

Lesson 3

YOU ARE CHERISHED

Episode Summary

Jesus stays at a campsite outside of Capernaum and is discovered by some curious local children.

Key Verse

“For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.” (Isaiah 43:3–4)

Additional Verses

Matthew 18:1–4; Galatians 3:28 and 5:18–24; 1 Peter 1:18–19

Episode Theme

In the same way Jesus welcomes and cherishes children, He welcomes and cherishes all those who choose to follow Him.

Opening Discussion

Open by reading the following:

“Precious in His Sight”

One of the most well-known Sunday school songs of all-time was written more than one hundred years ago, but it declares a timeless truth in its lyrics: “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world.”

While political correctness would like to banish such notions, the song stubbornly endures because its message resonates deeply and profoundly and universally: we were made in the image of God, and God loves what He has made.

This episode of *The Chosen* is titled “Jesus Loves the Little Children,” but it’s not just about children. When it comes to God’s love, it’s not about our age, our appearance, our abilities,

or anything else we may or may not bring to the table. It's about what already is. We're precious to our Maker.

Discuss the following question as a group:

Read Galatians 3:28. What does our sweet little song have in common with this verse?

WATCH THE EPISODE TOGETHER.

Discussion Questions

As a group, read through the "Welcomed" section and discuss the following:

"Welcomed"

"Then children were brought to [Jesus] that he might lay his hand on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 19:13-14)

That last part would've been a head scratcher for those listening, because parents in the ancient world didn't appreciate childhood the same way we do. It's not that parents had loveless, utilitarian attitudes toward their children; on the contrary, children were thought of as blessings to their parents (Deut. 28:1-6; Ps. 103:13; 127:3-5; 128:3-4; Mart. 2:16-18; John 4:46-54). But in first century AD, a person's contribution heavily weighted their value, and young children couldn't contribute much. While modern Western culture has extended childhood into the early twenties – have mercy – children in ancient times were expected to start working as soon as physically possible. Childhood was simply not a cherished time of life and definitely ended at puberty, which may be the reason the Gospels say nothing about the childhood experiences of our four main characters.

And yet we can surmise based on what we do know.

Mary Magdalene was from the town of Magdala, a place known for being so morally bankrupt that Rome ultimately destroyed the city for its corruption. Whether or not Mary experienced a godly Jewish upbringing, through life's tragedies and demonic influence, she slipped into a life of debauchery. Mary likely didn't feel precious to anyone, and wickedness and evil had a stranglehold on her life.

Nicodemus, a teacher among the Pharisees, probably had a solid Jewish upbringing. Perhaps he was like another famous Pharisee in the New Testament, the apostle Paul, who remarked, "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews ... that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee" (Acts 26:4-5).

Sounds like a real hoot. In any event, it's likely Nicodemus felt pride over his heritage, accomplishments, and stature rather than feeling cherished by God for who he was.

Matthew also likely benefited from a childhood with godly training and education; his historic Hebrew name, Levi, indicates as much. But that didn't stop him from choosing to serve Rome. Like other Jews who willingly worked for the enemy; Matthew got rich by betraying his fellow citizens. His family would've been damaged by his open display of disloyalty.

By pursuing the promise of wealth, Matthew willingly gave up any sense of being cherished for who he was. Contrary to the meaning of his name ("gift of God"), Matthew chose instead to be paid for what he could do.

Simon was a man of meager learning (Acts 4:13), but staying faithful to the God of his fathers was instilled in him from his youth. Nicodemus's pride in being religiously accomplished was not available to Simon, nor was Matthew's financial self-sufficiency – such things were beyond Simon Peter's reach. But from what we do know of the fisherman-turned-follower, he was the kind of guy who suffered from *both* pride and self-sufficiency and perhaps would've been entirely uncomfortable with the sentimental notion of being cherished.

Abigail and Joshua are fictional children created for *The Chosen*, but they're based on actual interactions, as well as Jesus's words *about* children: *to such belongs the kingdom of heaven*. Unlike most of the adults who came in contact with Jesus, the children knew they had nothing of value to offer Him except their love and excitement to be there – and Jesus welcomed them. He wanted to spend time with them, hug them, and heal them. He *wanted* to. He accepted them, not because of who they were or what they could do, but because of who **He is** and what **He does**.

Discussion Questions

1. According to Matthew 18:1–4, what quality do children have that we should seek to emulate?
2. Whose imagined childhood experience do you most identify with? Mary's darkness and brokenness? Nicodemus's need to perform and earn his worth? Matthew's rebellion and isolation? Simon's constant struggle to make a life for himself?
3. In order to keep us, Jesus became like us. According to the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5–8, what did that entail?

4. **How should you respond to the idea that Jesus cherishes you enough to (a) ransom Himself as payment for your sin and (b) restore your relationship with God?**
5. **Not only did Jesus become like us to keep us, He also promises to make us more like Him—which is exactly what He did in the lives of Mary, Matthew, and Simon Peter. Read Galatians 5:18–24. What characteristics become ours through the power of the Holy Spirit?**

Close by reading the following:

“Jesus Is Our Keeper”

It’s easy to understand why children are welcomed and cherished by Jesus. Children are uncomplicated. They’re appropriately awestruck by the world around them. They’re cute and innocent and vulnerable and unvarnished. They’re wide-eyed, expectant, moldable, and trusting—unlike us. They’re not jaded or judgmental, self-reliant, self-promoting, or stained by a lifetime of sinful choices, which means it’s much harder to believe we’re cherished by God the way they are. That we could be the recipients of His perfect love.

But that’s exactly what we are, and the evidence can be traced all the way back to Isaiah: “I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life” (Isa. 43:4).

Ransoms are paid to keep what would otherwise be lost. As indicated by Isaiah some seven centuries before Jesus arrived, God cherishes His chosen people so much that He ransoms them back for Himself. He keeps them, no matter the cost.

Prayer Focus

Give thanks to Jesus for sacrificing Himself in your place in order to bring you back to your Maker. **Ask** God to **empower** you to have a childlike faith (not a childish faith) and to **trust** that He’ll keep you through the hardships of life. You might even consider **praying** the words in Jude 1:24-25: “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”