

The Chosen: Season 1 Study Series

Cf: <https://downthehobbitholeblog.com/index.php/2020/02/05/the-chosen-discussion-questions/>

Episode 1: “I have called you by Name”

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

Isaiah 43:1-3 [Reference to God’s Promise in Episode 1] <http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/43>

Luke 8:1-15 [Mary Magdalen; early parables] <http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/8>

Mark 16: 1-13 [Resurrection to Mary Magdalen] <http://www.usccb.org/bible/mark/16>

Luke 11: 14-20 [Jesus & Demoniacs] <http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/11>

Episode 2: “Shabbat” [The Sabbath]

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

Deuteronomy 5:12-14 [3rd Commandment

explained] <http://www.usccb.org/bible/deuteronomy/5>

Leviticus 23 [Listing Jewish HolyDays] <http://www.usccb.org/bible/leviticus/23>

[Wikipedia article to skim over]: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat#Rituals>

Prayers of blessing at meals:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth...

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who creates the fruit of the vine...

[“King of the Universe” == “Lord God of all creation”...]

Questions to reflect on:

1. What struck me in reading & reflecting on these passages (and/or watching the episodes)? Did I see something about the person of Jesus or those he encounters, that I had not considered before?
2. Is there anything I notice about the cultural value systems and the times in which Jesus lived—whether Jewish or Roman? In what ways might I expect Jesus to conform, and in what ways would he diverge?
3. What were some contemporary expectations the Jews had of the promised Savior / Messiah?
4. On Sunday we rest and honor family, and God on the Sabbath. We refresh our souls. Rest is a restorative gift. How am I utilizing it? How could I be utilizing it better?

Episode III: Let the Children Come to Me

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

- Luke 18:15 “Let the children come” <http://www.usccb.org/bible/lk/18:15#50018015>
- Mark 9:42 Little Ones against sin <http://www.usccb.org/bible/mk/9:42#49009042>
- Luke 6:12 Jesus Calls & Sends Apostles <http://www.usccb.org/bible/lk/6:12#50006012>
- Deuteronomy 6:4 The Shema Prayer <http://www.usccb.org/bible/dt/6:4#05006004>

Questions to Reflect on:

1. Is it strange for you to think of Jesus as personable? Is it easy to see Jesus intentionally spending meaningful time with mere children?
2. Jesus says, “Adults need the faith of children”. What are some qualities of that kind of “faith”? How can we intentionally make space for this in our faith and our daily life?
3. It was easy for Abigail to tell her friends about Jesus. Who was Jesus for her, and what motivated her to share her experience of Him? Is it easy for us to share that with others?
4. With what attention to detail might Jesus take care of his work for others, or take care of himself? What motivated Jesus in his diligence?

Episode IV: The Rock on which It is Built

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

John 1: 35-51 Andrew hears John & finds Simon <http://www.usccb.org/bible/jn/1:34#51001034>
Luke 5 The Call of Simon <http://www.usccb.org/bible/Luke/5>
Matthew 13:47-53 Parable of the Net & other Parables
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/13>

Questions to Reflect on:

1. During this episode, why were Andrew & Edna (the character of Simon’s wife) more full of confidence than Simon was during the trials they faced—Simon being overwhelmed by anxiety and acting in desperation? Whom do I more resemble in my moments of high stress? If Jesus were to cast his “net” into the sea of my soul and my reactions, what good or bad “fish” would He find there to sort through?
2. To whom do I turn for help or relief during my losing battles—or to what? Which is more real to me: the sources of my anxieties, or the fruits that come from my times with God? Why?
3. Have I ever experienced something like the miracle of this catch of fish—a time when I’ve thought there was no way that something would work, but God made it happen or answered my prayer and “got my attention”? When have I felt God stimulate me to lean more on Him than on the limited horizon of my own resources?
4. In the moment of Simon falling to his knees after the catch of fish, what can I learn about Jesus and his qualities or values? Do I follow Him as a fisher, not of fish alone, but towards becoming one of his “fishers of men”?

Episode V: The Wedding Gift

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

- **John 2: 1-11 (Jesus turns water to wine)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/john/2>
- **Luke 2: 41-52 (The boy Jesus at the temple)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/lk/2:41#50002041>
- **Prov. 30:4 (What is His Name, or that of His Son...?)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/prv/30:3#24030003>

Questions to Reflect on:

1. In the opening scene, Mary's desires and expectations collided with Jesus's. Even though Jesus's relationship with the Father ranks higher than Jesus's relationship with Mary, Jesus assented to Mary's wishes. What does this story tell us about obedience and listening to family? What do we learn about Mary's desire to intercede for all brothers & sisters of Jesus, as our own "heavenly mother"?
2. Simon mentions that he and Andrew will learn by observing Jesus: "We'll watch him and do what he does... and then we'll do it ourselves...make our own mistakes..." However, Simon struggled to follow his own advice. Several times, Simon gives Jesus advice and tries to get Jesus's ministry rolling. What is your reaction to Simon's definition of "following" Jesus, and his struggle to live it out? Is it easy for me to "wait" for Jesus' timing?
3. Jesus reassures Thomas that "I do not correct you [for asking]; it is good to ask questions...". We won't always receive the answers we desire right away, nor at times understand the answers we're given. How do you handle this when it comes to questions about Jesus & the Ways he has revealed? How do you feel when a teaching of Jesus is presented as "to be accepted on Faith," especially teachings that are hard to understand within human logic?
4. As Jesus was turning the water into wine, Thaddeus told Mary Magdalene: "Once you make that first cut into the stone, it can't be undone. It sets into motion a series of choices ...and it will never be the same." Jesus made a deliberate choice when he began his public ministry, and he knew where that choice would lead him and his followers. Do I recognize where following Jesus might lead me—and do I still want to follow him throughout this life and into the next? Are there moments when I feel it's too hard?

Reflect for a moment on Jesus words in Luke 14:28-30: *"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'"*

Episode VI: Indescribable Compassion

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

- **Mark 2:1-12 (Jesus heals the paralytic)**
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/mark/2>
- **Matthew 8:1-4 (Jesus heals a leper)**
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/8>
- **Luke 12: 36-48 (The parable of the servants awaiting their master),**
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/lk/12:35#50012035>
- **Matthew 6: 1-18 (Giving to the needy and prayer)**
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/Matthew/6>

Questions to Reflect on:

- 1) Which part of this episode was the most different from how you imagined it being after reading the passage in Scripture?
- 2) Who in today's society might you equate with a "tax collector" in Jesus time? A "Roman soldier"? A "Jewish Rabbi"? A "leper"?
- 3) Leprosy is a corruptive, contagious disease of the body, crippling & corroding the flesh from within, and leading the person to isolation and, ultimately, to a slow and miserable death. Why do you think Sin and habits of sin can so often be compared to "leprosy" of the soul?
- 4) In the episode, Nicodemus struggled with his disciple to remain both faithful to the "old", written Word of God while being open to the surprising new ways of the Spirit--walking the ancient roads while being open to novelty: "We can do both". Many today err on the side of either extreme, dismissing the new so as to hold on to the old teachings, or dismissing the old teachings so as to be open-minded to new ways. Where do you find yourself in that discernment?

Consider 3 examples of this tension between the old and the new: What would Jesus think of each one? How do I stay faithful to Him amidst changing times and values—or does He have any opinions between the old, the new, and "the newer"?

- a. Tensions regarding Mass: (1) Traditionally in Latin vs (2) Post Vatican II in English, vs. (3) experiencing God in Nature, without any need for Mass
 - b. Tensions within Catholicism-- Conservative Catholicism (example, its emphasis on Moral teachings), and Liberal Catholicism (example, its emphasis on Free-thinking & Defining one's own values).
 - c. Tensions between "Christianities," and between Religions:
(1) Traditional Roman Catholicism—the Written Bible + Apostolic Authority of interpretation.
vs. (2) newer Christian "denominations": the Written Bible + [Baptist] Interpretation.
vs. (3) newer "non-denominationalism": the Written Bible + my own interpretation.
vs. (4) [newer] All Religions are really the same: No one has the true interpretation of anything God may have said.
- 5) There was a LOT of compassion emphasized in this episode. From not giving publicly to the healing of a leper. How did Jesus preach about and show compassion? Do you think there is a difference between compassion, giving, empathy and good will?

Episode VII: Invitations

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

- **John 3:1-21 (Jesus teaches Nicodemus)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/john/3>
- **Matthew 9: 9-13 (Jesus calls Matthew)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/9>
- **Numbers 21:4-9 (Moses and the bronze snake)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/numbers/21>
- **Luke 18:18-23 & Luke 19:1-10 (Two contrasting invitations)**
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/lk/18:18#50018018>

The Chosen Discussion Questions:

1. Amidst criticism for building the bronze serpent, Moses said, “I have learned to do what He says without questioning.” What does this tell us about faith? What are some differences between Christian Faith—compatible as it is with reason—and naïve “fideism”?
2. “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so will the Son of Man be lifted up so that everyone who believes in Him might have eternal life...And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Myself.” Suffering and death are the curse of sin. Do I see a parallel between salvation through a plagues serpent mounted on a pole, and salvation through the suffering, crucified Lord?
3. Jesus talked to Nicodemus about being born again. Outside of the re-forging grace of baptism, have you had an experience where God made his presence clear, came over you, and gave you something that resembles new life?
4. Did it surprise you how quickly Matthew agreed to follow Jesus? Did it surprise you how Nicodemus, though he fell to his knees with Faith in Jesus the Messiah, struggled to follow him? What causes led to Matthew and Nicodemus responding so differently to Jesus’s invitation?
5. What is your favorite conversation that Jesus has had with a character thus far in the series?

Episode Eight: I am He

Scripture Study / Suggested Readings:

- Mark 2:13-17 (Jesus eats with sinners)
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/mark/2>
- John 4:1-42 (The story of the Woman at the Well)
 - <http://www.usccb.org/bible/john/4>

Discussion Questions:

1. Following Jesus can create turmoil in your life and especially in your relationships. Nicodemus, Matthew, and Peter all encountered adversity after beginning to follow Christ. Do any of their stories resonate with you?
2. Jesus mentions several times that he's not trying to bring people 'easy', nor is he here to deliver them from their oppressive government. What is Jesus' purpose in coming and in bringing His disciples to follow him?
3. What do you think about Jesus's decision to eat with tax collectors and sinners?
4. Jesus took his lumps, so to speak, from the Samaritan woman. Jesus let the Samaritan woman express her anger and frustration, and that approach worked out. As Catholics, are we called to endure hostility from groups who have been mistreated by other Christians and Catholics?
5. Has there ever been a time in your life where you were as excited about Jesus as the woman at the well was? How can we bring back some of that excitement?
6. At the end of the episode, Jesus said he did not want food because he was nourished by doing the will of the Father. What does this reveal about the hearts of God, Jesus, and many of the saints like Peter and Paul?