

**The Chosen—Season 2, Episode 3, “Matthew 4:24”**

**“Easter Eggs,” Notes, and Discussion Questions—Details and Notes that Might Be Helpful or Interesting**

**Introductory Notes:**

1. ‘\*’ Indicates an extra-biblical character or incident.
2. This episode is produced in a way that we haven’t seen yet in *The Chosen*—there is no Cold Open, and today’s story takes place basically in one scene.
3. The title of today’s episode is **“Matthew 4:24”**: *[Jesus’] fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, people possessed by demons or having epilepsy or afflicted with paralysis, and he cured them.*

The verses both before and after Matthew 4:24 indicate that Jesus was probably actually in Galilee at the time and attracting crowds from a wide range of regions—including Syria, but also “Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan.”

<p>00:01:24-00:04:24</p>	<p>00:01:42 –00:04:21</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “But where would be a good place to start?”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “For you?”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “Yes, for me. The Law of Moses? The prophecies of Isaiah? The wisdom of Solomon? (See <b>Note 1—The Scriptures</b>, p.1)</p> <p><u>Philip</u> <i>[thoughtfully]</i> “Mmm.” <i>[thinks for a second]</i> “For you, I think Psalms of David. A good start.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “I’m ready.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> <i>[Matthew takes notes in his tablet.]</i> “For example—‘<i>To the choirmaster, a psalm of David. If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.</i>’” (See <b>Note 2—Psalm 139</b>, p. 2 &amp; <b>Questions for Discussion &amp;</b></p>	<p><b>Scene Summary:</b> The scene opens with a long line of people approaching a small tent or booth. As the camera pans along the line, we see a small group of people gathered off to the side. We soon surmise that, per the title of the episode and its scriptural reference (Matthew 4:24), the line of people are those “<i>who were afflicted with various diseases and pain, people possessed by demons or having epilepsy or afflicted with paralysis</i>” waiting to see Jesus. (Likely, the small group of people off to the side are lepers, distanced from the rest of the crowd.)</p> <p>Matthew and Philip enter the scene toward the back of the line, picking up where they left off in the last episode with Matthew wondering where would be a good place to start learning Scripture. Philip offers some instruction and suggestion as they interact with people both in line to see Jesus, as well as those who have been healed.</p> <p>1. <b>Note 1—The Scriptures:</b> What Matthew suggests aren’t “books” of the Bible per se (other than “the prophecies of Isaiah,” which of course corresponds to what we would call “the Book of Isaiah”) but rather broad categories or classifications of Scripture—i.e., “the Law of Moses,” would include the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, if not including Genesis itself as the whole Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible; “the wisdom of Solomon” is likely the book of Proverbs, possibly “the Song of Solomon” (also called “the Song of Songs”).</p>
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	<p><b>Practice, 1. Where to begin, p. 25)</b></p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “And?”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “Just that.” [<i>Philip turns to interact with the line of people waiting to be healed.</i>]</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> [<i>in typical ‘Matthew-fashion’</i>] “But I’m not planning on ascending to heaven or making my bed deep in the depths.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “You asked for a passage.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “Yes, but one that could help me understand how you and everyone else knows more.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “That’s what I know, and what you must come to believe if you want to make any meaningful study of Torah.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “I don’t understand.” [<i>Matthew turns to interact with one of the people leaving Jesus’ tent, apparently healed of epilepsy.</i>]</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “Say it back to me.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed deep in the depths, you are there.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “There’s nowhere you can go, no heights you can climb to in your intellectual mind, no depths you can reach in your soul, where God is not with you. Do you get it?”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “I think so.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “No amount of learning can bring you closer to God, or make you more or less precious to Him. He’s always right here, right now, with you and for you.” (See <b>Note 3—Scripture, Learning, God, and Us</b>, p. 2)</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “But I don’t feel it.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “The feeling doesn’t always come first. Sometimes you have to believe first.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “Believing a thing does not make it true.”</p>	<p>2. <b>Note 2—Psalm 139:</b> Philip begins to quote a portion of Psalm 139, verse 8.</p> <p><i>O LORD, you have searched me and known me.</i></p> <p><sup>2</sup><i>You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.</i></p> <p><sup>3</sup><i>You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.</i></p> <p><sup>4</sup><i>Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely.</i></p> <p><sup>5</sup><i>You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.</i></p> <p><sup>6</sup><i>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.</i></p> <p><sup>7</sup><i>Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?</i></p> <p><sup>8</sup><i>If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.</i></p> <p><sup>9</sup><i>If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,</i></p> <p><sup>10</sup><i>even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.</i></p> <p><sup>11</sup><i>If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and night wraps itself around me,”</i></p> <p><sup>12</sup><i>even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.</i></p> <p><sup>13</sup><i>For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.</i></p> <p><sup>14</sup><i>I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.</i></p> <p><sup>15</sup><i>My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.</i></p> <p><sup>16</sup><i>Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.</i></p> <p><sup>17</sup><i>How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!</i></p> <p><sup>18</sup><i>I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.</i></p> <p>3. <b>Note 3—Scripture, Learning, God, and Us.</b> I would have put this differently: there <i>IS</i> learning that can bring you closer to God. Or perhaps better, there <i>IS</i> learning that can <i>make you aware of God’s closeness to YOU.</i> About the Psalms, German pastor and theologian executed by the Nazis on April 9, 1945 once wrote:</p>
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00:04:25-00:05:24	<p><u>Philip</u> “That is wisdom. But these are not just any words. They are David’s in Scripture.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “But how do you know whether David was only talking about himself and not everyone else? He did say, ‘If I ascend,’ not ‘If people ascend.’”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “It almost sounds as if you don’t want it to be true.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> <i>[interacting with another healed person]</i> “So with the passage from David, I’m just trying to understand.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “The trying IS the thing. Meditate on it for a few days and come back to me. You’re always writing things down. Try writing it down several times. Something about writing it down goes a long way.” (See <b>Questions for Discussion &amp; Practice, 2. Memorizing Scripture</b>, p. 25)</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “That’s what I say too.”</p>	<p><i>Now there is in the Holy Scriptures one book that differs from all other books of the Bible in that it contains only prayers. That book is the Psalms. At first it is something very astonishing that there is a prayerbook in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures are, to be sure, God’s Word to us. <b>But prayers are human words. How then do they come to be in the Bible? Let us make no mistake: the Bible is God’s Word, even in the Psalms. Then are the prayers to God really God’s own Word? That seems difficult for us to understand. We grasp it only when we consider that we can learn true prayer only from Jesus Christ, and that it is, therefore, the word of the Son of God, who lives with us human beings, to God the Father who lives in eternity. Jesus Christ has brought before God every need, every joy, every thanksgiving, and every hope of humankind. In Jesus’ mouth the human word becomes God’s Word. When we pray along with the prayer of Christ, God’s Word becomes again a human word.</b> Thus all prayers of the Bible are such prayers, which we pray together with Jesus Christ, prayers in which Christ includes us, and through which Christ brings us before the face of God. Otherwise there are no true prayers, for only in and with Jesus Christ can we truly pray. (from <i>The Prayerbook of the Bible: Introduction to the Psalms</i>).</i></p> <p><u>This seems to be the direction Philip is nudging Matthew:</u> an understanding... an awareness... an awakening to the closeness of God, God’s desire to know us and to be known by us, God’s revealing Spirit in Scripture and prayer, and the unity of it all.</p> <p>***</p> <p><b>Summary:</b> As Matthew and Philip talk and interact with people waiting to see or who have been healed by Jesus, they make their way back to their campsite, not far from where Jesus is healing. The disciples have been taking turns, it seems, with managing the crowds, and Philip indicates that it is Thaddeus’ and Little James’ turns. Conversation shifts among the disciples about their shifts, the number of people coming to see Jesus, how long this is going to last, and more—Matthew, of course, particularly tuned in to the details.</p> <p>Ramah* wonders if Matthew has gotten any ideas from Philip about where to start with learning Scripture, and Matthew reports to both Ramah</p>
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00:05:25-00:06:33		<p>and Mary Magdalene what he has received. He begins reciting the passage from Psalm 139.</p> <p><b>Summary:</b> The camera viewpoint moves on from Matthew and the women as they talk and Big James and his brother John enter the scene. James, it seems has a slight cut on his hand from an incident with gathering firewood, and the wound has been exacerbated, to James' irritation, with an interaction with someone who had come to Jesus for healing and was rushing the line. (The point seems to be to establish both the desperation of those coming to Jesus and the annoyances and burdens the disciples themselves bear in their ministry with Jesus.) Philip indicates that he bumped into the same fellow after Jesus had healed the man's wife after they had been waiting all night. Big James continues to give voice to his frustration: (00:05:47) "Almost a four-hour walk this morning, and we didn't even have a moment to settle in. I mean, it's great what He's doing, obviously, but I wish it would have happened tomorrow." (<i>Note this on-going theme of irritation, annoyance, and burden throughout the rest of the episode.</i>)</p> <p>Thomas wonders what it is that is happening, what it is they have become a part of. Big James expresses that he has no idea. A number of the disciples also express varying levels of frustration and concerns about the spreading word about Jesus, the fame, and the crowds that are coming. None of this, it seems, had entered their minds in the moment of responding to Jesus' call to follow.</p>
00:06:34-00:10:06	<p><u>John</u></p> <p>"I cannot remember a time I did not think about the Messiah at least once a week. My whole life I prayed and prayed that He would come during this time," <i>[growing more animated in his gesticulations]</i>, "And I just hoped that I would at least get to see Him. But to be close to Him, like this? A nobody like me, I..." <i>[pausing for a second]</i>, "What's not fun about that?"</p> <p><u>Big James</u></p> <p><i>[skeptically]</i> "You call today fun?"</p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Next, the conversation turns to the disciples' thoughts and memories of what they had been taught, expected, and had come to understand about the Messiah.</p>

	<p><u>Philip</u> “Maybe not fun, but good. But with this fame comes enemies. You will be hated, too.” (See <b>Note 4—With this fame comes enemies</b>, p. 5)</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “I’m used to that.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “Well, you were protected. And your enemies weren’t powerful.” (See <b>Note 5—Matthew’s Protection</b>, p. 5)</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “Speaking of enemies, if someone had told you growing up, that you would be a student of the Messiah... YOU... You would be close to Him and you will help Him in His mission, what would you have thought?” (See <b>Questions for Discussion and Practice, 3. The cost of following Jesus</b>, p. 26)</p> <p><u>Ramah*</u> “I would have said, ‘Sorry, I’m a girl, as my brother.’”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “Fair enough. But, really, Thomas?”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “Hmm?”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “What would have thought?”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “I would have thought, ‘I don’t have military training’. That’s still a problem, actually.”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “Exactly. When I was a child I used to think how amazing it would be to see Messiah kill all the Romans on my street.” <i>[John nods vociferously.]</i> “And I wanted to help Him. I trained every day with a wooden sword.”</p> <p><u>John</u> “Yes, and I have this scar...” <i>[showing his right elbow]</i> “...that proves he was pretty good.”</p>	<p>4. <b>Note 4—With this fame comes enemies.</b> We have heard a handful of references from Philip about his time with John the Baptist and the challenges of that, even to the point of having to be on the run from the enemies John the Baptist made with his antagonizing preaching. It’s hard to tell where we are in that timeline—we do know (and have seen in Season 1) that John the Baptist has been jailed a number of times.</p> <p>Matthew’s Gospel narrates John’s death—<b>Matthew 14:1-12:</b> <i>At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus,<sup>2</sup> and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him.”<sup>3</sup> For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife,<sup>4</sup> because John had been telling him, “It is not lawful for you to have her.”<sup>5</sup> Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet.<sup>6</sup> But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and she pleased Herod<sup>7</sup> so much that he promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask.<sup>8</sup> Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.”<sup>9</sup> The king was grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he commanded it to be given;<sup>10</sup> he sent and had John beheaded in the prison.<sup>11</sup> His head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who brought it to her mother.<sup>12</sup> His disciples came and took the body and buried him; then they went and told Jesus.</i></p> <p>If it happens to John the Baptist, the disciples are beginning to have some sense of the cost of following Jesus.</p> <p>5. <b>Note 5—Matthew’s Protection.</b> Remember, we have seen the relative security Matthew has enjoyed from the occupying Roman authorities in exchange for his talents and labor, even in the face of rejection from his Jewish family and community.</p>
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	<p><u>Ramah*</u> “I used to imagine that the Romans would break into our home, and I would be hiding under the bed with a knife. And just when they came to get me, Messiah would rescue me at the last moment.”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “I didn’t think we’d be spending our time healing—well, watching Him heal. And they’ll never stop. The people come the more they hear about it, and we’re just going to be doing this the next five years, and we’ll never get to the fighting part.”</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “Eager to bring out that wooden sword of yours, are you?”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> <i>[annoyed]</i> “Do you honestly not know what I’m talking about?”</p> <p><u>Mary Magdalene</u> “I guess I haven’t had any expectations...” <i>[chucking slightly]</i> “...that’s probably why it’s a little easier for me. I can remember as a little girl hearing about how someone would save us someday, but I don’t remember much about it.” <i>[turning to Thomas]</i> “Why is it you expect a warrior?”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “Zechariah. ‘For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle and the city will be captured. Then the Lord will go forth...” <i>[you might see Matthew writing in his tablet]</i> “...and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. On that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east...”</p>	
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	<p><u>Philip</u> <i>[interrupting]</i> “Yes, yes, yes, the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, and half of it will move, all this craziness, but we don’t even know when this is going to be, if it’s even in this lifetime.” (See <b>Note 6—Competing Expectations for Who the Messiah Will Be</b>, p. 7)</p> <p><u>John</u> “Here’s what I also do not understand. Isn’t this Messiah supposed to come at time when all is holy?” <i>[turning to Big James]</i> “That’s at least what you’ve been telling me.”</p> <p><u>Ramah*</u> “Where is that from?”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “Even a prophetic poem from the rabbis not so long ago. ‘And there shall be no unrighteousness in them on His day, for they shall all be holy and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.’ (See <b>Note 7—The Messiah’s Day and His People’s Righteousness</b>, p. 9)</p> <p><u>John</u> “I guess that’s why the Pharisees do not think He [Jesus] is the one, Mary. You have to help clean out the Red Quarter first” (See <b>Note 8—The Red Quarter</b>, p. 10) <i>[Most of the group chuckles]</i></p> <p><u>Mary Magdalene</u> “I don’t think He’s waiting for us to be holy. I think He’s here because we can’t be holy without Him.” (See <b>Note 9—Our “holiness”</b>, p. 10)</p> <p><u>Philip</u> “Whoa. That’s good. The Baptizer will want to use that.”</p>	<p>6. <b>Note 6—Competing Expectations for Who the Messiah Will Be.</b> This is an argument we first encountered way back in Season 1, Episode 3, “Jesus Loves the Little Children,” in one of Jesus’ conversations with the children of Capernaum who find his campsite.</p> <p>What will the Messiah look like? Thomas’ response to Big James question—that he doesn’t have any military training—as well as the rest of the disciples’ conversation betray their expectations of the Messiah as a conquering military hero.</p> <p>THIS is the rub regarding the identity of the Messiah TO THIS DAY and certainly in the Gospels regarding Jesus’ identity as Messiah.</p> <p>On the one hand, there are texts that seem to point to a Messiah whose identity would like that of a military leader, cut from the same fabric as King David, the greatest king in Israel’s history and the height of Israel’s glory, power, and wealth. See <b>Psalms 2</b>, as an example of such Scripture:</p> <p><i>Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?</i>  <sup>2</sup><i>The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,</i>  <sup>3</sup><i>“Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.”</i>  <sup>4</sup><i>The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.</i>  <sup>5</sup><i>He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,</i>  <sup>6</sup><i>“I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain.”</i></p> <p><u><i>7 I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, “You are my son; today I have become your father.</i></u>  <u><i>8 Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.</i></u>  <u><i>9 You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”</i></u>  <sup>10</sup><i>Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.</i>  <sup>11</sup><i>Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.</i>  <sup>12</sup><i>Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment.</i></p> <p><i>Blessed are all who take refuge in him.</i></p>
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Or again, the prophecy that Thomas and the rest of the disciples who know the Scriptures quote, from **Zechariah 14:1-4**:

*See, a day is coming for the Lord, when the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst. <sup>2</sup>For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped; half the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. <sup>3</sup>Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. <sup>4</sup>On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the mount shall withdraw northward and the other half southward.*

On the other hand, ***there is also Scripture that proclaims a coming Messiah who is the exact opposite.*** See **Isaiah 53:1-12**, called **“The Suffering Servant’s Song,”** as an example of such Scripture:

*Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*

<sup>2</sup>*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.*

*He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.*

<sup>3</sup>*He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.*

<sup>4</sup>*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.*

<sup>5</sup>*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

<sup>6</sup>*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

<sup>7</sup>*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

<sup>8</sup>*By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for*



		<p><i>the transgression of my people he was punished.</i></p> <p><sup>9</sup> <i>He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.</i></p> <p><sup>10</sup> <i>Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.</i></p> <p><sup>11</sup> <i>After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.</i></p> <p><sup>12</sup> <i>Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.</i></p> <p><b>For us as followers of Jesus, following Jesus' lead and the testimony of both the Gospels themselves as well as the apostle Paul and the rest of the New Testament, we can do no other but also fall on the side of the suffering Messiah.</b> Their testimony of Jesus' teaching, his ministry to poor and outcast, Jesus' own suffering, the cross itself and the proclamation of Christ's resurrection we believe to be the clearest window into the heart and mind of God and his chosen servant in Jesus.</p> <p>7. <b>Note 7—The Messiah's Day and His People's Righteousness.</b> This quote comes from an apocryphal book called the Psalms of Solomon—that is, it is a book that was used in teaching in Jewish synagogues, and thematically, it matches other parts of actual canonical Scripture, but since its origin and authenticity were in question, it never makes it into the Bible. This collection of religious poems was compiled in the two centuries prior to Jesus.</p> <p>Big James' quotation of this is an example of the belief held by some Jews (both then and now) that the Messiah would not come until everyone had become holy by their obedience to the Law of Moses. There was a sense that Jewish sinfulness—that is, their disobedience to the Law—was what was delaying the coming of the Messiah.</p> <p>8. <b>Note 8—The Red Quarter.</b> Remember Mary's imagined origin story: we first met her</p>
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and saw her encounter with Jesus in the Red Quarter—the place where “all ‘those people’ lived—in Capernaum.

9. **Note 9—Our “holiness.”** Mary Magdalene asserts that we have no holiness unto ourselves, only through Christ himself.

For example, at His last supper, according to John’s Gospel, Jesus says, “*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup>He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. <sup>9</sup>As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

*<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”*

**That is, we can do nothing—least of all effect our own “holiness” or**

**“righteousness” apart from Christ himself.**

Or, as Paul writes in his letter to the **Romans, 7:15-20, 24-25:** *”<sup>15</sup> I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> But in fact it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that the good does not dwell within me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do the good lies close at hand, but not the ability. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it but sin that dwells within me. ... <sup>24</sup> Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

*So then, with my mind I am enslaved to the law of God, but with my flesh I am enslaved to the law of sin.”*

Or again, in **Ephesians 2:1-10:** *“You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, doing the will of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else, <sup>4</sup> but God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not the result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them.”*

**Throughout, here is the sense that our holiness or righteousness—our “rightness” with God—comes not from our efforts but through Christ’s grace and the work of His Spirit in our lives.**

00:10:07-00:13:21		<p><b>Scene summary:</b> Just then, Little James enters from his shift on crowd control with Jesus, requesting Big James’ help. The crowd is growing impatient, “getting physical and bickering.” Little James indicates that he can’t help much in that department, and we might be led to believe it’s because of his physical size and stature. Big James heads for the crowd, and Little James goes over to a small folding table we might have noticed before. A game of some sort is there, and Little James and Thomas had been playing, with Philip filling in for Little James when he went to pull his shift. Annoyed, Little James notices he’s worse off than he already was when he left, and Philip admits it. Philip dismisses himself to the fire, while Little James and Thomas continue their game and conversation. Thomas fills Little James in on what everyone had been talking about. Their conversation turns to an apparent malady that Little James has—something that I don’t think we’ve seen or heard about in previous episodes.</p>
00:10:48-00:13:21	<p><u>Little James</u> “So, what was everyone talking about?”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “Eh, not much. Just prophecy, our growing fame, the Messiah healing disease instead of overthrowing the Romans, small topics like that.” <i>[chuckling]</i></p> <p><u>Little James</u> “Well I’m not sorry I missed it.” <i>[pausing for a second]</i> “I’m ready for this day to be over.”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> <i>[pointing to the crowd]</i> “What about out there? Anything happen in your short shift?”</p> <p><u>Little James</u> “No, it’s the same as all day.” <i>[pausing for a second]</i> “One thing that is annoying me, though, is these people, they are believing in Him, and praising Him, and don’t get me wrong, that’s great—but it’s because He’s healing them. The Samaritans.”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “Yeah. It was pretty much what He said. That’s all they needed.”</p> <p><u>Little James</u> <i>[obviously annoyed]</i> “I know. I just don’t know how many of them would believe if He wasn’t healing them.” (See <b>Note 10—Jesus’ Signs and Belief</b>, p. 12)</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “So I have to ask...”</p> <p><u>Little James</u> <i>[chuckling]</i> “I think I can guess.”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “I have two questions. Forgive me, but I speak plainly. What is your malady? Forgive me, I don’t</p>	<p>10. <b>Note 10—Jesus’ Signs and Belief.</b> Little James seems annoyed at the response of the crowd to Jesus’ healing. John’s Gospel notes a similar observation by Jesus after feeding the 5000. <b>John 6:22-27:</b> “<i>The next day the crowd that had stayed on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there. They also saw that Jesus had not gotten into the boat with his disciples but that his disciples had gone away alone.</i>”<sup>23</sup> <i>But some boats from Tiberias came near the place where they had eaten the bread after the Lord had given thanks.</i>”<sup>24</sup> <i>So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his</i></p>

<p>00:13:22-00:34:48</p>	<p>mean to offend.” (See <b>Note 11—Little James’ Malady</b>, p. 13)</p> <p><b>Little James</b> “It’s fine. It’s a form of paralysis, it’s caused problems since birth.” <i>[Mary Magdalene interrupts with a call for the evening meal.]</i></p> <p><b>Thomas</b> “So then why...I mean... why hasn’t he healed you? How do you watch all these healing today? Does it bother you?”</p> <p><b>Little James</b> <i>[looking heavenward in thought]</i> “Whew! Fair questions. Um... I’m still trying to figure out how I feel about all of this. I mean, I suppose one big thing is that I haven’t asked.” (See <b>Note 12—I haven’t asked</b>, p. 13)</p> <p><b>Thomas</b> “Why not?”</p> <p><b>Little James</b> <i>[thinking for a moment]</i> “I don’t know.” <i>[continuing to stare off thoughtfully]</i></p> <p><b>Thomas</b> “If I had your...struggle, and I was watching what was happening today, I’d demand it.”</p> <p><b>Little James</b> “I don’t know if I should. It just doesn’t feel right, you know, and I suppose I’ve just been grateful that He called me to follow Him in spite of it, but...it’s never come up, not even once. I’m just afraid that if I mention it to Him... <i>[pausing, haltingly]</i>...it will make Him change His mind about me, or something.”</p> <p><b>Thomas</b> <i>[laughing]</i> “I’m pretty sure He knows your situation. It’s not like if you point it out, He’d be surprised.” <i>[grinning widely]</i></p> <p><b>Little James</b> “That’s true.” (See <b>Questions for Discussion and Practice, 4. Why some are healed and others aren’t, especially when I pray</b>, p. 27)</p>	<p><i>disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus.</i></p> <p><i><sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me not because you saw signs but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup>Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal.”</i></p> <p>11. <b>Note 11—Little James’ Malady*</b> If this has been implied at some point previously, I missed it. We learn, however, that Little James has some sort of occasional paralysis. There is no mention of this in Scripture and actually nothing else of Little James (“James, son of Alphaeus”) is known from the Bible, other than his name appearing in the lists of the disciples: <b>Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, Luke 6:13-16, and Acts 1:13-16.</b></p> <p>12. <b>Note 12—I haven’t asked.</b> See <b>Matthew 7:7-11:</b> <i>Jesus said, ““Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. <sup>8</sup>For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>9</sup>Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for bread, would give a stone? <sup>10</sup>Or if the child asked for a fish, would give a snake? <sup>11</sup>If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”</i></p> <p><b>Scene summary:</b> Mary the Mother of Jesus arrives to join the entourage, and all excitedly gather to greet her. Mother Mary demonstrates familiarity with Philip and his discipleship under</p>
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		<p>John the Baptist. Matthew is introduced to Mother Mary, since he wasn't with them yet when we last saw Mary with Jesus and the disciples at the wedding celebration in Cana, Galilee. She notes his fine clothing, asking what he does, much to Matthew's discomfort. Mary Magdalene notes the discomfort and interrupts, simply noting that Matthew is a new student whom Jesus called.</p> <p>The disciples continue to fill Mother Mary in with the proceedings of the day, including their walk from Caesarea Philippi and that Jesus has been healing nonstop ever since their arrival. "He has always been a worker," Mary notes, "Het gets that from his father, both of them, I suppose."</p> <p>Mother Mary notes the presence of the evening meal and the exhaustion of the disciples and indicates she's there to help. She busies herself with those tasks while the disciples continue to putz around the campsite.</p> <p>After nightfall, we see Simon and Andrew have rejoined the others. They wash up, Simon seems obviously worn out.</p> <p>The scene shifts to the campfire, where the evening meal is being served by Mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Ramah*. Simon and Andrew wearily join the group. Still no sign of Jesus, Thaddeus, Little James, and Philip are apparently with Jesus and not there by the fire.</p> <p>After the meal is over, the group begins to chat, Simon indicating he needs a mental break. He asks Andrew to do one of his "meaningless question games." Andrew begins by asking the question: "What would you do for unlimited money? Or what would you give up to have all the money you could ever want, for the rest of your life?" The group banters to figure out the parameters of the question and how to answer. Mother Mary notes she's never had much money and been happy, and Thomas responds with speculation about their financial prospects so long as they are following Jesus. Mary replies, knowing that Thomas had some means in his working life and wonders if he's happier now or then? "Ask Matthew," is John's reply. Andrew looks INTENTLY at John, sensing the light conversation is about to take a turn. There is a brief exchange about Matthew's previous status of wealth and always the implication of those ill-gotten gains, or at least the sense of treachery always associated with tax collectors. Big James seems to diffuse the growing tensions but insisting that personal money is impolite conversation. Undeterred, Andrew brings up his thoughts about his original question, though his focus really seems to be</p>
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<p>00:19:23-00:22:18</p>	<p><u>Mother Mary</u> “Well...nothing about it was easy. I can tell you that.” <i>[They all look intently at her.]</i> “It wasn’t in my hometown, my mother wasn’t there, we had no midwife. I don’t know if I’m ready to give all the details, maybe some other time. But I do remember this...When Joseph handed Him to me, it was like nothing I had expected. It was like everything I’d heard about having a baby, but I thought this would be completely different.”</p> <p><u>Simon</u> “What do you mean?”</p> <p><u>Mother Mary</u> “I had to clean Him off. He was covered in, um...” <i>[pausing, embarrassed]</i> “...I will be polite; He needed to be cleaned. And He was cold, and He was crying. And... He needed my help...MY help...a teenager from Nazareth. It actually made me think for just one moment, ‘Is this really the Son of God?’” <i>[pausing thoughtfully]</i> “And Joseph later told me he briefly thought the same thing. But we knew He was.” (See <b>Note 13—But we knew He was</b>, p. 16) “I don’t know what I expected...but He was crying, and He needed me. And I wondered how long that would last.” (See <b>Note 14—He was crying and He needed me</b>, p. 17) “He doesn’t need me anymore...not since we taught Him how to walk and eat. He hasn’t needed me for a long time, I suppose. And after Joseph passed—may he</p>	<p>more about his discipleship and feelings of inadequacy.</p> <p>This becomes an entrée into a different topic than money, one that Ramah* resonates with, as well as Mother Mary, who reflects on Jesus’ birth, eliciting an enthusiastic response from the group when she assumes they might be uninterested in such things. As she speaks, she begins by focusing on the difficulty of the whole situation, similarly to how some of the disciples have expressed their struggles with the realization of the difficulty of following Jesus. As her meditation concludes, she wonders about Jesus and his healing in the moment. Simon indicates that it’s difficult to tell how long Jesus will be, that the line was dying down, and that Jesus won’t turn anyone away. Mary excuses herself to check on Him.</p> <p>After Mary has left, the rest of the group stares pensively into the fire until Thomas breaks the silence reflecting on Jesus’ loss of his father Joseph and Thomas has himself lost his father. The conversation turns to who among them have lost a parent. Mary Magdalene reflects on her experience with the death of her parents—remember way back to the very first episode, we saw Mary as a little girl and the death of her father in a flashback. (See <b>Questions for Discussion and Practice, 5. Life events that leave us angry or hurt</b>, p. 27).</p> <p>The conversation shifts again, this time to comparative “Jewish competency” of most of the rest of the disciples compared to Mary Magdalene, Ramah*, and Matthew. The talk bounces around to the disciples’ perceived “expertise” or feelings of inadequacies. (Thaddeus returns from his shift with Jesus, indicating the Jesus, Little James, and Philip have the situation under control.) The conversation continues about their experience and learnedness (or not) after they “graduated” out of Hebrew school.</p> <p>Now they begin to talk about some of their “youthful transgressions” of Jewish Law and how exhausting, at times, being Jewish can be. (See <b>the conversation dialog on p. 17.</b>) (This might be an opportunity to refer to <b>Questions for Discussion and Practice, 1. The cost of following Jesus</b>, p. 26) They speak of being God’s “chosen people” and yet question why the Roman occupation has been allowed and for such a long time. (See <b>the conversation dialog on p. 21.</b>)</p> <p>As the wind blows, the fire crackles, and an owl hoots, Simon’s gaze falls on Matthew, who has been conspicuously quiet throughout their time around the campfire. (See <b>the conversation</b></p>
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	<p>rest in peace—He grew up even quicker.” (See <b>Note 15—After Joseph passed...</b>, p. 17) “And I wish I could say that made me happy. Of course, as a Jew, I’m excited to see everything He does for our people, and I’m proud of Him. But...as a mom... <i>[sighs]</i> ...it makes me a little sad sometimes.” <i>[She pauses pensively as all eyes are on her.]</i> “So it’s good to be with all of you for a bit, I can find ways to help.”</p> <p><u>Ramah*</u> <i>[gently placing her hand on Mary’s knee]</i> “We’ll take it.”</p>	<p><b>dialog on p. 21)</b> Simon antagonizes Matthew, once again returning to the ongoing theme of Matthew’s former occupation as a tax collector for the Romans. Thomas joins in with Simon’s antagonism and is shut down by Big James as “the new guy.” A heated argument breaks out, with the appearance of potential fisticuffs between the brothers Big James and John and the brothers Simon and Andrew. Little James and Mary, who have just returned from being with Jesus, look shocked and concerned. Just at that moment, Jesus returns, bedraggled and worn out from an entire day of ministry. All look at each other, shocked at the discord and concerned for Jesus’ well-being. Unaware—or seemingly unaware—of what has just transpired among his students, Jesus greets them with a wave, a weary “Good night,” and staggers off to his tent. Mother Mary rushes over to join him to minister and comfort him. The disciples are silent. Mary gently washes Jesus’ feet and hands. He collapses into bed and prays.</p> <p>13. <b>Note 13—But we knew He was.</b> Remember, according to both Luke and Matthew, both Mary and Joseph were made aware of their mission.</p> <p><b>Luke 1:26-38:</b> <i>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.” <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” <sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup> Then</i></p>
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<p>00:26:39-00:27:08</p>	<p><u>Thomas</u>                    “One time when my parents were asleep, I had meat with cheese, just to see what I was missing.” [turning to Andrew] “Have you ever done that?”</p> <p><u>Andrew</u>                    “No, I’d feel too guilty.”</p> <p><u>Simon</u>                      “You feel guilty about everything. Right after you</p>	<p>Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.</p> <p>So, yes, in spite of the contemporary Christmas song, Mary DID know.</p> <p><b>Matthew 1:18-25:</b> <i>Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah]: <sup>23</sup>“Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” <sup>24</sup>When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife <sup>25</sup>but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.</i></p> <p>14. <b>Note 14—He was crying and He needed me.</b> I suspect this is a theme we’ll see again. And not just in this episode.</p> <p>15. <b>Note 15—After Joseph passed...</b> After Luke’s and Matthew’s accounts of Joseph’s role in their birth narratives and Luke’s account of Jesus being presented in the Temple for circumcision and the boy Jesus teaching in the Temple (Luke 2:22-52), Joseph disappears. This has led some scholars to wonder if Joseph died by the time Jesus begins His mission, though there is no mention whatsoever of Joseph’s death.</p>
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	<p>were born, you said sorry to Eema [the Hebrew familiar for “mom”] for causing her pain.” <i>[all chuckle]</i></p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “Forget the guilt, I was sick for days. I haven’t violated a single food rule since.”</p> <p><u>Thaddeus</u> <i>[sheepishly]</i> “I tried pork once.”</p> <p><u>Ramah*</u> “How?”</p> <p><u>Thaddeus</u> “We were travelling and we were in a Gentile marketplace, and I just grabbed a piece.”</p> <p><u>Andrew</u> <i>[skeptically]</i> “Really!”</p> <p><u>Thaddeus</u> “Ah, it was marvelous.” <i>[laughing]</i> (See <b>Note 16—Jewish food rules</b>, p. 18)</p>	<p><b>16. Note 16—Jewish food rules.</b> According to Jewish Law, there are a variety of purity laws with regard to diet, not so much for “the diet” itself but more so as a “separateness”—as God’s people, we’re different—and obedience as a sign of faithfulness. The more obedient one is to the Law, the more faithful one is, and the more blessing one would earn from God.</p> <p><b>Exodus 23:19:</b> “<i>You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk.</i>”</p> <p>To this day, this Law is often interpreted as a prohibition against mixing “all meat and dairy.”</p> <p><b>Leviticus 11:1-12:</b> “<i>The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to the Israelites:</i></p> <p><i>“From among all the land animals, these are the creatures that you may eat. <sup>3</sup>Any animal that has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed and chews the cud—such you may eat. <sup>4</sup>But among those that chew the cud or have divided hoofs, you shall not eat the following: the camel, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. <sup>5</sup>The rock badger, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. <sup>6</sup>The hare, for even though it chews the cud, it does not have divided hoofs; it is unclean for you. <sup>7</sup>The pig, for even though it has divided hoofs and is cleft-footed, it does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. <sup>8</sup>Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean for you.</i></p> <p><sup>9</sup>“<i>These you may eat, of all that are in the waters. Everything in the waters that has fins and scales, whether in the seas or in the streams—such you may eat. <sup>10</sup>But anything in the seas or the streams that does not have fins and scales, of the swarming creatures in the waters and among all the other living creatures that are in the waters—they are detestable to you, <sup>11</sup>and detestable they shall remain. Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall regard as detestable. <sup>12</sup>Everything in the waters that does not have fins and scales is detestable to you.</i>”</p> <p><b>Jesus—under the auspices of the two greatest commandments being to “love the Lord your God with all that you are and to love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-40), sets aside such prohibitions:</b></p>
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*“Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, <sup>2</sup>“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands before they eat.” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup>For God said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever speaks evil of father or mother must surely die.’ <sup>5</sup>But you say that whoever tells father or mother, ‘Whatever support you might have had from me is given to God,’ then that person need not honor the father. <sup>6</sup>So, for the sake of your tradition, you nullify the word of God. <sup>7</sup>You hypocrites! Isaiah prophesied rightly about you when he said:*

*<sup>8</sup> ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; <sup>9</sup>in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’ ”*

*<sup>10</sup> Then he called the crowd to him and said to them, “Listen and understand: <sup>11</sup>it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.” <sup>12</sup>Then the disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” <sup>13</sup>He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. <sup>14</sup>Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” <sup>15</sup>But Peter said to him, “Explain this parable to us.” <sup>16</sup>Then he said, “Are you also still without understanding? <sup>17</sup>Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach and goes out into the sewer? <sup>18</sup>But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. <sup>20</sup>These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.” (Matthew 15:1-20)*

Likewise, Paul sets aside such regulations, as well, UNLESS breaking that Jewish Law (or any other law, rule, or regulation, for that matter) causes another outrage—because it is THEN that we are not loving our neighbors as ourselves: [The apostle Paul writes,] *Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. <sup>2</sup>Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary*

knowledge,<sup>3</sup> but anyone who loves God is known by him.

<sup>4</sup>Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists” and that “there is no God but one.”<sup>5</sup> Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—<sup>6</sup> yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

<sup>7</sup>It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.<sup>8</sup> “Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat and no better off if we do.<sup>9</sup> But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.<sup>10</sup> For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols?<sup>11</sup> So by your knowledge the weak brother or sister for whom Christ died is destroyed.<sup>12</sup> But when you thus sin against brothers and sisters and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never again eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.” (1

**Corinthians 8:1-13)**

00:28:05-00:28:58	<p><u>Thomas</u> “I’ve grown to love being Jewish, and I’ve grown to love following the Law, but it can be exhausting.”</p> <p><u>John</u> “Following the Law or being Jewish?”</p> <p><u>Andrew</u> “Both.”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> “It always has been. Even before the [Roman] occupation.”</p> <p><u>Mary Magdalene</u> “Yes, but aren’t we used to it by now? Hasn’t it made us stronger?”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “I don’t get it if I’m honest. I don’t know why God has allowed the occupation.”  <i>[All seem to grow pensive at his question]</i> “I’ll have to ask Him more about that...why this has been allowed for so long. It’s hard to feel like ‘the chosen people.’” (See <b>Note 17—It’s hard to feel like the chosen people</b>, p. 21)</p> <p>[Perhaps an opportunity to revisit <b>Questions for Discussion and Practice, 4. Why some are healed and others aren’t, especially when I pray?</b>, p. 27)</p> <p><u>Simon</u> “I’ve been there.”</p> <p><u>Ramah*</u> “But it’s all worth it now, yes? The wait is over.”</p>	<p>17. <b>Note 17—It’s hard to feel like the chosen people.</b> Or as Tevya from <i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> observes, “I know, I know. We are your chosen people. But, once in a while, can’t You choose someone else?”</p>
00:29:07-00:31:54	<p><u>Simon</u> <i>[To Matthew]</i> “What about you?”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> <i>[uncomfortably]</i> “What do you mean?”</p> <p><u>Simon</u> <i>[accusingly, dripping with sarcasm]</i> “Has it been difficult for you all this time? The occupation, following Jewish Law?”</p>	

	<p><u>Matthew</u> “My life has not been easy.” [Remember how we saw the heartbreaking relationship between Matthew and his family, with his only true companions being his dog and his Roman body guard, Gaius*.] <i>[Mary Magdalene glances around the circle uncomfortably.]</i></p> <p><u>Simon</u> <i>[even more sarcastically]</i> “Oh it hasn’t? What was more painful for you: escaping Roman persecution by working for them, or escaping your guilt with all the money? And now you’re catching upon Torah...” <i>[Thomas looks intently at Matthew]</i> “...and wanting to follow the Law? Why now, all of a sudden? Why not all the other times you had the chance?”</p> <p><u>John</u> <i>[trying to defuse Simon’s growing antagonism]</i> “Simon...”</p> <p><u>Simon</u> “No, no, John, I want to know. Mary had horrible trauma, she didn’t choose all that happened to her. What’s your excuse?”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “What do you want me to say? I don’t know what you want from me?”</p> <p><u>Andrew</u> <i>[bitingly]</i> “An apology.”</p> <p><u>Matthew</u> “What?”</p> <p><u>Andrew</u> <i>[looking angrily at Matthew]</i> “Simon’s not wrong. He could be more...<i>[turning to look at Simon]</i> delicate about it, but...” <i>[Mother Mary and Little James begin to return to the circle]</i> “...you did choose to work for them...” <i>[returning his gaze to Matthew]</i> “...and you made my life even</p>	
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	<p>harder than it already was, and you haven't apologized."</p> <p><i>[Matthew begins, fumbling for words.]</i></p> <p><u>Simon</u> <i>[interrupting Matthew]</i> "No, no, don't say it. I don't want you to apologize, it doesn't matter. <i>[angrily, growing in vigor]</i> What will hearing him say 'sorry' do? I won't forgive it anyway."</p> <p><u>John</u> <i>[angrily to Simon]</i> "What keeps putting you in authority? Who are you to forgive or not to forgive?" (See <b>Note 18—Forgiveness</b>, p. 23)</p> <p><u>Simon</u> "What? You're on his side?"</p> <p><u>John</u> "No! Of course not! But you've had your problems too! What about apologizing for what you almost did to us <i>[gesturing toward his brother Big James]</i> with the Romans!?"</p> <p><u>Simon</u> "I didn't go through with it! I was trying to save my family's life, and I love you, John, but that's not something you have to worry about when Zeb and Salome [Big James' and John's parents] are looking out for you." <i>[returning his ire toward Matthew]</i> "But you put me in a desperate position where I did thing I would never have done otherwise, and I've repented for them. And John and James, I am sorry, but I didn't go through with it!" <i>[Rising to stand]</i></p> <p><u>Thomas</u> <i>[to Matthew, accusingly]</i> "What IS your excuse? I was a successful</p>	<p>18. <b>Note 18—Forgiveness.</b> It seems Simon has much yet to learn. As do we all.</p> <p><b>Matthew 6:9-14:</b> <i>Jesus said, "Pray, then, in this way:</i></p> <p><i>Our Father in heaven,</i>  <i>may your name be revered as holy.</i>  <sup>10</sup> <i>May your kingdom come.</i>  <i>May your will be done</i>  <i>on earth as it is in heaven.</i>  <sup>11</sup> <i>Give us today our daily bread.</i>  <sup>12</sup> <i>And forgive us our debts,</i>  <i>as we also have forgiven our debtors.</i>  <sup>13</sup> <i>And do not bring us to the time of trial,</i>  <i>but rescue us from the evil one.</i></p> <p><sup>14</sup> <i>"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, <sup>15</sup> but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.</i></p> <p><b>Matthew 18:15-35:</b> <sup>15</sup> <i>"If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If you are listened to, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup> But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup> If that person refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church, and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup> Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup> Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."</i></p> <p><sup>21</sup> <i>Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" <sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.</i></p> <p><sup>23</sup> <i>"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. <sup>24</sup> When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him, <sup>25</sup> and, as he could not pay, the lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions and payment to be made. <sup>26</sup> So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' <sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him,</i></p>
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	<p>businessman, and yet I was always behind.”</p> <p><u>John</u> <i>[to Thomas, seemingly defending Matthew]</i> “He wasn’t your tax collector.”</p> <p><u>Thomas</u> “Quit defending him; I want an answer!”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> <i>[turning on Thomas]</i> “Hey! You’re new!” <i>[Little James and Mother Mary look on, concerned for the direction this is going.]</i></p> <p><u>Simon</u> <i>[looking down, menacingly at Matthew]</i> “Do you even know what it’s like to be Jewish? To suffer for centuries and centuries because of it, but to still commit to it? To protect our heritage, even though it never stops being painful? Because the one comfort we have is to know that we’re doing it together, that we’re all suffering together. But if we just wait a little longer, if we hold tight just a little more, we’ll have rescue because we’re chosen, all of us!” <i>[growing in anger and bile]</i> “And you betrayed that, and you spit on it! I CAN’T FORGIVE IT! I WON’T FORGIVE IT!!”</p> <p><u>Big James</u> <i>[rising to meet Simon]</i> “All right! You’ve said what you needed to say!” <i>[calmly]</i> “Sit down, Simon.”</p> <p><u>Andrew</u> <i>[rising to meet Big James’ challenge and support Simon]</i> “You sit down first!” <i>[Now John rises in support of his brother Big James, and the quartet eye each other across the fire circle.]</i></p>	<p><i>the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. <sup>28</sup> But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him by the throat he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ <sup>29</sup> Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ <sup>30</sup> But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. <sup>32</sup> Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. <sup>33</sup> Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ <sup>34</sup> And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. <sup>35</sup> So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”</i></p> <p><b>(See Questions for Discussion and Practice, 6. Forgiveness, p. 27)</b></p>
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## **Questions for Discussion or Practice:**

1. **Where to begin**—In beginning to learn the Scriptures, Philip suggests to Matthew that he begin with even just one verse of a Psalm, Psalm 139:8, “*If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, [the place of the dead] you are there.*” (NRSV)

If you were to begin to dive deeper into the Bible, where would YOU start?

The answer to that question might depend on what you’re looking for. For example, are you wanting to grow more familiar with the broad story of the Old Testament? Are you wanting to grow more knowledgeable of the story of Jesus? Are you wanting to know more (and *to be known more*) of the character of God?

Where do you want to start?

2. **Memorizing Scripture**—Try to memorize a piece of a Psalm this week that reminds you of God’s presence with you at all times, all places, and all situations. Here are some suggestions, or you can choose your own:

Psalm 139:7-8

Psalm 46:10-11

Psalm 106:1

Psalm 3:5

Psalm 51:1-3

Psalm 109:26

Psalm 8:3-4

Psalm 51:10-12

Psalm 116:1-2

Psalm 19:14

Psalm 54:1-2

Psalm 117:1-2

Psalm 24:1

Psalm 55:16-17

Psalm 119:49-50

Psalm 27:1

Psalm 61:1-3

Psalm 119:105

Psalm 27:5

Psalm 62:1-2

Psalm 121:1-2

Psalm 28:7

Psalm 66:19-20

Psalm 121:5-6

Psalm 30:11-12

Psalm 73:26

Psalm 121:7-8

Psalm 31:7-8

Psalm 84:12

Psalm 124:6-7

Psalm 32:7

Psalm 86:6-7

Psalm 124:8

Psalm 34:6

Psalm 90:1-2

Psalm 130:1-2

Psalm 36:5-6

Psalm 91:1-2

Psalm 136:1

Psalm 37:23-24

Psalm 96:1-2

Psalm 141:8

Psalm 40:1-3

Psalm 100:5

Psalm 146:1-2

Psalm 42:1

Psalm 103:1-5

Psalm 146:8-9

Psalm 46:1-3

Psalm 103:13-14

Psalm 147:10-11

3. **The cost of following Jesus**—We have begun to see over the last couple of episodes the challenges, burdens, and annoyances that come with following Jesus, things these men and women could not fathom and did not expect in following Jesus. In 1937, after he and other like-minded Christians were forced underground when Adolf Hitler became Germany’s chancellor in 1933, pastor, theologian, teacher, and writer Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a book entitled *The Cost of Discipleship* in which he wrote: *“The cross is laid on every Christian. The first Christ-suffering which every man must experience is the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death—we give over our lives to death. Thus it begins; the cross is not the terrible end to an otherwise god-fearing and happy life, but it meets us at the beginning of our communion with Christ. When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. . . .When all is said and done, the life of faith is nothing if not an unending struggle of the spirit with every available weapon against the flesh. . . .If there is no element of asceticism [renunciation of the world] in our lives, if we give free rein to the desires of the flesh (taking care of course to keep within the limits of what seems permissible to the world), we shall find it hard to train for the service of Christ. When the flesh is satisfied it is hard to pray with cheerfulness or to devote oneself to a life of service which calls for much self-renunciation.”*

We might have detected at various times in the world around us or perhaps even in our own lives, this cost or struggle that comes with being a follower of Jesus—not like the petty whininess we might hear in the never-ending “culture wars” in which some Christians believe we are engaged when they are triggered by folks who say “Happy Holidays” instead of “Merry Christmas” and such. Christians in North America may THINK they are being persecuted for their beliefs, but really, these annoyances we might encounter through our encounters with people who do not share our beliefs, values, and convictions are nothing compared to what each of Jesus’ disciples in *The Chosen* will encounter or what the Persecuted Church has and is facing in the world—imprisonment, impoverishment, or death.

More like the reaction we might have, the annoyance, irritation, even downright anger when we read or hear in Scripture or from the Church, that there are thresholds, even demands and expectations for being a follower of Jesus—things like the time and energy to worship or pray or study/learn the Bible or to give, all of which call us away from the time, energy, and resources we might otherwise choose to use for ourselves. For example, when we’re in worship, we can’t be at the lake, or when we give of our money, that’s money that can’t be applied to something we want.

Or perhaps, the embarrassment, reticence, or even shame we might feel in certain aspects of our lives among others who are not followers of Jesus when we detect an opportunity to talk about our faith or even share it. For example, someone might say or imply, “You actually believe that stuff?” or “You’re a member of a church?!”

What are some things you have encountered or experienced or noticed in your life that are burdens, the cost of following Jesus?

How have you responded to those costs? On-going struggle? Submission to the world? Rejection of those things that seek to draw your discipleship away from Jesus?

4. **Why some are healed and others aren't, especially when I pray?**—Little James and Thomas engage in conversation over Jesus' healings of the crowds but not healing Little James of the occasional paralysis with which he is occasionally plagued. (I don't think we've seen or heard anything of this?)

Or a different question that's perhaps the same question: Why does God allow bad things to happen? Why to some but not others? Or why more for some and less for others?

Any thoughts?

5. **Life events that leave us angry or hurt.** In the after-dinner campfire scene, after Mother Mary's reflection on her motherhood, the conversation turns the loss of a parent. Mary Magdalene reflects on her anger after the death of her father, and that she "left everything...I tried to stop acting like a Jew, I tried to stop being myself. And then later, as some of the people of our town, including some of you, knew about, worse things happened." (Remember there was a flashback in Season 1 of a violent, sexual encounter—at least that seemed to be the implication—with a Roman soldier.)

Have you ever experienced a loss like that which turned your world upside down? Or do you know anyone who has?

Reflections? Meaning for you?

6. **Forgiveness.** Talk about a time when you were in a position to offer forgiveness. Easy? Difficult?

Talk about a time when you were in a position of asking for forgiveness. Same questions—easy to ask for? Easy to receive? Difficult?

Are you inclined quickly to forgive? Why or why not?