

THE CHOSEN

Season One | Episode One

In Episode One, we are quickly submerged into the world of first-century Israel under Roman occupation. Familiar names from scripture start to surface as we are methodically introduced to an initial group of soon-to-be disciples who find themselves struggling between opposing forces of power and taxation—from the oppressive Roman government to the burdensome moral laws of their religious leaders. Here we meet Simon (Peter), his brother Andrew, Mary Magdalene, Matthew the tax collector, and others including the well respected “teacher of teachers” Nicodemus from John chapter 3.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Were there any details about the depiction of 1st century Israel, historical context and culture, or Roman oppression that stood out to you in Episode One?
- 2** Both Matthew and Mary (and even Nicodemus) were trapped in social structures whether by choice or by circumstance. Do you think the way we view systems of power affects our ability to see hurting people?
- 3** With Mary, we see the hope that can come from holding fast to scripture. Are there any scriptures throughout your life that have been anchor points for you?
- 4** When Jesus purposefully steps into the fray—and the final frame of this episode—His deeply personal intervention brings healing and freedom. Has there ever been a moment in your life that has been unmistakably marked by Christ?

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Season One | Episode Two

In Episode Two, we see Mary Magdalene completely restored and living in freedom. She has abandoned her old identity to embrace a new way and even hosts her own Shabbat (or Sabbath) dinner which introduces us to two more of Christ's disciples. Mary's transformation has also come to the attention of the Pharisees, including Nicodemus whose curiosity for Jesus is developing. We also see tensions between Simon Peter, his Jewish brothers, and Matthew specifically begin to bubble up as the Roman Praetor, Quintas, tightens his grip on the region through backroom deals and manipulation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** "I was one way. And now I am completely different. And the thing that happened in between was Him." A powerful truth from Mary Magdalene! Have there been moments in your life where you've come to the same conclusion as Mary?
- 2** Mary's Shabbat dinner is humble, lacks polish, and brings people to the table who others have ignored. Yet it's the dinner Jesus chooses to attend. What lessons can be learned from that scene to help us become more like Christ in our own lives?
- 3** The presence of Jesus turns homes into holy places, dinner tables into discipleship spaces, and ordinary moments into miraculous ones. Is there anything "ordinary" in your life that, if yielded to Jesus, could become the same redemptive and mercy-filled moment in and for your neighborhood?

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Season One | Episode Three

In Episode Three, we get to see the humanity of Jesus as well as the divine nature of God through the eyes of children. We observe His humanity as He labors to build a fire, crafts wooden locks and mechanisms, engages in moments of intense prayer—and even breaks a sweat while He does it! Children find Him and are so delighted that they return day after day to learn and inquire about Christ’s life, mission, and favorite kinds of food. We see the delight that Jesus has in spending time with everyone, including children, and the intentionality and invitation He provides when sharing His life with anyone who willingly accepts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** What thoughts about the humanity of Jesus come to mind as we watch Him build fires, cut food, and engage in His trade?
- 2** What is it about Christ that draws everyone in, especially children in this instance?
- 3** “Everyone has a much larger job than just your trade.” How does this statement from Jesus impact the way we see our current employment or work environments?
- 4** The Shema, a central Judaic prayer from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, is powerfully featured in this episode and is part of the Great Commandment Jesus gives in Mark 12:28-34. How would these prayed and practiced ideas impact the way we live day-to-day?
- 5** What lessons can we learn from this episode when it comes to who we choose to interact with, or in whom we choose to place value or importance?

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Season One | Episode Four

In Episode Four, time is running out for Simon Peter who is on the verge of losing his family, friends, livelihood, and possibly his life. And just like Mary Magdalene in Episode One, Simon desperately needs a miracle. Simon meets Jesus after much indifference, despite his brother Andrew's attempts to convince him of Messiah's coming. After a night of fruitless attempts to save himself, Simon encounters a miracle that absolves his debts and activates his worship and surrender. Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John are invited to follow Jesus into intimate discipleship. Matthew is forced to confront "variables" he never expected and we are introduced to "Creepy John" the baptizer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** In this episode, Simon's wife Eden confronts him about his propensity to try and fix things on his own, without asking for help or seeking God for solutions. What are some signs of this behavior in our own lives and how do we avoid the trap of self-sufficiency? In addition, what are some practical ways we can pursue God and seek His direction and provision today?
- 2** We see the power of invitation as Andrew shares his encounter with Jesus with his brother Simon. Andrew then invited Jesus to get into their boat, and ultimately their lives. Is there someone in your life who is in need of your courage and invitation to experience Christ for themselves?
- 3** What are the implications of Jesus' statement, "You are to gather as many [people] as possible, of all kinds, and I will sort them out later" when it comes to our personal evangelism or sharing of the Gospel?

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Season One | Episode Five

In Episode Five, we are acquainted with Mary, mother of Jesus, and get to see the dynamic of Christ's interactions with family. Eden and Simon reconcile with each other and embrace the call of Jesus to follow Him. We also see Nicodemus dive headfirst into the deep end of his divine curiosities through his conversation with "Creepy John" the baptizer. And in the infamous wedding celebration in Cana, we are introduced to more followers of Jesus and witness the acceleration of Jesus' public ministry and His Messianic reveal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** In Eden and Simon's conversation, she makes a powerful statement in response to Simon's call from Jesus: "Someone finally sees in you what I've always seen. You're more than a fisherman." What are ways we can encourage people around us to see their value and God's call on their lives?
- 2** John the Baptizer, from inside of his jail cell, says to Nicodemus, "All your life you've been asleep. Make straight the way for the King, He is here to awaken the earth." If salvation causes us to be fully awake and fully alive, how might that change the way we live our daily lives?
- 3** "We will watch Jesus, and watch, and watch. Forever I think...", says Mary Magdalene when it comes to following and becoming like Jesus. What does discipleship look like for us today in the 21st century?
- 4** After Christ's water-into-wine miracle, Thomas is faced with a choice to follow Jesus. Like many of us, he hesitates to weigh the pros and cons. As a modern disciple, have you ever found moments of hesitation in your obedience in fully following Jesus? If so, why do you think that is?

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Season One | Episode Six

In Episode Six, the ministry of Jesus is accelerating and His public awareness is escalating. We get to watch two incredible miracles come to life, the healing of both the leper and the paralytic. Also, Nicodemus faces off with his students and challenges their perspective all while continuing to open his understanding to the possibility of God working outside of their expectations. As Jesus heals, He teaches those who are willing to listen and takes a moment to pierce the heart of the Pharisees (and provoke their rigid sensibilities). Nicodemus and Matthew, both seeking, are drawn in closer to the mystery of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Were there any specific moments during either miraculous healing that increased your understanding of culture, scripture, or context? Were there any reactions from Jesus, His disciples, the Pharisees, or those who were healed that stood out to you?
- 2** Nicodemus says to Shmuel, “Let’s look to the ancient roads where the good way is and walk in it as Jeremiah says, and still keep our eyes open to the startling and unexpected.” How do we hold both the mystery of God and His established, written word in tension today?
- 3** “Your faith is beautiful,” Jesus says to Tamar, who lowered her friend through the roof. What does it mean for us to live with “beautiful faith” today and how might it change the way we live day-to-day?
- 4** Both Shmuel and Nicodemus are Pharisees and yet approach God very differently. What causes the difference and are there lessons (or even warnings) for us today as we approach God and people around us?

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Season One | Episode Seven

In Episode Seven, two very different people, each with much to lose, are given an opportunity to leave wealth, safety, influence, and power behind. The first comes in an extraordinary meeting under the cover of darkness as Jesus reveals His mission, the mystery of salvation, and His divine identity while extending an invitation for Nicodemus to follow Him. The second invitation is given to Matthew, whose faith for what could be and his discontentment for what is are both rapidly growing. At the protest of Simon Peter and the astonishment of others, Matthew accepts the offer and leaves all he knows, predictable and familiar, behind.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** Nicodemus finally has his (now legendary) meeting with Jesus at night, straight out of John's Gospel, chapter 3. Nicodemus says that his heart is "swollen with fear and wonder" as he processes the inbreaking Kingdom of God through his encounter. Have there ever been moments in your journey with Jesus that you've felt the same "fear and wonder?" What was the fear? What was the wonder?
- 2** Matthew the outcast (and vilified tax collector) wrestles between what he assumed to be reliable and what is becoming reality. With so much to lose and the fear of the unknown, what do you think caused Matthew's immediate response to Jesus' invitation, and are there lessons for us to be learned in his decision?
- 3** "Get used to different," Jesus says to Simon Peter as he protests Christ's call of Matthew into discipleship. What do you think causes us to so readily receive the gifts of mercy and grace for ourselves, and then so easily withhold those gifts from others?

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Season One | Episode Eight

In the final episode of Season One, Jesus dines with tax collectors and sinners at Matthew's house. Peter's mother-in-law has been suffering from a deadly fever but is miraculously healed, and Nicodemus is torn between revelation and his own reality, choosing to walk away in agonizing regret. Meanwhile, Jesus is put on Quintas' "most wanted" list and is causing equal unrest for the Pharisee Shmuel, who is ready to devote his life to tearing Jesus down. As Jesus and His followers detour into dreaded Samaria, Jesus has an appointment of destiny and redemption with a woman who has been rejected and discarded.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1** "You came so close." A heartbreaking statement from Jesus at the moment when Nicodemus ultimately decides not to accept Christ's invitation to follow Him. What are some of the personal reasons we cling to that might hinder us from accepting Jesus' offer of discipleship? How do we overcome those reasons?
- 2** As they prepare to detour through Samaria, Christ's followers begin to raise their objections. Jesus responds, "If we're going to have a question and answer session every time we do something you're not used to, it's going to be a very annoying time together for all of us. So follow me." As modern disciples, what are practices we can do daily to prepare our own hearts for obedience?
- 3** At Jacob's well, Photima cries, "I'm rejected by others." Jesus replies, "I know, but not by the Messiah." As you watch this scene unfold, what kinds of barriers did Jesus need to break down to bring mercy and compassion to the woman at the well? Are there barriers that exist in our context today that require our willingness to overcome for ministry as well?