



The  
**CHOSEN**

An Interactive  
Bible Study

Season 4

God's Goodness for the **Chosen**

Amanda Jenkins, Dallas Jenkins, & Douglas S. Huffman



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*transforming lives together*

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“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

1 Peter 1:3–5

## Lesson 1

Death is eclipsed by

LIFE

*EXT. CITRUS GROVE*

*(Elizabeth hurriedly leads Mary to a small citrus grove nearby. The pair sit, clasping hands, Elizabeth breathless. Young Mary is cooperative but bewildered. Elizabeth closes her eyes and bursts—)*

ELIZABETH: Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

YOUNG MARY *(looking again at Elizabeth's bump)*: Wait. How did you know? Ah, I suppose nothing should surprise me anymore.

ELIZABETH *(Elizabeth is overwhelmed, her words coming faster than she can think)*: Something better than that is happening. So humbling. Why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

YOUNG MARY: Did a messenger tell you about me?

ELIZABETH: When I heard your voice, just the sound of your greeting, my baby leaped for joy. And blessed are you who believed there would be a fulfillment from what was spoken to you from Adonai.

YOUNG MARY: So a messenger did tell you—

ELIZABETH: The messenger came to my husband. Zechariah said, “I don’t believe it.”

YOUNG MARY *(putting her hand on Elizabeth's)*: May we just slow down a moment? You’re not in a condition to be losing your breath *(they breathe together)*. When my

messenger told me about your news, I was so happy, knowing how long you'd suffered ...

I want to hear all about it!

ELIZABETH (*chuckling*): The reason Zechariah could not speak with you is that he did not believe the message from God about me.

YOUNG MARY: I wasn't sure at first, either.

ELIZABETH: I feel bad he has to go through this, but I must admit sometimes ... (*whispering—*) I don't mind the quiet. But he wrote down for me what was spoken, and I memorized every word: that his name will be John.

YOUNG MARY: Not Zechariah? Why John?

ELIZABETH: Well, perhaps he will not be a priest like his father. A different path for God. For Zech was also told John will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. To prepare the way for ... (*she nods at Mary's bump and puts her hand to her own—*) Oh! There he goes again! Feel it!

YOUNG MARY (*laughing with delight*): Yes!

ELIZABETH (*overwhelmed*): It's like he can't wait to get started.

## Good News, Bad News

John the Baptist was sent to proclaim the coming Messiah. He was the forerunner

(Matt. 3:1–12), preparer of the way (Isa. 40:3), and the one who called people to repentance in order to prepare their hearts for the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (Mark 1:4; John 1:29–30).

Jesus and the life He offers were coming into the world, and John was the herald of that good news. But, as is sometimes the case, bad news comes along with the good, because in order for our sins to be forgiven, we have to first acknowledge them and repent. In

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**Herald:**  
an official messenger bringing news; a person or thing viewed as a sign that something is about to happen.

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**Repent:**  
to feel and express sincere regret or remorse about sin.

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order for us to follow, we have to abandon the things that offend God. In order to experience the Lord's abundant provision, we have to accept our own pathetic lack. And in order to be "born again to a living hope," we first have to die.

## Your Turn

1. Following Jesus requires that we turn away from sin, surrender our future plans, and trust Him to take care of us—and all that on a daily basis. In what ways do you imagine that was hard for John the Baptist's elderly mother? For Jesus's teenage mother? In what ways are those things hard for you?

## For Bible Nerds (like us) Who Want to Know

In the Gospel of John, the "Lamb of God" moniker that John the Baptist used for Jesus has a rich history from the Old Testament sacrifice system. In particular, it references the Jewish festival called Passover, which is a

remembrance of God's rescuing of the Hebrew people out of slavery to Egypt (called the "Exodus").

In that event, God commanded His people to sacrifice a lamb and smear its blood on their doorframes so God's judgment on Egypt would "pass over" those who demonstrated their allegiance to God (Ex. 12:1–14). In obedience to God's command that they remember His saving work in the Exodus, the Jews continued the annual celebration of Passover with the sacrifice of a lamb.

John the Baptist understood that the symbolism of the Exodus and Passover was coming to its culminating goal, so he identified Jesus as God's provision of a "lamb" who would be sacrificed to save His people from enslavement to sin.

It is no accident that Jesus's death occurred during the Passover festival (see John 18–19). And looking ahead, Jesus is also often referred to as "the Lamb" in the book of Revelation (a book also authored by the apostle John).

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Gospel:  
the good news  
of Jesus Christ.

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“[John’s followers] came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.’ To this John replied, ‘A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, “I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.” The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.’”  
John 3:26–30  
(NIV)

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## Survival Instinct

“And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, [Jesus] said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?’”

Mark 8:34–36

Human beings are hardwired to self-protect. Add to that our twenty-first-century Western culture, which constantly (and almost exclusively) glorifies self-focus and self-gratification, and you end up with large swaths of the population actually opposed to God—because you can’t put God first *and yourself first* at the same time. It’s just not possible.

Indeed, we hear “me” messaging on a regular basis. Exhortations to grow in self-care, self-help, self-worth, self-love. To be proud of being self-made, self-taught, self-assured, self-determined. To pursue spiritual goals like being self-affirmed and self-actualized. (Even our phones, which we use for self-everything, have “I” right in their names!)

In other words, we’re strongly encouraged to be self-obsessed.

But while we’re busy hyper-focusing on ourselves (and feeling wholly unsatisfied), Jesus offers an alternative: *die to yourself*—which is quite a departure from what we’re used to. But those of us who follow Jesus must reject what the world teaches. We have to surrender control and obey God’s Word instead. And in so doing, we render ourselves dead to the “all-powerful” self and alive to Jesus, giving Him free rein to do what He wills in our lives.

That’s what it means to follow. We give up our lives like Jesus gave up His—and John the Baptist understood the assignment. God tasked him with preparing the way for the Savior of the world. In fact, it’s appropriate to think of him as the last of the Old Testament–style prophets assigned to point others to Jesus. Guys like Isaiah, Micah, and Zechariah.

# For Bible Nerds (like us) Who Want to Know

SOME OT PROPHECIES AND THEIR FULFILLMENT IN JESUS IN THE NT		
Old Testament	New Testament	Fulfillment
2 Sam. 7:12–16; Ps. 132:11; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5	Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38; John 7:42	The Davidic descent of Christ
Mic. 5:2	Matt. 2:4–6; Luke 2:1–20; John 7:42	The birth of Christ in Bethlehem
Isa. 40:3–5; Mal. 3:1	Matt. 3:1–3; Mark 1:2–4; Luke 3:1–6; 7:24–28; John 1:19–23	John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ
Mal. 4:5–6	Matt. 11:7–14; 17:10–13; Mark 9:11–13; Luke 1:13–17	John the Baptist as an Elijah-type figure coming before Christ
Isa. 9:1–2	Matt. 4:13–17	Christ's ministry in the region of Galilee
Isa. 29:18–19; 35:5–6; 53:4; 61:1–2	Matt. 8:17; 11:2–6; Luke 4:16–22; 7:18–23	Christ's ministry of miraculous healing and good news
Isa. 42:1–4	Matt. 12:15–21	Christ's compassion in ministry
Deut. 18:15; Isa. 42:1; Ps. 2:7	Luke 9:28–36; Acts 3:19–24; cf. 7:37	Christ as God's provision of one like Moses to speak for Him
Ps. 78:1–4	Matt. 13:34–35	Christ's teaching in parables
Isa. 6:9–10; 53:1	Matt. 13:10–15; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:9–10; John 12:37–41	The hard-hearted rejection of Christ's teaching
Isa. 62:11; Zech. 9:9	Matt. 21:1–9; John 12:12–19	Christ's humble entry into Jerusalem on a donkey
Ps. 22:1–18; 34:20; Isa. 52:13–53:12; Zech. 12:10	Matt. 27:32–49; John 19:18–37	Christ's suffering and death on the cross
Ps. 16:8–11; Hos. 6:1–2	Luke 24:46–47; John 2:19–22; Acts 2:22–31	The resurrection of Christ
Ps. 110:1	Matt. 22:41–46; Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44; Acts 2:32–36	The exaltation of Christ
Joel 2:28–32	Acts 2:1–21, 38–39	Christ's pouring out of the Holy Spirit on believers

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“And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, ‘Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’ And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?’”

Mark 8:31–36

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Once the mission was completed and Jesus came into view, John was expected to pass from the scene. To himself be eclipsed. But the Baptizer didn’t cooperate for the sake of obedience alone. Of course, it’s good and right to obey God, to follow Jesus no matter the cost, and to trust Him for the outcome—even if that outcome is death. After all, Jesus died and **we must die too in order to truly live.**

But while the bad news of our “death” is necessary, it’s completely overshadowed by the good news that comes right after: we die **so that** we can be born again to a living hope—which is exactly what the preparer of the way, even in his final hours from a jail cell, was looking toward.

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## Your Turn

2. Jesus is calling us to follow all the way to the cross. But far too often, we carry our “me first” mentality into our relationship with Him. Meaning, we focus on what He can do for us instead of what we can do for Him. In what ways are you practicing dying to yourself, and in what ways are you still putting yourself first?

3. Read Mark 8:31–36 in the margin above. What name did Jesus call Peter in verse 33(!)? What explanation did He give for such a harsh rebuke?

4. What are “things of God”? What are “things of men”?

## Perks of the Job

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:19–21

The fixation on self is the forfeiture of real treasure. In other words, most of us spend so much time trying to lay up treasure on earth (to feel secure in our bank accounts, be affirmed by others, be as beautiful, smart, or successful as we perceive those around us to be) that we’ve lost sight of **what’s already ours in Christ.**

In his letter, Peter painted a picture of what followers of Christ have been raised to life *for*: “a living hope” (1 Pet. 1:3). Incidentally, the Bible doesn’t teach that we should separate ourselves from all the enjoyment God has provided in the world. While self-control, self-discipline, and even self-sacrifice are praiseworthy Christian virtues (1 Pet. 4:7–11; 2 Pet. 1:3–11), we aren’t ascetics. On the contrary, God made the world and everything in it, and He wants us to enjoy what He made within the bounds He intended.

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**Ascetics:**  
people who punish themselves by denial of basic human needs for some supposed self-earned righteousness.

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That said, the reason we’ve been raised to life **is to enjoy Him!** Along with all the perks that come from following.

If you're in Christ, you've been "born again to a living hope ... to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:3–4). Which means the Creator of the world, the One who set the boundaries for the sea (Jer. 5:22) and owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10), the author of time and space and galaxies that extend beyond what our telescopes can see (Isa. 40:26), the King whose heavenly throne is encircled by an emerald rainbow (Rev. 4:2–3) along with angelic creatures who worship Him day and night (Rev. 7:11)—

## HE has set aside your inheritance.

And there's more. Not only has God stockpiled awesomeness for you in heaven, He's also guarding you on earth. He's protecting, leading, and providing for you in ways you couldn't possibly accomplish on your own, no matter how much me-time you choose to spend. Which begs the question, what need is there for self-preservation when God is willing to do the work for you? How could any one of us do a better job of caring for ourselves than the Lord of life who loves and is love?

Surely His goodness eclipses our "death" and redefines what truly matters in life.

(Spoiler alert, it isn't you.)

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## Your Turn

5. Christ chose the ultimate suffering so we could be reborn into the hope of His resurrection:

- Life with God on earth where He safeguards every follower for eternity.
- Life with God in heaven where every follower has an inheritance waiting.

How does knowing **what you've been saved for** make you more willing to die to **what you've been saved from**?

6. Read the verses in the margin. What are some of the ways God safeguards you on earth?

7. What does it mean that "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"? What do you treasure most? What, in Jesus, are you beginning to treasure *more*?

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"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the LORD your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you."  
Deuteronomy 31:6

"The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them."  
Psalm 34:7

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."  
Isaiah 41:10

"No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me," declares the Lord."  
Isaiah 54:17

"Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."  
Matthew 6:31–33

"But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."  
2 Thessalonians 3:3

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## Our New Reality

“And [John’s followers] came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi [Jesus], who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look, he is baptizing, and all are going to him.’ John answered, ‘A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, “I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.” The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

**He must increase, but I must decrease.”**

John 3:26–30

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**Side note:**  
Dying to sin might sound like bad news at first, but we should remember that it’s actually the good news of being rescued from enslavement to sin! And rescue from enslavement should always be viewed as good news (see Rom. 6).

Obviously.

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Bad news does sometimes tag along with the good, and for us to be alive in Christ we do have to die to sin. Which means the only hyphenated words we should have on repeat are the ones we mentioned before, like self-control, self-discipline, and self-sacrifice. Or better still, Jesus-focused, Spirit-controlled, heaven-bound, and hope-filled.

Because we’re not the One we need.

On the contrary, we need Jesus. We need the hope His resurrection provides, the protection His presence promises, and the satisfaction our souls find only in Him. Oh that we’d

learn to say along with the herald of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ:

He must increase. We must decrease.

## Your Turn

8. How can you increase your Jesus-focus today?

Seasons 3 and 4 of *The Chosen* include psalms from the Old Testament, which is why each lesson of this study will close with one.

The book of Psalms is a collection of songs, hymns, poetry, and prayers. Some inspire praise, some bring comfort in grief, but all of them can be spoken in prayer when words otherwise fail us.

## Prayer Focus

Praise Jesus for dying for your sin, so that you could die to your sin. Praise Him for rising from the dead, so that you could rise to new life too. Thank Him for guarding you in the here and now, and for the inheritance He is setting aside for you in heaven. Ask Him to increase as you follow, and to help you decrease.

### Sample Prayer

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true words of God.’”  
Revelation 19:7–9

*EXT. EXECUTION CHAMBER HALLWAY (DAWN)*

*(In the dim light just before sunrise, Palace Guards flank John the Baptizer. His hands are bound and his shackled feet stumble as the guards pull him.)*

*A heavy wooden door swings open to a large room with stone walls and John sees the chopping block. His face betrays neither shock nor fear.*

*A soldier polishes a gleaming platter.)*

JOHN THE BAPTIZER: That’s a nice plate. Silver?

SOLDIER: Only the finest. Intended for a royal wedding banquet, requested by King Herod himself. *(After a beat, John chuckles.)* Why are you laughing?

JOHN THE BAPTIZER: I’ve never been to a wedding banquet. But I’m on my way to one.

SOLDIER: What’s that mean?

JOHN THE BAPTIZER: Oh, never mind. You wouldn’t get it.

GUARD WITH CLIPBOARD *(looking up from his inmate termination paperwork)*: Are those your final words? *(Murmuring as he writes—)* You ... wouldn’t ... get it.

GUARD WITH CLIPBOARD (CONT’D) *(as the executioner takes his position—)*: John, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth of Judea, here on this day, by order of His Majesty King Herod Antipas ...

*(By the time we hear the word “King,” the recitation has been reduced to a low, inscrutable mumble. Music rises as John sees something down the hill, in the golden rays of morning light in a small clearing—a lamb. Grazing. Wiggling an ear. Behold ...)*

JOHN THE BAPTIZER *(as he smiles and whispers—)*: Thank You ...