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# The Chosen Dilemma

by [Don and Joy Veinot](#) | Jan 6, 2022 | [Dallas Jenkins](#), [Enneagram](#), [Jesus](#), [Mormon](#), [Mormonism](#), [Richard Rohr](#), [The Chosen](#) | [10 comments](#)



*Used by Permission, "The Chosen TV Show"*

In "[A Candid Conversation with Dallas Jenkins, Director of The Chosen](#)," Dallas Jenkins made an interesting statement to our friend and fellow apologist, Melissa Dougherty, at about the twelve-minute mark of the interview. He was relaying a story about God speaking to him when he was in a synagogue in Israel.

I felt that God was laying on my heart was that in several years the Chosen was going to be what people thought of when they pictured the disciples. When they pictured Jesus' people. People that were around Jesus. Because up to that point, the movie, the mini-series about Jesus, you don't have anything in your mind specifically about Simon Peter or Mary Magdalene. There's no visual in your mind. And, I felt like God was saying, well, this is going to be the definitive portrayal of my people, and this is what people are going to think of around the world when they think of my people. And I'm not going to let you screw it up.

The identification with the fictional characters that people will invariably make is one of the concerns expressed by T.A. McMahon in his article, "[The Chosen' Fiction](#)." After explaining how distortions creep into films in the retelling of an original story, he poses the dilemma:

For those who are still not seeing the problem with this, let's consider a program that makes the highly publicized claim that it's helping people get to know Jesus better and to recognize similarities with the "Jesus of different faiths." What if the Jesus we are being introduced to is not the biblical Jesus, but rather a spirit that was produced in heaven?

In "[The Chosen: Concerned but Keep Watching](#)," Jonathan Miles pointed out, "Jenkins makes clear that the writers condense timelines and take poetic license."

To be sure, *The Chosen* is not a faithful film version of the gospel accounts, nor was it intended to be. As Jenkins notes in the interview with Melissa, 95% of the material is not from the Bible. Sometimes taking such artistic license makes no difference in the original character or story – but it certainly *can* create a whole new character that only vaguely resembles the biblical original. For example, in scripture, the character of Simon Peter comes across as a fisherman who speaks his mind, sometimes perhaps a little brashly – but overall, he seems like an honest, hard-working fisherman turned disciple. In the creative hands of the first season of *The Chosen*, Peter is a tax scofflaw, a barroom brawler for money who is recruited as an informant on his fellow fishermen for the government. Is that really the “definitive portrayal” God wanted people to envision “around the world when they think of my people,” specifically Peter?

In the interview with Melissa, Dallas Jenkins describes how those of different faiths all love the Jesus they see in *The Chosen* but get into battles in the fan groups in defense of “their Jesus.” When pressed on the Mormon involvement in the production of the series, Jenkins emphatically states that he and his personal Mormon friends believe in the *same Jesus*. We will not argue that point, but we must point out that the Jesus of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not the Jesus of Scripture and history. The Mormon Jesus is another Jesus (2 Cor 11:4) – a Jesus who was once a man but became “a god” – one of millions – through his own efforts. It is, of course, a fact that Mormons and people of other faiths may not fully grasp or fully believe in the teachings of the group they are involved in and may honestly think their religion teaches the biblical Jesus. Or it may be the case that an individual Mormon may, in fact, embrace the biblical Jesus and not even realize that he is leaving or has left the Mormon Jesus behind. Or as is the case with so many groups that hold to “another Jesus,” and *very often* with Mormons, they use the same or very similar vocabulary as Christians but assign different meanings to the words. As the Bible teaches, there are many Jesuses out there, but only one is the true Jesus – the rest are imposters. Without a *clear definition* of terms, one Jesus seems very much the same as all the other Jesuses on the menu. It is up to the individual Christian to ask for clear definitions of terms and so be able to discern whether their friend is speaking of the real Jesus of scripture or the faux Jesus of a false teacher.

There is also the fact that human beings very often place “fraternity over orthodoxy.” It is not easy or pleasant to believe and accept that a friend or a close work associate holds heretical beliefs. The very human tendency is to defend the friend and look past the false teaching. Human friendship and affection can very definitely have a blinding effect.

Jenkins gave multiple assurances during this interview that he is an evangelical and has final control over the script. In addition, he insists he has had no pressure from those on the team or the distribution company to accommodate LDS beliefs in the storytelling. Whatever one may think of the series itself, the danger of serious heresy may lie *outside the script* and in the social media presence of the creative team, actors, and actresses. We all know that fans become enamored with celebrities and, in many cases, may view them uncritically as reliable authorities in their public communications.

So, by way of celebrity status, Dallas Jenkins and the actors and producers of the popular series can and will have an outsized influence on countless fans. As a case in point, Jenkins [posted material from Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr](#) that he found challenging. He wrote:

From Richard Rohr...not sure that this is universally true, but it's rocking my world:

For those who may not be aware, Richard Rohr is a panentheist who teaches that the cosmos is the first incarnation of “the Christ.” In “[A Heretic's Christ, a False Salvation](#),” Dr. Douglas

Groothuis outlines some of the serious heresies in Rohr's book, *The Universal Christ*. Whether intentionally bestowed or not, Rohr now enjoys the imprimatur of Dallas Jenkins and *The Chosen*. How deeply has Jenkins been drinking at Rohr's well? We do not know, but he isn't the only one involved with *The Chosen* that has in some way publicly advanced the heretical teachings of Richard Rohr.

Dan Haseltine, along with Matthew S. Nelson, composes the music for *The Chosen*. It doesn't take much searching to discover a Richard Rohr connection there as well. On [The Orbit Around Matthew S. Nelson & Dan Haseltine Fan Page](#), we find:

I am thankful for mentors who have helped me understand the value of solitude and contemplative prayers as a practice that builds intimacy with God and gives that "inner authority" of knowing. I spent so many years learning about God and not enough time knowing Him. Both are important. Some of you read Katie Haseltine's "All The Things," also a prayer practice that helps with intimate relationship to God, seeing and hearing Him in our daily lives. It is such an important way to seek Him. I believe many do not hear these words and concepts. Richard Rohr also spoke to this, last week...

The same writer explains the "'inner authority' of knowing":

The dualistic or non-contemplative mind cannot imagine how both could be true at the same time. The contemplative mind sees things in wholes and not in divided parts.

We all must find an inner authority that we can trust that is bigger than our own. This way, we know it's not only us thinking these thoughts. When we are able to trust God directly, it balances out the almost exclusive reliance on external authority (Scripture for Protestants; Tradition for Catholics).

Scripture then is made subject to the "'inner authority' of knowing." We also see the power of the stamp of approval by celebrities:

While, like all of you, I was drawn to Matt and Dan because of the beauty and empathy of their art, I quickly learned that beauty came from a contemplative mind.

Dan and Kate Haseltine seem deeply marinated in Richard Rohr's worldview. In the "About the Author" section of her new book, [All the Things: A 30 Day Guide to Experiencing God's Presence in the Prayer of Examen](#), the first sentence is telling:

Katie Haseltine is a trained Spiritual Director, a certified Enneagram coach and self-care coach.

The book is endorsed by none other than [Your Enneagram Coach](#), Beth McCord (who was trained by five New Agers) and *Dallas and Amanda Jenkins*:

"We've known Katie for more than two decades. In our twenties, we spent weekends together as married couples, eating and talking sun-up to sun-down. Which means that, in spite of all the life lived since then (the miles between us, the kids we've raised, the marital ups and downs we've experienced), we know Katie well. Our friendship was firmly established in those early days—along with her tendency to end every disagreement with 'Jesus.' For as long as we've known her, all Katie roads have led to Jesus. Any topic, any argument, any anything: Katie would remind us of a verse or idea that drew the conversation back to Him.

“And she’s still doing it. *All the Things* is beautiful and authentic and interesting and profound and truth-filled and Jesus-focused... just like our friend.”

Some readers may be thinking the above citations and comments are little more than assigning guilt by association. That might be true if we were suggesting the problem is that Dallas Jenkins is steeped in Richard Rohr’s material, and *it is making its way into his vastly popular series*. But we plainly have not made that claim. We clearly expressed our concerns early on that “the danger of serious heresy may actually lie *outside the script* and instead within the social media of the creative team, actors and actresses.” If Richard Rohr, the Eastern practices of Contemplative Prayer<sup>1</sup> and the Enneagram are spiritual tools that those associated with The Chosen admire and advocate, fans are very likely to trust these “tools” as safe and helpful in their personal spiritual pursuits. That would be a tragedy.

Dallas Jenkins is clear that he is not a pastor, The Chosen is not the Church, and the story the series is telling is not the Bible. Fair enough. But whether he recognizes it or not, his celebrity status among Christians places a burden on his shoulders. Fans will pay close attention to what he says and tend to trust who and what he advocates. If his fans should be inspired to read and trust Richard Rohr and other false teachers, based upon Jenkins’ perhaps careless endorsement, will he not bear some responsibility for that?

We do not know Dallas Jenkins. From the interview we watched, he seems to genuinely seek to make Jesus “real” for this current generation. He appears honestly perplexed at some of the criticism he has received for his portrayal of Jesus and His disciples by other people. Celebrity is a dual-edged sword for sure, and with it comes perhaps unwanted scrutiny and added responsibility.

The Church in our era seems to be rapidly slip-sliding off its true foundation. We *all* need to ask ourselves if we are part of the “slide” or part of the bulwark.Ω



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