

The Chosen

Group Leaders:

The easiest way to show these movies to your group is to go to www.vidangel.com and follow the instructions there. OR download the app, and then cast it to your roku or appleTV.

The episodes have also been put on youtube – search, for instance, for “The Chosen Episode 1” and so forth. If you use youtube, for many episodes you will find “The Chosen Global Livestream” which includes introductory material at the beginning or the end – feel free to watch that if you’d like, but know that you are seeing more than just “The Chosen” episodes themselves.

The 20 minute Christmas Show “The Shepherd”, which gave birth to The Chosen, can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4y9rNSKuk3I>

It is recommended that you use subtitles as you watch in order to catch all the nuances, especially since the characters speak with a generic accent.

This is an 8-session course. Each of the sessions should take about 90 minutes to complete, depending on the length of the movie for that night (the episodes vary in length from about 40-60 minutes). Each study session is composed of three parts:

Read prior to watching the movie:

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

It is set up this way so that some of the Scripture referenced in the episode for that session is read prior to watching the movie. This will be of great help to any in the group who are not extremely well versed in various Bible stories – it will help group members pick up on some of the nuances and intricacies of the writing. Because of the length of time it takes to do all of this, **if at all possible it is recommended that this “Read Prior” section be done even before arriving for the group study.**

Groups that are on zoom, or who have members who will be zooming in, have found it helpful to gather on zoom at the beginning for prayer and introducing the episode. Then get off zoom and have each member/couple watch the episode in their own home. Then, at an appointed time, get back on zoom for the Discussion and Learning.

Groups have found it helpful for the 8 sessions to be printed out and given to the group members, so that they have the notes and Scripture references handy both during Group time and also at home afterwards for further study.

After you watch the episode, there is Discussion and Learning section. As you lead the discussion, if there are multiple questions in one paragraph, **do not ask them at all at the same time.** Ask each one individually. Give time for discussion, and then move to the next question.

If people in the group are not familiar with the Bible, the Bible is divided into 66 books. Each book is named, and then divided into chapters and verses. So, for instance, Isaiah 43:1-7 means that you should look in the Table of Contents for the book of Isaiah. Chapter 43 (usually large numbers) and verses 1 through 7 (usually small numbers). It would be good to make sure everyone understands this prior to starting.

An easy way to read the Bible is to download the Youversion Bible app on your phone. Click the “Read” button at the bottom of the page. Chose “NIV” from the dropdown menu at the top of the page. Search on the Book / Chapter / Verse from the dropdown menu at the top left of the page.

Because of the unique way this series presents biblical material, it is recommended that at least one person in the group watch at least episodes 1-5 prior to the group beginning. Why? Some who have not watched the series at all may get discouraged during episodes 1-3 ... it would be good to have a cheerleader in the group who can, with excitement, keep the group hanging with it until episode 4. Once the group gets that far, the opposite will occur ... it will be hard to keep the group from binge-watching the rest – it is just that good!

A final note – might be obvious but here it is anyway – begin and end each session with prayer, that God’s Holy Spirit would move mightily in our hearts as we read His word and contemplate the beautiful life of Jesus. Shalom! (“God’s peace” in Hebrew)

As you lead your group, if you find things that work or don't work, are helpful or unhelpful, please let Pastor Jeff Scheich know so that he can improve the study. If you have ideas on how to make it better, by all means, let him know. Thank you! God's blessings!

jscheich@christlincoln.org
402-483-7775 ext. 108

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #1 “I Have Called You By Name”

NOTE: This episode has scenes of demon possession and may be too intense for younger children.

NOTE: It is highly recommended that you use subtitles, as strange as that may feel at first. After the first two episodes, if your group wants to eliminate the subtitles, you can do that.

Read prior to watching the movie:

Isaiah 43:1-7

Luke 8:1-3

John 20:11-16

“Adonai” is translated “Lord”. It is the word that the Jews used to refer to God, in place of His revealed name, “Yahweh”. In order to “not take the name of the Lord in vain”, the Jews developed the practice of never actually speaking that name, but instead calling Him “Adonai”. You will notice in many versions of the Bible that LORD is in all caps in the Old Testament – this is to indicate to us that the actual word there is “Yahweh”.

NOTE: The first three episodes have much less biblical material than episodes 4-8. They are really setting the stage for the fireworks to come in those later episodes. Keep that in mind as you watch Episodes 1,2,3. The first three are good ... but some really awesome stuff comes later. So get ready and have fun!

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

Mary is from Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Magdala was a wealthy commercial village at which the fishermen on the Sea sold their fish. From there they were then shipped overland to the Mediterranean Sea and around the Roman empire. What would this indicate about Mary’s financial status, and how is this reinforced in Luke 8:1-3?

Some have identified Mary as the sinful woman in Luke 7:36-39. This idea gained traction in the early church and is reflected in The Chosen. However, there is no evidence that she is this woman. There is proof, however, that she is the first person to whom Jesus appears after His resurrection, as you’ve already read.

Much of The Chosen is intended to fill in potential ‘backstories’ for the biblical characters. It’s painting a picture rather than just giving us the bare bones. As someone said, it’s painting rather than pointing. Of the characters we’ve met today, here’s what we know for sure (the rest is conjecture):

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling council in Jerusalem) (John 3:1)

Mary was from Magdala and had seven demons cast out of her. (Luke 8:1-3)

Matthew was a tax collector - employed by the Romans but considered a horrible traitor by his fellow Jews. Horrible because he was viewed as a collaborator with the enemy, and because he made his money by charging more than the Romans asked him to collect. (Matthew 10:3)

Simon (Peter) was married (Mark 1:30) and had a brother named Andrew (Matthew 4:18)

Fishing on Shabbat (aka The Sabbath, beginning at sundown on Friday and lasting through sundown on Saturday) was strictly forbidden in Jewish law.

What were your images of the characters you saw today, prior to watching The Chosen?

Did The Chosen provide any happy surprises or shifts to these images? Any surprises with which you weren't comfortable? Give reasons for your answers.

What did you like about the backstories presented here? Is there anything you'd change, given what you've seen so far?

How did Jesus appear to you? Like you thought? Different?

What will you take home with you and ponder further?

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #2 “Shabbat”

Read prior to watching the movie:

Shabbat is the way Jews say “Sabbath”. For Jews this is from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. Shabbat begins with the Sabbath meal on Friday evening in Jewish homes. No work is to be done on the Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8-11

Exodus 31:14-17

Proverbs 31:10-31

Luke 14:1, 7-11

John 1:45-46

John 9:1, 6-12

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

GROUP LEADER NOTE: Remember, as you lead the discussion, if there are multiple questions in one paragraph, do not ask them at all at the same time. Ask each one individually. Give time for discussion, and then move to the next question.

We meet two disciples of Jesus in this episode, at the Shabbat dinner at Mary’s home. James and Thaddeus. These are two disciples about whom almost nothing is known – this James is not “James, the brother of John” (we’ll meet him later). This James is presumably “James, the son of Alphaeus”, although that is not clear in the movie. Thaddeus is mentioned in Mark 3 and Matthew 10, but he’s replaced by “Judas, the son of James” in Luke’s list of disciples – these are likely the same guy, called by a different name.

Do you think the directors intended to include a nod to Judas Iscariot as they portrayed Simon leaving his home quickly after Shabbat dinner? Why or why not?

What did you notice about the various (as many as six, if you can find them) different Shabbat meals that we saw depicted in this episode?

Did you catch Jesus winking at Barnaby??? FUN!

How did the directors work in some of the biblical stories that we read earlier, transporting the ideas found there into a new location or setting?

Were there other allusions that you noticed?

Much of what we see in this episode is a continuation of Episode #1, fleshing out backstories before the series will surge ahead. What have you appreciated about the backstories as they continue to flesh out in the movie? Is there anything you'd change, given what you've seen so far?

How did Jesus appear to you? Like you thought? Different?

What will you take home with you and ponder further?

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #3 “Jesus Loves The Little Children”

NOTE: This episode is the simplest and shortest of those in this first season. It takes a break from the characters that we've met thus far (except Jesus). To give a sneak peek at what's to come in future episodes ... they will be bringing back the characters we've gotten to know and continue the story of Jesus' interactions with them and delve deeper into Jesus' first miracles in Galilee. Big fun ... and exciting miracles yet to come! Because this episode doesn't advance the character development of the others in Season 1, if your group only has time for seven sessions, this would be one you could skip.

Read prior to watching the movie:

Luke 18:15-17

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Psalms 133:1

Mark 8:27-30

Luke 4:16-21

Matthew 5:1-12

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

There is no evidence that Jesus ever had a little camp outside Capernaum, where no one else saw him except some children, who snuck out to Him without their parents' knowledge, and whom He taught without their permission. Ha! Just sayin'. In fact, as we will see later, Jesus was likely well-known by at least some in Capernaum for many years prior to His public ministry.

Be that as it may, this episode is very endearing and shows a very tender side of Jesus. What did Jesus emphasize in His teaching with these children?

One of the things we should note, and which is hinted at here, is that Jesus likely taught the same things many different times and in many different settings. In Jesus' day most people could not read or write; they learned by rote repetition.

Read Deuteronomy 32:35 and, if you have time, I Samuel 24:1-12. Discuss the situations in your life where you can apply this Scriptural teaching, which Jesus fleshes out in various Beatitudes (Matthew 5).

There are many endearing things in this episode. Jesus is portrayed as clearly loving these children, treating them with dignity, and having plenty of time for them. Also we see Abigail

finding first one friend (Joshua the Brave) and then multiple friends and bringing them to Jesus.
What friend or family member would you bring to meet Jesus?

Close with the Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew 6:9-13

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #4 “The Rock On Which It Is Built”

Read prior to watching the movie:

Genesis 15:1-5

Luke 3:1-20

Matthew 13:47-52

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

Read Luke 5:1-11. Talk about Simon’s reaction, Matthew’s reaction, your reaction to the events of that day.

Did you catch the letter on the fishing bobber? It read “Z” in Hebrew. For Zebedee. As in “James and John, the sons of Zebedee” – close friends (and in the Bible, fishing partners) of Simon and Andrew.

Did anything cross your mind as Simon had his ear cut by a Roman soldier? See John 18:10. Be watching for allusions like this throughout the series!

Historical note: The movie has John the Baptist baptizing on the northern stretch of the Jordan River, just after it leaves the southern end of Sea of Galilee. Historically this is almost surely not accurate, but a) it matches with a site that is often visited by tourists, allowing them to avoid the Palestinian-controlled West Bank and b) it allows the movie directors to compress the stories we’ve seen thus far, keeping them within a day’s walk of Capernaum.

Recall the monologue that Simon has with God while out on the boat.

“And I will make your descendants as many as the stars in the heavens.” And then what, huh? Make the chosen as many as the stars, only to let Egypt enslave us for generations. Bring us out of Egypt, part the Red Sea, _____ only to let us wander in the desert for 40 years. Give us the land, _____ only to let us be exiled in Babylon. Bring us back, _____ only to be crushed by Rome. This is the God I’ve served faithfully my entire life. You’re the God I’m supposed to thank.”

From Simon’s recitation, it seems that God has continually let His people down. Simon recites some bad things that he seems to blame on God ... but his historical recounting is missing some stuff (the blanks, marked above by _____). What’s he missing? (HINT: In each case, it’s the same sort of thing). How and in what situations are you tempted to the same type of historical mis-remembering in your life, blaming God for stuff ... and conveniently forgetting your own part in things?

What did you like about the backstories presented here? Is there anything you’d change, given what you’ve seen so far?

How did Jesus appear to you? Like you thought? Different?

What will you take home with you and ponder further?

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #5 “The Wedding Gift”

Read prior to watching the movie:

Proverbs 30:1-6

Isaiah 40:1-5

I Kings 19:19-21

Luke 2:41-52

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

Read John 2:1-12

What did you notice about Thomas’ personality which might have been the writer’s attempt at giving hints of who he was to become in the Gospels?

At one point Simon says, “Master, I was thinking ...” and proceeds to give Jesus advice. From what you know of him in Scripture, can you picture Simon doing that in real life? When have you done that in your life? What can you learn for yourself here – how can you grow?

What did you like about the backstories presented here? Is there anything you’d change, given what you’ve seen so far?

How did Jesus appear to you? Like you thought? Different?

What will you take home with you and ponder further?

NOTE: It’s important to remember that “The Chosen” is a movie adaptation of the Gospels. It is not meant to replace the reading of God’s Word, and there are many inconsistencies (most of them minor) with how it presents the biblical stories. The point of watching is not to learn what “actually happened”. The point of watching is to enjoy, to make the stories come alive, and to spark in your heart a desire to dig into the Scriptures. But of course the Bible is always our final authority about what really happened!

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #6 “Indescribable Compassion”

Read prior to watching the movie:

Matthew 25:1-13

Luke 13:1-5

Matthew 6:2-8

Luke 18:9-14

I Chronicles 25:1, 7

There are many more biblical references in this episode, but we’ll have to pause here and watch the video. See what other references you hear as the show unfolds.

Note: You’ll hear the term “Av Bet Din” as the show begins. That is the term for the Chief Justice, 2nd highest member of the Sanhedrin. It is a courtroom scene, in other words.

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

Read Luke 5:12-26

How did the scenes you watched match up with the scenes in Luke’s gospel? What was your reaction as you watched these scenes of indescribable compassion?

Jesus tells the Leper who was healed to not say anything to anyone. This is very typical of Jesus’ healings among the Jews. As you can imagine from this episode, healings would have a way of attracting LARGE crowds. And large crowds had the same misconceptions as Jesus’ disciples – they expected the Messiah to lead a war against the Romans. Jesus had to walk a fine line between doing miracles which pointed to Who He was ... and not starting a revolution against Rome. That wasn’t His calling. Thus the command to “not say anything to anyone.”

Zebedee makes a big deal of trying to figure out if Jesus is from the tribe of Judah. Genesis 49:8-10 tells us why – check it out. By this time in history easily more than 75% of all Jews were from the tribe of Judah – others were from the tribe of Benjamin or Levi. All the other 9 original tribes had been wiped out (either killed OR carried off into captivity and forced to intermarry outside of their Israelite faith) by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

What was your reaction to how the show portrays the curiosity of Matthew and Nicodemus?

Salome is the name of Zebedee's wife – this is most likely correct. Jesus meets her in this episode – this is most likely in-correct. Check out these passages from the time of Jesus' crucifixion:

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. (Mark 15:40 NIV)

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (John 19:25 NIV)

Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. (Matthew 27:56 NIV)

It's very likely that these passages are naming the same women:

Mary, Jesus' mother (named only in one account)

Mary Magdalene

Mary, wife of Clopas and mother of James & Joseph

Salome, Mary's (the mother of Jesus) sister, the mother of Zebedee's sons (James / John)

If this is true, and throughout history the Church has interpreted these passages this way, this would mean that Salome was Jesus's aunt. Zebedee was Jesus' uncle. And it would mean that James and John, the disciples whom we've met in the series, are Jesus' cousins. James and John were fishing partners with Andrew and Simon. So ... not to burst your bubble, but it is highly likely that all these guys knew Jesus for many years prior to their calling as disciples. They had likely hung out together on many occasions. They knew Jesus ... but didn't *know* Him. Suddenly Jesus starts doing things like turning water into wine and healing lepers ... their reaction? "Who is this guy???"

Close this way: Nicodemus accuses Shmuel of putting God in a box, of making God act in a certain way. Shmuel makes a good case – he's got a ton of Scripture to back up what he's doing. Are there ways today that we (you) put God in a box? Limit Him? Pray that God will do more than we could ever ask or imagine (as He promises in Ephesians 3:16-21).

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #7 “Invitations”

Read prior to watching the movie:

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalms 2:12 As you read this, note that it was a royal psalm used at the coronation of kings.

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

Read John 3:1-21.

How did the writer’s take on this episode reinforce any previous conceptions that you may have had of this event? How does it change them? What moved you about this scene? What would you have portrayed differently?

NOTE: John’s gospel seems to place the discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus in the vicinity of Jerusalem / Judea. If you’d like, check out John 2:23 and 3:22, verses surrounding the conversation, both of which place Jesus down south rather than around the Sea of Galilee.

Did you catch the disciple, John, taking notes on the steps as Jesus and Nicodemus talk? Fun little shot that gets your mind thinking! What was the point of that?

How do the writers use Psalm 2 and what point are they making with its use?

The Greek word for “spirit” and “wind/breath” are the same. What point then is Jesus making as he and Nicodemus discuss the wind, recorded in John 3:8?

Check out John 3:5-6 again. Jesus is there contrasting a physical birth (“water” “flesh”) with a spiritual birth (“born of the Spirit”). Nicodemus has trouble following Him – do we do any better? How are we “born of the Spirit”?

Check out Luther’s comment on being “born of the Spirit” in his explanation to the 3rd Article of the Apostle’s Creed: “I believe that I cannot by my OWN reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him. But the HOLY SPIRIT has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith...” How does this help us understand what it means to be “born of the Spirit”?

If you are using various English versions, you may notice that there is a difference in the red letter editions (red letters indicate the words of Jesus). There is some debate over where the words of Jesus in this text end ... and perhaps the commentary of the Gospel writer, John, begin. So ESV in its red letter edition has Jesus speaking all these words thru v. 21, while NIV has Jesus’s words ending at v.15. The original writing obviously is not a red letter edition (ha ha)

and so we don't know for sure where (or if) Jesus' words ends and John's word begin. The Chosen portrays Jesus as saying the very familiar words of John 3:16, and may indeed be right.

Read Matthew 9:9-13

NOTE: In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, "Matthew" is called "Levi, son of Alphaeus". They are almost surely the same person.

One of the impressive things about The Chosen is that it fills in a backstory to things like what we read about in Matthew 9:9. The gospel writers, trying to get a LOT into a small scroll, leave out backstories ... and so it appears that the very first time Matthew saw Jesus was as He walked by that day. How does The Chosen help you understand and flesh out the very likely reality of what happened with Matthew?

How did Jesus appear to you? Like you thought? Different?

What will you take home with you and ponder further?

The Chosen Season #1 Episode #8 “I Am He”

Read prior to watching the movie:

Genesis 32:22-32

Genesis 33:18-20

Daniel 7:13-15

Matthew 9:9-13

Matthew 19:16-26

Watch the movie

Discussion and Learning:

What a heart-rending scene as Nicodemus makes the decision to not follow Jesus! What do you think he was weighing out in his mind as he made his choice?

The story of the rich man in Matthew 19:16-26, making a similar decision, is not about Nicodemus. But how does the movie’s hypothetical portrayal of Nicodemus’ loss help us understand the pathos, the emotions, of the scene in Matthew 19?

Read Luke 4:38-39 How is this similar and how is it different in terms of the circumstances surrounding the healing of Simon’s mother-in-law?

Read John 4:1-42 Photina is the name traditionally given to the woman at the well, but we don’t really know if that’s historically accurate. Anyway, that’s why she has that name in this episode.

How does the portrayal of Photina’s time with Jesus in the movie help you understand what is recorded by John in his gospel? What do you learn from Jesus’ interaction with her that is helpful for your life?

Jesus is given a wickedly funny and poignant quote in this episode: “If we are 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.” In what areas of your life do you and Jesus seem to have constant question and answer sessions?

What scenes of Jesus’ life are you most excited to see in future seasons?

NOTE: These movies are being funded via crowd-source funding. If you’d like to support this effort, you can do so at www.vidangel.com