

CHRISTMAS WITH
THE CHOSEN
“HOLY NIGHT”



A GUIDE FOR GROUP CONVERSATION



Here's your guide to Holy Night in theaters and on streaming.

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

A Note to the Leader: Whenever you finish watching anything, let alone something from *The Chosen*, admit it: *you're not looking for someone to push the conversation in a particular direction*. After you've finished *Holy Night* — or after you've finished watching one of the Christmas specials — allow for some *free-range reflection*. Maybe just say something like this and let things unfold naturally for a bit:

Opening Question

You're probably going to share some things that we'll chase down a bit further in a moment, but let's start here: what's sort of lingering in your head or heart after watching that? A scene? A line of dialogue? A particular character?

A CONVERSATION ABOUT MARY MAGDALENE

(AN EMPHASIS ON *THE MESSENGERS*)

A Note to the Leader: A palpable anxiety over how things are unfolding in the world of the early church hangs over *The Messengers*. Severe persecution has settled in and some (Nathanael and Big James) have lost their lives. *How on earth do they press on and not lose hope?* Mary Magdalene represents an uneasy church in her conversation with Mother Mary, and Mother Mary comforts her, while also challenging her, by remembering the faithfulness of God in another precarious time — *when she and Joseph had to hold fast to hope as they brought Jesus into the world.*

The questions below lead you and your friends along in a conversation that ultimately lands on this simple truth: *sometimes the only way for us to faithfully press on in our present is to revisit God's faithfulness as seen in our past.*

Question 1

Part of the Christmas special takes place in 48 A.D., several years after Jesus has walked the earth, and the church is struggling; why?

Question 2

In many ways Mary Magdalene represents an anxious church, and Mother Mary comforts her. How?

A Note to the Leader: Remember — Mother Mary points her back to a story of God's faithfulness (the Christmas story) to show how he has been, is, and will be faithful, even if there is loss and pain along the way. This is crucial for a church that is in the middle of a story with no ending. *They need to hear a story with a beginning, middle, and end.*

Question 3

What are all the ways, big and small — and even the ways that aren't talked about in the Christmas special — that God was faithful to provide for Joseph and Mary? How would the Christmas story speak to what the early church is experiencing?

Question 4

In the midst of what Joseph and Mary were going through, Mary had to have drawn from stories she had been told as a young Jewish girl. What stories of God's faithfulness do you think she drew from?

A Note to the Leader: *This might be a good point to have someone read Mary's poem as recorded in Luke 1:45-56. There's a story of old in there that Mary surely drew from—the story of Abraham. Maybe talk about that a bit, too.*

Question 5

What is most troubling you right now? What fears have taken hold of you? And how are you responding to it all?

Question 6

Sometimes the only way for us to faithfully press on in our present story is to revisit God's faithfulness as seen in past stories. What are the stories, both Scriptural and personal, that you need to remember in anxious moments?



A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE YOUNG SHEPHERD

(AN EMPHASIS ON *THE SHEPHERD*)

A Note to the Leader: At this point, you can shift rather seamlessly to the story of the young shepherd.

If Mary Magdalene is a sort of stand-in for an 'us' that is uneasy, the young shepherd is a stand-in for an 'us' that feels unworthy of Jesus — *an 'us' that is wrecked by guilt and shame*. The questions below lead you and your friends along in a conversation that ultimately lands on this simple truth: *we are worthy of all that we have been given by God in Jesus*.

Question 1

Let's shift to the story of the young shepherd. If Mary Magdalene is a sort of stand-in for an 'us' that is uneasy, the young shepherd is a stand-in for an 'us' that feels unworthy of Jesus—an 'us' that is wrecked by guilt and shame. Why might the young shepherd feel unworthy of Jesus?

A Note to the Leader: Alongside the young shepherd being made to feel unworthy because of his physical condition (the ancient line of thinking would have had people saying, *"Surely he's done something to deserve such a curse from God"*), shepherds in general weren't kindly viewed. They were often poor and unkempt — and their work often left them unclean, physically and spiritually. *Remind the group what the Pharisee said: "People like you are keeping the Messiah away with your stains."*

Question 2

Let's talk about us. What is it that makes us feel as though we couldn't possibly draw near to Jesus? How do others (even Christians) make us feel as though we are unworthy?

Question 3

The young shepherd is obviously worthy. In fact, all the shepherds are worthy. Why? What makes them worthy? (Which is also to ask—what makes us worthy?)

A Note to the Leader: Somewhere along the way, you might want to recall what the religious leader said when he rejected the young shepherd's lamb: *"This lamb is for righteous men!" Because it appears the lamb is for the un-righteous.* It's the sort of twist you've come to expect in the story of Jesus: *the shepherds' unworthiness — and their humble recognition of their desperate position — is what makes them somehow worthy.* You might even want to have the group revisit Mary's song (*Luke 1:45-56*), because it shows the grand reordering of things with regard to who is worthy.

Question 4

How can we hold fast to the truth that we are worthy when we are so prone to talk ourselves out of this truth, while also staring down so many who also wish to talk us out of this truth?

TO CLOSE OUT THE CONVERSATION

A SERIES OF CLOSING QUESTIONS

Let's wrap up all that we've talked about by focusing on the needs of others (and not just our own). After all, a prevailing thought in the Christmas special(s) is that *"people must know."* Who is most uneasy — most anxious — these days? How can you speak to their fears in a way that honors Jesus? *How can you be with them in tangible ways in their fear?* Who's most been made to feel unworthy these days? How can you speak to their pain? *How can you be with them in tangible ways in their pain?*