* | *Commitments*

Indescribable Compassion

Study #7

INTRO: This passage from Isaiah will be read in this episode as the Pharisees wrestle with the meaning of John the Baptist's ministry.

FROM

The

BIBLE

DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss*

Prepare the Way

ISAIAH 40: ³ A voice cries:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
and all flesh shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

1. *What do you think about the analogies that Isaiah uses?*

2. *In what ways does Isaiah (also quoted in Mark 1:2-3) depict John the Baptist’s role?*

WATCH View Episode 6 Together (51 min.) > Discuss

INTRO: Salome is Zebedee's wife and ends up as part of Jesus' inner circle. Eden's mother and Simon's mother-in-law, **Dasha**, meets Jesus in unusual circumstances to say the least!



When Jesus speaks of himself in the third person, he most often takes on the title, **Son of Man** (Mark 2:10). Some mistakenly assume this refers to the human side of Jesus; conversely, *Son of God* designates the divine side. Rather, as Jesus' audience would know, this title is given to the heavenly being envisioned in Daniel 7:13-14. Son of Man was a glorified, Messianic title, as was Peter's use of the word, Messiah, or, in Greek, "the Christ" (Mark 8:29-31).

3. As Jesus' ministry goes public, how does this episode describe:

... Matthew and what he has seen?

... the Egyptian woman (Tamar), the paralytic and his friends?

... the Pharisees' view of John the Baptist and their rigid religious perspective of God?

... Nicodemus witnessing the paralytics' healing?

DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Study > Discuss*

INTRO: Tamar (the Egyptian woman), does not make an appearance in the stories of Mark's Gospel. The film, however, mostly follows the actual events and certainly fleshes out the emotions that those caught up in the story would have experienced.



Leprosy is a debilitating and disfiguring nerve disease. It can now be cured, but in pre-scientific Israel it was misunderstood and feared. In fact, the rabbis said it was easier to raise the dead than to cure leprosy. This leper, like the paralytic described next, had no hope of a cure and was rejected by society (Leviticus 13:46).

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

MARK 1: ⁴⁰ And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴² And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³ And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." ⁴⁵ But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

MARK 2 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ² And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was

preaching the word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹²And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

4. What strikes you about these two back-to-back miracles?

5. The leper's enthusiasm in getting healed is understandable, but going public and not privately to the priest—contrary to Jesus' warning—complicates things for Jesus in many ways. How so?

a) The healing turns skeptical Jewish scribes against Jesus.

b) It was not properly documented as a witness to others.

c) The unwanted publicity closed doors for Jesus healing others.

d) Other:

6. Jesus pronounces the paralytic forgiven and then uses the title “Son of Man” (see page 67). *What is the Scribes’ issue with him?*

RELATE *How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss*

7. In the film version, Nicodemus says, “We are still students.... Our understanding will never be complete.” *If adopted, how would this attitude of humility change... our nation/our community/us?*
8. *How has your view of Jesus grown through the years? Where are you now with your understanding of who he is and what he can do?*
9. This episode stirs up a lot of emotion. *How were you touched by it and how could such momentary emotion turn into long-term commitment in your life?*

NOTES on Study #7

Isaiah 40:3-5—Prepare the Way

- Leaving the cities for the wilderness is, in and of itself, an exercise in purging oneself from distractions. As a word picture, this metaphor of building a road in rough terrain is like the preparation one must make to get ready for God’s appearance. It is the very role that John the Baptist took on for the people of Israel to prepare for Jesus’ coming.

Mark 1:40—2:12—Jesus Cleanses and Heals

- Jesus wants the leper's witness to God's power proclaimed via the normal dictates of the Old Testament for such a healing. But note the consequences of him not keeping to Jesus' word (v. 45). The second story not only identifies Jesus' power over the sickness and disease, it highlights that his power is divine by introducing the Scribes (religious lawyers of the day), and their disdain for Jesus' claim to the right of doing something that only God can do: Forgive sins.



That's plausible but did it happen?

Did the catch of fish satisfy Simon/Andrew's taxes? It's hard to say, but this high-value haul likely went to Simon and the others' families to

financially sustain them in their absence while traveling with Jesus.

Did Jesus grow up in Egypt and speak Egyptian?

Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt to avoid the massacre of baby boys under Herod (Matthew 2:13-15). Then they returned to Nazareth after Herod's death (2:19-23). They may have lived in Egypt for several years, though there is no evidence that Jesus spoke Egyptian.

Did the Pharisees sell out John the Baptist to the Romans?

No. John confronted Herod Antipas' regarding his illicit relationship with his brother's wife, Herodias. This angered Herodias, so Herod imprisoned John and, at an opportune moment, Herodias appealed for his execution. (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9).

Did Joseph die before Jesus began his ministry?

Probably, as there's no mention of him after Jesus begins his adult ministry. Joseph is last named by Luke narrating about the boy Jesus in the Temple (2:48).

Was Jesus constantly teaching God's truth in the form of parables?

Jesus told stories and parables more than once. He did so all the more intentionally after he was further rejected (Matthew 13:10-17).

Did Nicodemus ask Mary for a meeting with Jesus?

Not likely, but we do know that it happened at night (John 3:2).

Notes | *Quotes* | *Emotions* | *Prayer Concerns* | *Commitments*

Invitations

Study #8

INTRO: Jesus seeks commonality with Nicodemus by identifying with **Moses**, who led Israel's 40-year exodus out of Egypt while dealing with rebellious people. He fashions a bronze snake and attaches it to a pole to heal his people the snakes bites. This was a severe judgment against God's people, Israel, but still just 1/10th of what Egypt suffered from the ten plagues.



DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss*

The Bronze Serpent

NUMBERS 21: ⁴From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this worthless food.” ⁶Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷And the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

INTRO: Jesus picks up the imagery and applies it to himself and his mission in the world, drawing a connection between himself and Moses (Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-15; see note on page 82).

Lifting Up The Son of Man

JOHN 3:14-15: ¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

1. The snake on the pole has come to represent medicine's curative power. *How does the story in Numbers 21 play out?*



2. *How do the snake and pole relate to healing in both passages?*

WATCH View Episode 7 Together (37 min.) > Discuss

In the film, Moses' successor **Joshua** protests the serpent imagery, to which Moses says he's only doing as God instructs. The serpent on the pole, once looked at, will save the Israelites from snake bites. So also, Jesus will save his people as they place their faith in him lifted up on the Cross.



3. This episode is titled "Invitations." *How is that invitation extended in each of the following interactions, or not?*

... Nicodemus with his wife, Zohara?

... Matthew with his mother and in response to Jesus?

... Simon's response to Jesus' inclusion of Matthew?

DISCOVER *Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss*

INTRO: What follows is considered one of the weightiest passages in Scripture, indeed one of the most significant conversations in human history. Nicodemus was more than a devoted Pharisee; he was one of only 70 members of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court. He knew that Jesus was no ordinary man, but he was not sure what to make of him. Little did Nicodemus know that this conversation would provide not only for him, but for the world in all generations to come, the most insightful way to understand our relationship with God.



Whether to avoid the crowds, or the distractions and heat of meeting during the day, or maybe to keep his reputation intact, Nicodemus meets Jesus at night.

You Must Be Born Again

JOHN 3 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you

hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God So Loved the World

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

4. Even though very familiar with the Old Testament, and though he knew of Jesus' miracles (v. 2), Nicodemus is baffled by Jesus' message. *What about his message is difficult for him?*

5. *How is the wind similar to evidence of transformation that comes from being born of the Spirit?*

6. *What does Jesus say are the consequences for those who are "born again" and for those who are not?*

7. The birth metaphor contradicts the idea that we can obtain God's approval from anything other than God's provision of Jesus' death. *How does v. 14 reinforce this truth?*

RELATE *How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss*

8. Jesus turns every world religious system, including Nicodemus', on its head by insisting that God's love is freely given, but can only be experienced by a commitment to him.

In what way has (or is) God opening your eyes to this truth?

9. God's approval is a gift, unable to be earned. *What is both appealing and difficult about that truth?*

10. John 3:16 is probably the most well-known verse in the Bible. *What does John 3:16 mean to you personally? (Also use page 84.)*

NOTES on Study #8

NUMBERS 21:4-9—The Bronze Serpent

- Complaining to God is not condemned in Scripture, it's celebrated. In the Psalms, we see testy, honest exchanges where David calls God to account. But for the Israelites—who had seen God's miraculous redemption in the plagues, pillar of fire and manna from heaven there was a sizable difference between *complaining* and *condemning*. To speak "against God and against Moses" went too far. Hence, the Jewish people tasted what Egypt's plagues were like: Enter deadly snakes.
- But, taking the New Testament into account, maybe this experience was used to set up "Act Two": An amazing word picture for Jesus to flesh out. Just as the serpent was lifted for Israel's healing, so also the Son of Man is lifted up for the world's healing (John 3:14-15).

JOHN 3:1-15—You Must Be Born Again

- Jesus cuts to the chase, confronting Nicodemus (and us) about the need for a relationship with God based on a new, born again nature. Opinions vary concerning just what is meant by, "born of water," but this statement parallels a natural, fleshly birth. A spiritual rebirth is likened to the wind: invisible but undeniable in its effects. Jesus' statement repudiates anyone who thinks they can earn or merit the new birth, as it is a gift that comes from the Giver of all good gifts.

JOHN 3:16-21—For God So Loved the World

- The leaders of Israel expect the Messiah to deal with the Romans, but Jesus would deal with sin and its tragic consequences. Sin destroys lives and separates us from God. Jesus succinctly lays out his place in God's plan, a plan that flows from one magnificent source: "For God so loved."

REALISTIC

But

REAL?

That's plausible but did it happen?

Did Quintus express concern to Nicodemus about Jesus?

There is no “Quintus” identified in the Bible, although there are Roman magistrates and centurions like him. The Gospels do show plenty of political tension early in Jesus’ ministry (Mark 3:6), but no such dialogue with Nicodemus.

Was Matthew rejected by his parents?

The Gospels do not comment on Matthew’s parents or their attitude toward him, but the portrayal of him as a traitor is how fellow Jews would have viewed him.

Did Nicodemus himself eventually become “born again”?

Yes, that seems likely, as we see Nicodemus unashamedly identifying with Jesus again, later in the Gospel of John (7:45-52; 19:38-42).

Did Matthew leave immediately when Jesus said, “Follow me”?

Matthew (9:9), Mark (2:14), and Luke (5:27-28) tell us that Matthew left everything, and *The Chosen* portrays the drama of his readiness in that moment!

Did Simon initially reject the idea of Matthew joining their group?

We have no record of this, but “antiestablishment” types, such as the fisherman Simon and “establishment” types, such as tax collector Matthew, were bound to be at odds—all the more so when the latter was considered a national traitor to the Jewish nation. Jesus knew that learning to value and care for each other would help prepare the disciples to minister to the diverse people they would meet.

Notes | *Quotes* | *Emotions* | *Prayer Concerns* | *Commitments*

I Am He

Study #9

INTRO: Jesus has an uncomfortable propensity for associating with the wrong kind of people, such as at this dinner party at Matthew's house.

FROM

The

BIBLE

DISCOVER Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

Jesus Calls Matthew

MATTHEW 9⁹ As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

¹⁰ And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹² But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.”¹³ Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

1. *What is surprising about Jesus’ call of Matthew and his eating dinner with Matthew’s friends?*

... his actions and words toward the religious leaders?

WATCH View Episode 8 Together (from 0:00-37:40) > Discuss

INTRO: Jesus reaches into the lives of a wide variety of people to touch their need for God, for him. Some are drawn in, others are not.



3. In this episode what do we learn about:

... the dinner party at Matthew's and growing conflict with the religious leaders?

... Nicodemus wrestling with Jesus' call on his life?

... Jesus' empathy for Eden and solving her worry about her mother?

WATCH View Episode 8 Together (from 37:40-59:31) > Discuss

INTRO: This episode begins and ends at the same well. The scene opens with a flashback to **Jacob and sons** digging the well and being visited by a cynical neighbor. (See also note on page 91; this well can be visited today.) Jacob's twelve sons head up the original twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament.



In Jesus' day, however, Samaritans (whom the Jews considered half-breed, religious inferiors) lived there. Jews normally bypassed Samaria by going to the east of the Jordan River when traveling between Judea and Galilee (see map on page 107). Not Jesus. At Jacob's well he has his longest recorded conversation with the most unlikely of people.

Note: This passage is for reference. Since the episode closely follows John 4, feel free to NOT read/study it unless you have available time. If you don't, go right to the questions on page 89.



Jesus and the Samaritan Woman

JOHN 4 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(though Jesus him-self did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³he left Judea and departed again for Galilee. ⁴And he had to pass through Samaria. ⁵So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there; so Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸(For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." ¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock."

¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

¹⁵The woman said “Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and then come here.” ¹⁷The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not really your husband. What you have said is true.”

¹⁹The woman responded to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”

²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”

²⁶Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

4. What prejudices does Jesus break down by entering into a conversation with the woman?

5. How does he overcome her resistance and keep her going deeper?

6. What does Jesus want to teach her about true worship?

7. What do you think finally opens her eyes to who Jesus is?

RELATE How It Applies to God / Life / You > Discuss

8. How do you see people seeking to quench their thirst for hope and?

9. Recall the first time you heard about Jesus or felt a thirst for what he has to offer. *Describe.*

10. A recurring theme has been people finding their needs met by Jesus—water for the thirsty. *In what ways has Jesus met your needs? (Or how have you considered trusting him to do so?)*

NOTES on Study #9

John 4:1-30—Having Our Thirst Quenched

- Jesus is the master conversationalist. He breaks down conventions (male/female, Jew/Samaritan, Rabbi/sinner), builds common ground, avoids diversion, and gets to the woman's real need. This conversation is a great example of how to build rapport, identify a person's need, and seek to meet it in a meaningful way.

- The woman is an outcast in society (comes to the well alone at noon, has had “five husbands,” and much shame). Jesus offers her *living water* to meet her deepest need—a relationship with himself. Jesus’ offer is as radical as living water is to well water (see John 7:37-39).

REALISTIC

But

REAL?

That’s plausible but did it happen?

Did Jacob dig a well that Jesus came to (and that still exists today)? Although there is no specific record of Jacob and sons digging a well, he came to Shechem, which is called Sychar in John 4, where he pitched a tent and built an altar (Genesis 33:18-20). The well in John 4 is called “Jacob’s well,” and tradition identifies him as having dug it.

Was Simon Peter the only married disciple? Yes, as far as we know. Although it would be interesting to know about Simon’s wife and their relationship as the show speculates, we have no biblical account beyond the fact that he had a mother-in-law and, thus, a wife!

Did Jesus claim to be God, as the Pharisee, Shmuel, contends?

Yes. When Jesus called himself the Son of Man (Mark 2:10), this title was not an expression of his humanity (and “Son of God,” his divinity). Rather, it is a direct reference to Daniel 7:9-14 (see page 67).

The Scribes and Pharisees correctly understood this as identifying with the glorified, powerful being from Daniel, “one like the son of man.”

Notes | Quotes | Emotions | Prayer Concerns | Commitments

PRIOR

10

STUDY

Integrate your Chosen Experience going forward.

The tenth meeting includes a bridge to Season Two, a review and reflection on commitments. For this gathering, the group can decide to meet at your normal time.

As an alternative, your group could plan to meet in a special place or for an all-day Saturday event or even a weekend retreat, to discuss the passage(s), eat, pray, have fun, celebrate your time together and talk about what to do next. Such special places and longer events do wonders as group bonding experiences.

Whatever you choose to do, it's a priority to have as many in your group come as possible—hopefully everyone! So, discuss options and get it on your group members' schedule, as early as possible.

Hopefully, you and your group will want to continue your Chosen experience and invite new people to your next study!

Note: See TheChosenStudy.org for suggestions on what to do for a longer, all-day or weekend *retreat*.

Integrate Your Chosen Experience

Season One Reviewed and Looking Ahead

Study #10

INTRO: The cover on this guide illustrates the centrality of water in our lives. But, of course, our thirst runs deeper. We have a “God-shaped void” only God himself can satisfy.



Jesus works hard to get his point across to the woman, later identified as Photina, that the source to quench such thirst only comes from a relationship with him as her Messiah—the anointed, Servant-King sent from God the Father.

Let’s see how water, being the source of life, carries through as a biblical theme starting from creation to this very encounter at Jacob’s well.

Leader’s Note: This study includes a video from [BibleProject.com](https://www.bibleproject.com) and two film clips from episode 8, as the next two pages designate.

WATCH [View BibleProject.com Water of Life \(4 min.\)](#) > Discuss

The video depicts the “water of life” image in the following scenes:

- ... the river in the Garden of Eden.
- ... the drought of the human condition.
- ... Jacob fleeing into the desert where he finds a well and restarts God’s family.
- ... yet the desert/dry bones thirst continue.
- ... the woman at the well story reimaged in her encounter with Jesus at Jacob’s well.
- ... Jesus’ death on the cross as a fountain of life flowing with God’s love.
- ... the climax of God’s Spirit in us bringing life and renewing creation.



1. *How does the Bible use the image of water, the desert and dry bones to demonstrate both our thirst and God’s provision?*

2. *How does Jesus use this imagery in his conversation with the woman at the well?*

RE-WATCH [View Episode 8 \(.00-4.26 & 40.08-49.12\)](#) > Discuss

3. *Let’s revisit the water of life scene shown in this story. Even though the woman leaves her water jug at the well, she is no longer thirsty. In what ways has Jesus satisfied her deepest needs with his water?*

4. While she came to the well as a woman of shame, she leaves as an emissary of restoration for her community. *How do you imagine this turn of events will impact the woman and others in her hometown of Sychar?*

RE-WATCH View Episode 8 (49.12-50.48)

INTRO: Beyond the provision of “living water,” Jesus offers his disciples an invitation to eat “living food” at a “living harvest.”

**DISCOVER** Read Aloud > Mark It Up > Discuss

INTRO: We'll now focus on the last part of this story. Jesus' disciples appear clueless about decisions that set the stage for Jesus going public, particularly meeting the woman at the well. The disciples, who went to town to find food, have returned and they offer Jesus something to eat. Jesus' response leaves them even more confused. Apparently, he is getting his hunger satisfied with something else and he wants for them to have the same experience.

**The Disciples Return**

JOHN 4 ²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?” ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and went into town and said to the people, ²⁹ “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” ³⁰ They went out of the town and were coming to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.” ³² But he said, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³ So the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought him something to eat?”

³⁴ Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes. See that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is

receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷ For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, “He told me all that I ever did.”

5. Describe the dialogue about food and the disciples' confusion.

6. What is the “living food” that Jesus is talking about and wants for his disciples?

7. Compare the kind of immediate spiritual harvest in Sychar that Jesus refers to with the expected harvest four months away?

NOTES on Study #10

John 4:31-39—The Disciples Return

- Like *living water* that replenishes the spirit, there is *living food* that sustains the soul. The disciples completely miss the point in their focus on ordinary food, wondering if Jesus had already eaten.
- Many pursuits energize us, but for Jesus it is the work of God in the lives of people that provides real satisfaction—forsaking small ambitions for the large ambition of meeting people's deepest needs.
- Jesus' “food” comes in providing *living water* through the woman's testimony as many seek him out. This event lays the groundwork for a *living harvest* among the Samaritans coming in Season Two!

REVIEW Consider the Questions > Write Thoughts > Discuss

8. Skim pages 13-91 and summarize your experience with *The Chosen* and the Scripture passages.

What surprised, encouraged, or challenged you about the story and the characters?

9. *Where would you have placed yourself on this continuum (with a smaller x) regarding your relationship with God / Jesus when you began this study (see p. 28)? Where are you now (with a larger X)?*

Observer... Sceptic... Learner... Seeker... Follower...

10. *What new spiritual perspective do you have about God / Jesus / direction in your life? (Use page 99-100 if needed.)*

RELATE Consider the Questions > Write Thoughts > Discuss

Jesus' metaphors are considerable here. He enjoys "living food" as he provides living water to the woman and, through her, to her village. He then invites his disciples to participate with him in a "living harvest."

11. *Do you struggle to see Jesus' invitation to become a reaper and harvester of people in your network of relationships? Describe.*

12. *Which friends, co-workers, family members do you sense God would have you help through service, prayer and dialogue about spiritual things?*

-
-
-
-

13. *Can you envision using *The Chosen Study* as a means of inviting people into a dialogue about Jesus? Explain.*

14. *Could you imagine yourself going a step further by facilitating a one-to-one experience or a group? If so, how and with whom?*

Note: For more leadership input, see the website and pages 109-115. Also, we have a Chosen Study Team community to become a part of for support, prayer, and encouragement at TheChosenStudy.org/join.

Review/Looking Ahead Notes

Review/Looking Ahead Notes

Spoiler Alert! What happens next . . .



Episode 1: The opening scene not only sets the stage for Season Two, it serves as prologue for how the Gospels were written. Here we find **John** interviewing key witnesses, writing notes and musing with Jesus' mother, Mary, about how to begin his Gospel.

After Jesus encounters **Photina**, the Samaritan woman, he and his disciples visit her hometown of Sychar for two days (John 4:43). During this time, **James** and **John** till a field, and the disciples "lose" Jesus while he fixes a cart axle. Also, Photina's husband, among others, listens to Jesus tell the Lost Sheep Parable (Luke 15:1-7). The parable foreshadows a fascinating encounter with a "lost sheep" **Melech**, and an interesting reference to the Good Samaritan parable.

Episode 2: The disciples welcome new follower, **Philip**—a disciple of John the Baptist, a former fisherman, and friend of Andrew. Now changing allegiance from John to Jesus, he seeks out his old friend, **Nathanael**, with whom he shares his good news. Nathanael (in this show, a failed architect) was despondent over the loss of a collapsed building and his career. But he finds new purpose in meeting and following the man who saw him under a fig tree.

Episode 3: No new characters, but crowds of people line up for healing. We listen in on compelling insights as the disciples, including his mother Mary, seek to understand the movement they have joined. Tensions rise as Simon and Andrew confront Matthew about his former life. But their arguments look petty as an exhausted Jesus returns, laboring as he walks through the camp to his tent.

Episode 4: Here we meet **Jesse**, permanently lame from a childhood accident until he is healed by Jesus some 38 years later (John 5:1-9). His brother in this show, **Simon the Zealot**—trained as an assassin, but stunned to see his brother healed—rejects his zealot vows to join this new movement. Jesus increasingly "stirs up the water," coming to the attention of the Roman authorities and Jewish religious leaders.

Episode 5: The older cousin by six months, **John the Baptist** and Jesus have a sit-down conversation. **Mary Magdalene** struggles with PTSD from a close encounter with a Roman soldier and a demon-possessed man called **Legion** (real name, **Caleb**), who is delivered by Jesus. She ends up drawn back into her old lifestyle and leaves the group who are very concerned about her disappearance. Jesus is, as well, and sends Simon and Matthew to look for and hopefully, return her.

Episode 6: Mary falls deeper into old habits, but Simon and Matthew find her and bring her back. She meets with Jesus, who is quick to extend forgiveness. The focus on love over law, and recovery over sin and relapse, stands in sharp contrast to Pharisees' **Shmuel** and **Yanni**. They seek to bring Jesus to 'justice' for what they see as blasphemy for more healings and grain-eating (harvesting) on the Sabbath.

Episode 7: Jesus and his disciples prepare for an upcoming sermon to be witnessed by thousands. But that scenario appears to blow up when Roman soldiers lead Jesus away to Capernaum for questioning before **Quintus** (the Roman Praetor from Season One) and one of Caesar's cohorts, **Atticus**, who has been tailing Jesus. Andrew, despondent over John's imprisonment, leaves the group with Philip. They come upon the Egyptian woman, **Tamar**, and the healed paralytic—both speaking about Jesus while he is wanted for questioning. The episode ends with Jesus returning and the disciples asking him to teach them how to pray, in the same manner that he does. Them wanting to get "the heart and the mind right" pleases Jesus.

Episode 8: We anticipate the Big Reveal, as Jesus and Matthew work together on what will be called the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Jesus comes up with just the right introduction (the Beatitudes), while the disciples busy themselves with finding and negotiating the right spot, preparing leaflets, inviting townsfolk, welcoming old friends and parents—plus crowd control. Thousands gather, including one who finds himself caught up in it all, **Judas (Iscariot)**. Jesus, decked out in a blue "Prince of Peace" sash, finally takes to the stage, and...(hold your breath, drum roll, please) the long-awaited Big Reveal will now be. . . delivered in Season Three.

Background Notes *Where his story came from*

Early tradition identifies Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the ones who introduced Jesus to the First Century world and to ours. Their portrait of him is both historically unique and remarkably consistent.

MATTHEW: Given his occupation as a tax collector for the Roman government, we can only imagine the initial tension between Matthew (also called Levi) and the other disciples. But reconciliation lay at the heart of Jesus' message (see *The Sermon on the Mount*, Mathew 5-7). Matthew's Gospel emphasizes the interconnectedness between the Old and New Testaments and provides young believers a systematic tutorial on Jesus' teaching.

MARK: This Gospel has been generally recognized as the account coming from Peter. Mark begins his first "sentence" with no verb: *The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. His last sentence ends with the women fleeing Jesus' empty tomb *because they were afraid*. For Mark, Jesus is a man of action. To help believers facing persecution from the Roman state, Mark focuses on Jesus as the Suffering Servant who "came to serve" (Mark 10:45).

LUKE: An educated Greek physician and traveling companion of Paul, Luke authored the book of Acts and the Gospel that bears his name. Although Luke never met Jesus himself, he had a close relationship with Paul and was acquainted with most of the key eyewitnesses who knew Jesus (Luke 1:1-4). After extensive interviews with these contacts, Luke begins: "Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account" (Luke 1:3).

JOHN: A fisherman and brother of James, he writes, "In the beginning was the Word," offering a rather obvious parallel to the opening words of Genesis. In the "first Genesis," God spoke *Creation* into existence, and in the "second Genesis" God speaks *Redemption* into existence: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (1:14). This "Word made flesh" is who John wants his readers to know.

Knowing those who knew him best

Mary Magdalene: One of several women mentioned in Luke 8:2-3 who had been “cured of evil spirits and diseases” and was following Jesus. Having been delivered from seven demons, she is with Jesus at the cross and is the first one to whom Jesus appears after the Crucifixion (Luke 8:2-3; John 19:25-27; John 20:1-18).

Nicodemus: As a Pharisee, he also ruled as a member of the Sanhedrin, the supreme religious council in Jerusalem during New Testament times. His encounter with Jesus in John 3 is the occasion for the well-known verse, John 3:16. He boldly steps up to help bury Jesus’ body with Joseph of Arimathea after the crucifixion (John 3:1-21; 7:45-52; 19:38-42)

John the Baptist: Miraculously conceived shortly before his cousin Jesus, he heralds Jesus, as foretold by Isaiah (40:3-5), calling Jews to repent in preparation for the Messiah. After a faithful ministry and baptizing Jesus, he is imprisoned and later beheaded for the threat he posed to Herod Antipas. Jesus identifies him as the “greatest of those born of women” (John 1:6-34; Matthew 3:1-17; 11:1-19; 14:1-12; Luke 1:5-25, 57-80).

Andrew: One of the first to follow Jesus, he brings his brother, Simon (Peter), right away. Together with fellow fishermen, James and John, Andrew leaves everything to follow Jesus after the miraculous catch. He also plays a key role in the feeding of the 5,000 (John 1:40-42; 6:8-9).

Simon: This fisherman meets Jesus and is later renamed Peter, *the Rock*. He is brought to Jesus by his brother, Andrew, and follows Jesus thereafter. He is well-known for walking (and sinking) on water, slicing off a soldier’s ear, denying Jesus before his death, being a prominent leader in the early Christian movement, and for writing 1 and 2 Peter (Matthew 14:25-32; 16:13-28; Mark 14:66-72; John 1:40-42; Luke 5:1-11).

James and John: Along with Simon, they become Jesus’ closest disciples. Appropriately nicknamed by Jesus as the “sons of thunder” (Luke 9:54), they were Simon’s partners and, like him, they left everything to follow Jesus after the huge catch of fish (Mark 3:17; Luke 5:1-11). John goes on to write a Gospel, three letters, and the Book of Revelation.

Zebedee and **Salome** are the parents of James and John, and she is named twice in Scripture and is highlighted several other times. Though not above asking favor for her two sons (Matthew 20:20-28), she is a devoted follower of Jesus and is there at his crucifixion (Mark 15:40) and resurrection (Mark 16:1). (Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-40)

Matthew: Also known as Levi, he is a despised tax collector when Jesus calls him from his tax booth to follow Him. He “left everything and followed him” and invites many friends and coworkers to a dinner with Jesus. He authors the Gospel of Matthew. (Luke 5:27-32)

James the Less (*micros*, meaning “little” or “young”) and **Thaddeus:** Two lesser-known disciples. “Little James,” a son of Alphaeus (Mark 3:18), could have been Matthew’s brother (also a son of Alphaeus, Mark 2:14) but never identified as such. Thaddeus, aka Jude/Judas, may have gotten his nickname (meaning “breast child” or “mama’s boy”) to distinguish him from the other Judas, whose name carries negative connotations.

Thomas (aka Didymus, or “twin”): Best known for doubting: *Unless I see the nail marks in his hands... I will not believe* (John 20:25), could, maybe more accurately, be called *logical*. Regardless, we see a wholehearted passion, even an openness to die with Jesus (11:16), and fear of missing him (14:5). Thomas, the last of The Twelve to see Jesus after the resurrection, upon seeing him, proclaims, *My Lord and my God* (20:24-29).

Mary, mother of Jesus: She is the teenager God chose to give birth to Jesus, who was conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. She raises Jesus with **Joseph**, who married her after an angel appears to him in a dream, and who probably died before Jesus began his adult ministry. She weeps at the Crucifixion, witnesses the resurrected Christ, and, along with at least some of her other children (Acts 1:14), is part of the early church (Luke 1:26-56; 2:5-7; 8:19-21; John 2:1-12; 19:25-27).

The Leper: An outcast and “untouchable” in his society (Leviticus 13:46), this particular leper receives compassion and healing from Jesus. Even Jesus touching him would have been shocking, both to him and to any onlookers. He is only the first of many lepers and other social outcasts—the blind, lame, sick, paralyzed, demon-possessed—that Jesus heals (Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16; 17:11-19).

Can You Trust The Chosen?

Some have raised questions about the authenticity of *The Chosen*—which is what this guide’s *Realistic But Real?* sections highlight. An analogy to Bible translation could be made in this regard.

Some translations strictly follow the original Hebrew and Greek, but such very literal renditions can make it difficult to read in other languages. Other translations focus more on meaning by reworking sentence structures into a better, native-reading format: a “dynamic equivalent.” And still others go beyond translation into paraphrasing the original words (and meaning), or even by adding interpretation, thus amplifying (not contradicting) the meaning.

Every film enactment of biblical events falls somewhere on a similar spectrum: from a literal (word-for-word) depiction, to a dynamic equivalent, to a non-literal paraphrase. In the case of *The Chosen*, it would be fair to characterize it as beyond paraphrase to an “amplified version.” Some would use this byline under it: *Based on a True Story*.

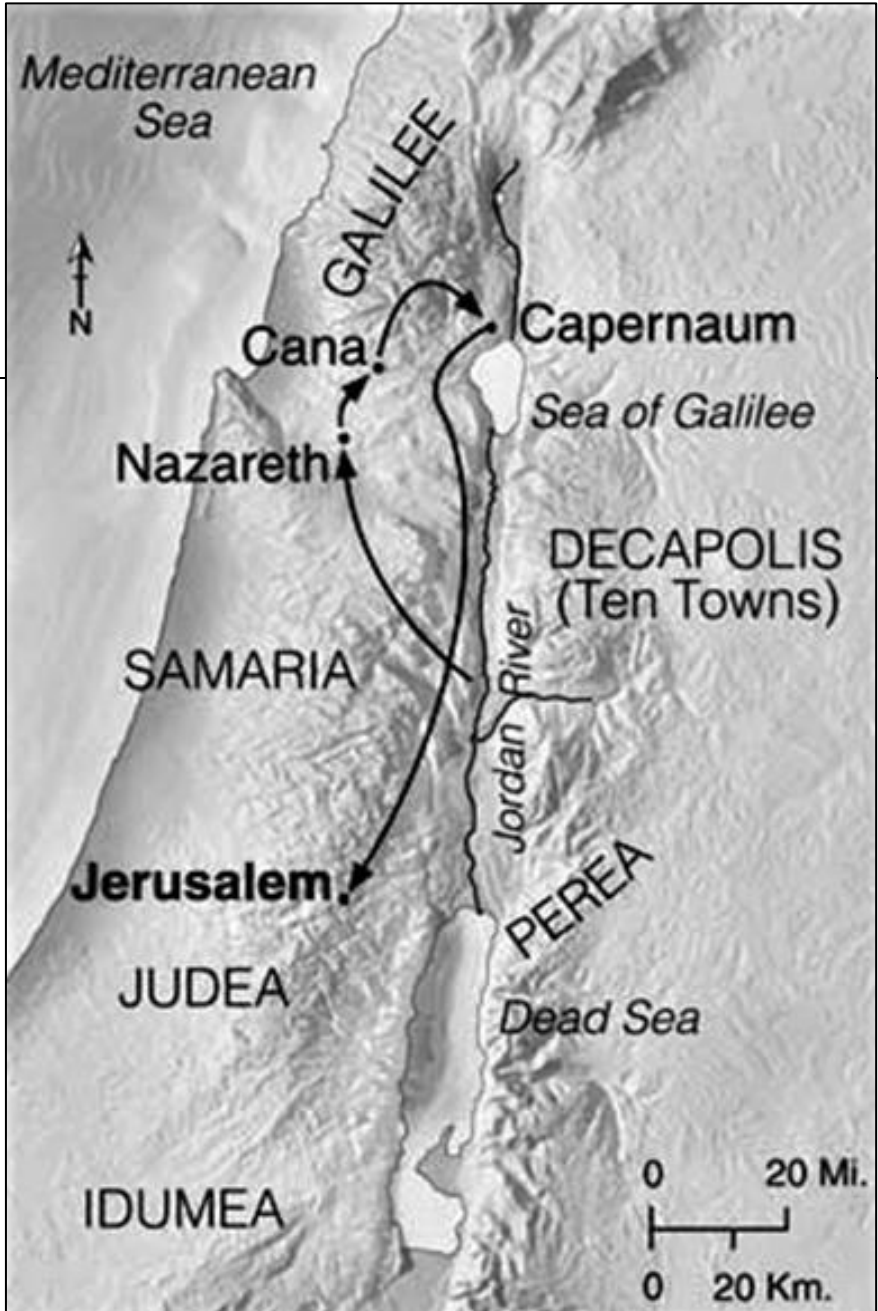


Such “non-literal,” *historical fiction* relies on artistic license, and can cause discomfort. That is understandable. If that is true for you, check out the YouTube video by Dallas Jenkins on the Home page of our website (scroll down a bit) entitled: *Can You Trust The Chosen?* This video conveys his perspective and may prove helpful.

We seek to regularly point out what actually happened versus plausible speculation from *The Chosen*, to keep in mind the difference.

Ultimately, *The Chosen* is a TV show and Scripture is the only media that is inspired by God and given to inform us of the way things happened. Film can bring supportive context and three-dimensional color to the two-dimensional writing on the page. For this reason, we appreciate the TV series and developed the Chosen guides.

Where Jesus began after being baptized by John the Baptist



Notes

Leader's Notes

The Chosen Vision: Dallas Jenkins and his team share the goal of *reaching a billion people with the message of Jesus*. They have translated the film into a multitude of languages, and are well on their way!

The Chosen Study: Our “loaves and fish” effort joins their far reaching aspirations by helping study leaders to facilitate *focused discussions about Jesus with everyone we know to grow as Christ followers*. Jesus called his disciples *students*. It’s who we are and what we do.

If you’re on the fence about leading, consider Jesus’ challenge to his disciples in Episode 8 of Season One about traveling through the hated Samaritan territory, a place considered unclean and dangerous: *Did you join me for safety reasons?*

So, you’re interested in leading a Chosen Study? Here’s what to do:

Gather a Core Team



The Chosen Study Team

is a small group with a big purpose.

Draw together a core group made up of those who have seen something “different” in Jesus and want others to experience that difference. The team meets together regularly (shoot for weekly) to support the group process and pray. They plan, oversee the food, and invite friends

and family to join in. This team can take on the following roles:

--*The Group Leader* oversees the group’s study and discussion process and seeks to foster one-on-one friendship evangelism and discipleship within the group. We encourage the Group Leader to send out weekly emails and to model servant/leadership within the group.

--*Meal Organizer* oversees the food. Many groups provide sign-up sheets for ongoing “potluck theme nights.” Meal Organizers can also

keep in touch during the week with group emails. (The first meal will likely be something like a pizza night instead of a planned potluck.)

--A *Sign-Up/Name Tag/Greeter* should be designated, especially for larger groups. For the people who may not feel comfortable at first, you'll want to extend hospitality and friendship from the start.

--A "*Tech Person*" to oversee film presentation and casting to the TV.

--*Small Group Facilitators* (for larger studies—eight or more) oversee their group. **It is best to sit around small tables with just four to six others** (and separate spouses), rotating members weekly.

There are two study series to choose from:

The Chosen Series follows along with the seven seasons of *The Chosen*.

The Bible Series includes other film and passage selections from the Gospels and various books of Scripture (See the website for these options.)



Be Inclusive of Everyone

Who to invite? Everyone who is open to come: The religious, the doubters, the non-religious, the seekers—you name it. This is to be a fun, interactive place that values and respects everyone.

We hope group members share differences of opinion and viewpoints from all over the spiritual map. We're glad for that. Each person brings their own background. We're not here to judge. We love to stir up discussion and hear unaccustomed perspectives. As Jesus, in *The Chosen* said to Simon in Season One: *Get Used to Different!*

Sharing and Prayer: In order to respect where people are spiritually, **encourage believers to avoid insider-type sharing**—that can characterize typical Bible study groups. (Prayer should primarily take place before you come/after you leave, not during group time.) This is a **skeptic- and seeker-friendly study** for mutual learning and to develop deeper friendships both inside and outside the group.

Get the Word Out

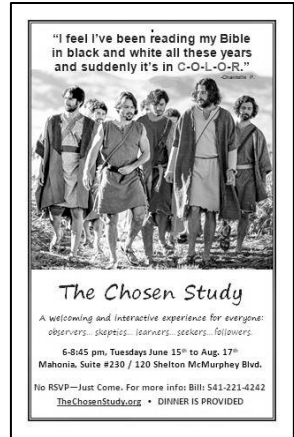


Direct Invitation: Yes, we still do that, right?! Indeed, it is by far the most effective means.

Email Invitation: You can get the word out quickly, send an active

link to the trailer, and a flyer attachment.

Text Invitation: Send out a photo or, better yet a digital photo (jpg), of your flyer and an active link to the trailer via text.



Flyers: Contact us at our website to receive sample flyers in MS Word that you can adapt and print or make up your own to hand out.

Create a Facebook Event and Church Announcements to the masses.

Once started, keep inviting. New people can binge watch to catch up!

Plan for Food



Our studies seek to connect us to God AND to each other. What better way to bring people together than sharing food and conversation? We encourage starting with a meal, potluck or, at least, finger food. The role of overseeing the meals is a tremendous service to the group.

Facilitate the Group

You can begin small with just one friend, one-on-one, or look to gather a group. Pray, invite, read and underline the key points on pages 4-12 and 109-115. The leader's notes along the way are for both current and future leaders to gain confidence in how to facilitate their groups.



Multiply Your Efforts



Combining small groups within a larger group:

When a group starts off large or grows larger—to eight or more—the larger size presents unique opportunities. Small groups provide a *depth* of intimacy that allows members to participate more. Larger group interaction can then draw out the best insights from the small group discussions to offer a *breadth* of give-and-take sharing.

This combination **provides for two ongoing discussion times**, with the best of both dynamics, and gives group leaders the role of a “dialogical” (two-way), not “mono-logical” (one-way), teacher. After each small group time, the leader brings together the larger group for a “check-in” to highlight what was discussed within the small groups.

A small/larger group combination **provides a chance for the core team to facilitate those small groups**. The goal is to foster a guided conversation. This, likewise, is true for large group leader on a larger scale. Quality, dialogical teaching brings a soft touch to the group sharing by focusing on the best insights gleaned from the small groups.

Larger groups thus **provide discipleship opportunities** for group members to step into the role of small group facilitators, as part of the core Chosen Study team. The goal is to help equip an increasing number of these leaders to multiply their outreach efforts in the lives of others. The challenge during the group time is to keep up the pace.

If you’re currently a group member with such aspirations, feel free to study through the guide notes, go through the website and look for an opportunity to join a team, or to start your own Chosen Study!

Where to Meet

Churches are convenient because they have kitchens, tables and are free but also look for non-church friendly alternatives like hotel conference or community rooms, homes, colleges, offices, and cafés.

Eight Don'ts of Leading Group Discussions

You're NOT a teacher, you're *a facilitator*. To lead a highly productive group discussion, start with what NOT to do and you're halfway there!

- 1. Don't answer your own questions.** Otherwise, the group will look to you as "the teacher" rather than "the facilitator." You're not just the questioner. You should participate like any member but don't be the first one to answer your own question.
- 2. Don't over-talk.** Groups with an overtalkative leader will often sit back—in boredom! Ninety percent of what we hear we forget, but 90% of what we say, we remember. So, your goal is to get your group talking. Get them remembering. Get them learning.
- 3. Don't be afraid of silence.** Silence may mean you need to rephrase the question, but if you "bail out your group" when silent, you set a bad precedent. To exercise patience, count in your head from 100 to 0 before answering—then only if you must. Oh, yes, they'll talk!
- 4. Don't be content with just one answer.** For every written question feel free to ask a follow-up question or two, like: "Does anyone else have a thought?" This allows several people to respond.
- 5. Don't expect group members to respond with an answer each time.** They may be tempted to look straight at you solely, especially when the group is new. Instead, you want them talking to each other, so you don't have to "broker" or be the discussion hub.
- 6. Don't reject an answer as wrong.** Respond to questionable answers by asking, "How did you come to that conclusion?" or "There's probably a difference of opinion here. Does anyone else have another way of looking at this?" Be affirming to everyone.
- 7. Don't be afraid of controversy.** Different opinions are a good thing.
- 8. Don't allow the group to end late.** If the discussion proves fruitful, end on time. Don't let the group drag on, but for those who choose to stay, give opportunity to discuss the issue in more depth.

Eight Do's of Leading Group Discussions

You don't need to be an expert or trained teacher to lead a discussion group. Your role is that of a facilitator, one who guides the group into a productive conversation that centers on the episodes and studies' main points. It's an honor to be able to serve your group in this way.

- 1. Pace the study.** It's the leader's responsibility to both start and end on time. Keep up a flexible pace with one eye on the clock and the other on the content. There may be more questions than you have time for; so, if necessary, skip some questions. Press ahead!
- 2. Give members the chance to study on their own.** They are free to do so—or not. There is no expectation of prior preparation.
- 3. Have the Scripture passage read aloud.** Or ask a member to read. Some may feel uncomfortable reading in public, so don't make "surprise assignments," unless you know they're willing to do so.
- 4. Conduct a discussion with the questions supplied.** Ask follow-up questions. Your goal is NOT to get into "one-and-done" responses; rather, your goal is to start a "conversation," with several people responding to a particular question in a back-and-forth way.
- 5. Be on the alert for too-talkative people.** Someone who over-talks can empty the life out of a group. If this is a problem, talk to that member after the meeting, and enlist their help with getting everyone else involved in the discussion.
- 6. Involve everyone, more or less equally.** Sit across from quiet people to draw them out, and next to talkative people to make less eye contact. If helpful, go around the circle with a question.
- 7. Keep the discussion on track by avoiding tangents.** Tangents may seem important but can hurt purposeful discussion, leading the group to talk about less important things. "Important tangents" provide opportunities for conversation outside the group's time.
- 8. Bring along your own curiosity and have fun with it.** Enough said!

Eight Group Ground Rules for a better experience

1. **The Leader** is a facilitator of discussion, guiding the group through questions rather than statements. He or she is responsible to **prepare for and oversee group interaction and to help with outreach.**
2. **The Guide** makes for a valuable personal study but is especially set up to help **current and future leaders** facilitate watching, study and discussion in one-to-one and small/large group settings.
3. **Prior Preparation** is **not expected.** Come as you are. Of course, we get out what we put in, so prior prep in **also not discouraged.**
4. **Come consistently.** Making “guest appearances” serves no one. It doesn’t serve you, or your group who wants to get to know you.
5. **Each Group Member** “owns the group,” and is thus seen as a key contributor of comments and questions. **Talkative members** should defer to others and **quiet members**, speak out. The conversation engagement around the circle should look like a pinball machine!
6. **Group Focus** is controlled by its purpose. *The Chosen* Study allows the episode and Scripture passage to **govern the discussion**, rather than Bible commentaries or cross referencing. Tangents are to be avoided or at least “tabled,” until after the group meeting is over.
7. **Personal Growth** from studying Jesus is our ultimate goal. Such growth naturally includes a **focus on humility and child-like faith.**
8. **Group Growth** happens as **friendships form and deepen.** Members should see themselves as more than just a study group, but as a discipleship group where consistency, self-disclosure, empathy, accountability and reaching out to others are key characteristics.

Anything else to add?

Continuing on with Jesus

One definition of genuine faith is *giving all you know about yourself to all you know about God*. This was, sadly, the opposite of what so many of Jesus' contemporaries did, especially the religious leaders of his day. Instead of approaching God with humility, they wanted to impress him with their religious performance.

The more you are around Jesus, the more you realize that he isn't impressed with appearances. Maybe that's why he—the Servant-King, God's Messiah—made no grand entry. Instead, Jesus shows up as a baby, born in a dirty stable to a peasant girl in a non-descript town.

Then, 30 years later, for three years, he announces the Kingdom of God has arrived, complete with spiritually intriguing stories and miracles. He offers forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God the Father—all culminating in his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

Something is going on here. You can't make this stuff up. It's all so strange and compelling. If nothing more, the story of Jesus is the very best, most audacious story that humanity has to offer. The Gospel writers felt that same way. Their eagerness to retell Jesus' remarkable story to any who would listen pours through their various accounts.

Are you increasingly finding yourself caught up in Jesus' story, as well? Do you want it to more deeply influence your life? Then, take on what you learn. If Jesus says to love your enemies, try it out. Or, if he says to show hospitality like the Good Samaritan, then do it.

As you "try on Jesus' teaching," you will find it not only making sense, but that you will also need to look to him for the wisdom, strength and courage to take the risk of making some hard choices. Thankfully, in this journey of faith, his forgiveness is always close at hand.

The

CHOSEN

STUDY

Have you seen something different in Jesus?

Join a Chosen Study Team or consider becoming a

Chosen Study Leader

Notes: Your Faith Journey

Our Mission: What We're About

The Chosen Study combines film depiction with Scripture Study in a welcoming and interactive experience for all: observers... skeptics... learners... seekers... followers, who WATCH > DISCUSS > RELATE together the Most Compelling Story ever told.



Our Leadership Team: What We Do

We work with Chosen Study Leaders, helping them succeed at gathering people, creating a friendly place and a compelling means to talk about Jesus.

Back to Front, Left to Right:

Bill Ditewig, Dietrich Gruen,
Bill & Teresa Syrios and
Cathy & Don Baker

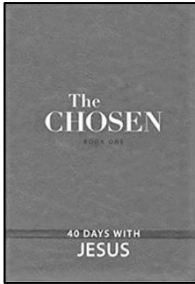


Our Proposition: Zoom with us - Start a Group - Join the Team

Do you have some loaves and fish to bring to this endeavor? We are looking for those who have seen the "Jesus difference" and are interested in exploring how to spread that difference around the world using *The Chosen Study*. If that sounds like you, please contact us at TheChosenStudy.org.

For Further Study

The Chosen Devotional: 40 Days with Jesus provides a new journal for each season to take your Chosen experience deeper. It can be spaced out to follow a five-a-week schedule. See: TheChosenGifts.com

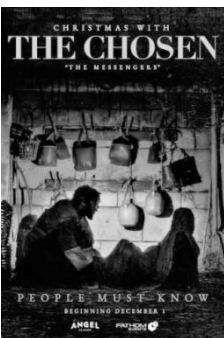
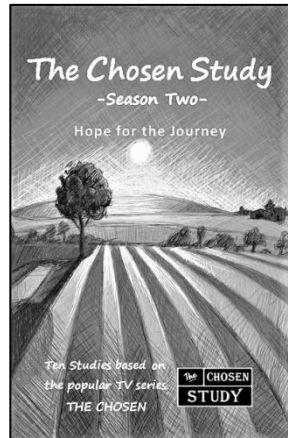


To divide
the
devotional
into five
readings per
week.

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The Chosen Study: Season Two guides you and your group into the next stage of Jesus' life and ministry with his followers wondering where all this is going.

Here we meet the remaining disciples, like Nathanael, who is despondent over a career in shambles, only to be given a new vocation by Jesus. Besides him, there are a host of others with physical, mental, and emotional infirmities, even demon-possession that, up to now, have been impossible to overcome.




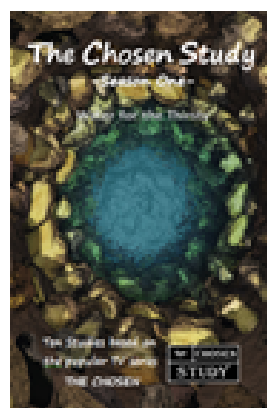
Christmas with The Chosen: The Messengers. This full-length episode could be used as a *come-one-come-all* event for your group before Christmas. Some people are more open to Christ at Christmas, so attending this episode can help with a winter-quarter (January) kickoff for a new Chosen group.

To order guides:
TheChosenStudy.org/order

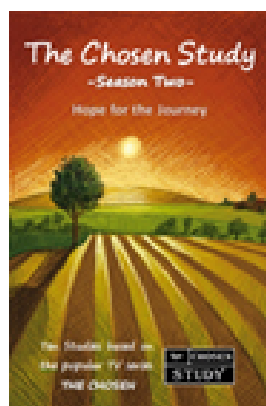
ENHANCE YOUR CHOSEN EXPERIENCE

The Chosen Study, Season One, focuses on Simon, Matthew, Andrew, Nicodemus, and Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus. This guide, based on the hugely popular show *The Chosen*, will give you and your group an in-depth appreciation of their unexpected change of fortunes in getting to know him.

To help with taking colorful study notes, get a four-color BIC pen. 



*Film Depiction + Scripture Study to
WATCH > DISCOVER > RELATE
the Most Remarkable Story ever told.*



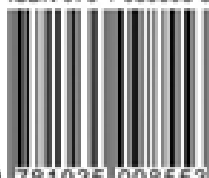
The Chosen Study, Season Two guides you and your group into Act Two of Jesus' story.

Here we meet the remaining disciples, like Nathanael who is despondent over a career in shambles, only to be given a new vocation by Jesus. Beside him, there are a host of others with physical, mental, emotional infirmities, even demon-possession, that up to now, have found themselves hopeless.

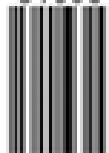
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