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Presentation Transcript
Camping by the Red Sea
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This presentation is going to be a little on the low-key side – maybe a little shorter too. (I can hear the applause.)

There's a streaming show out called *The Chosen*. Have you seen it? They finished season 1. The chosen are the twelve disciples that Jesus called, but it's a lot more than that. It's an easy way to learn a lot about what life was like for people back then – like what it's like to live under Roman occupation, what life was like for women in those days, what it was like in those anxious times to know someone who was completely at peace, and filled with faith, and knew what to do. It's about what living an example can do to change people. I've never seen a show like it about Jesus. It's actually going to be an entire multi-season series. I think they are expecting seven seasons and eight episodes, perhaps, in each one. I know there were eight in the first one. All the material for season two has been shot and completed, as of this date, as well. To make sure it's religiously, culturally and historically accurate, they have a number of consultants they use to verify the accuracy of the portrayal historically. They also have a Jewish rabbi, Catholic priest and evangelical pastor who give their opinions, doctrinally, culturally and historically about the program. They all have input on each episode. And I've watched a few videos where they talk about what goes on among them. They're pretty interesting to watch.

Now, it's nothing like the ministers that you and I've met, because these all have respect for each other and generally come to a place of acceptance, even though they don't always hold the same views. Each one of them doesn't seem to be worried that the other two are going to rustle their sheep. It seems to be a very collegial effort.

Now, I do want to warn you, if you go watch this show, that even though they've gone to great lengths to be biblically accurate, do not watch the show if you don't want to see a Jesus with a sense of humor, or if you do not want to see some vignettes about personalities of various people in the Bible that are extra-biblical, but are most often culturally and historically accurate and driven toward helping us understand what these people in these times were like. And, to me, while I really enjoyed watching the show, this isn't even the best part of it.

The creator of the project, whose name is Dallas Perkins, is also the main writer and director and came up with the original idea, took it to Hollywood, where he was rejected out of hand. Instead of thinking he was beaten, that he could do nothing, that he was done for, that the idea was no good, he gathered up some seed money – I don't know how – hired some actors, wrote a few scenes, did a few interviews of some of the actors, showed them on YouTube and Facetime, and asked the public to help support the project. What happened next was unbelievable! Nobody could believe what was happening. To date, the project has inspired Christian people worldwide to donate millions of dollars to do this project. And he estimates it's going to take ten million to do the whole seven seasons.

I've learned a lot about Jesus and his followers from this show, but I think, from the creator of it, I have learned even more. Since the entire project is supported by donations, instead of the fat bank roll of Hollywood, he is under an unrelenting pressure to generate funds, which he does with boundless enthusiasm. But in one of his fundraising videos, he also recounted a strangely familiar story. He said they were planning to shoot some scenes at a lake. He often talks about the *Jesus boat* that they have. That's what they call the fishing boat that they use. That boat was there. On the last day that they had scheduled to shoot, they had quite a lot left to do. So, they got to the lake early, and it was completely fogged in – couldn't even see the lake. It was so thick. And this was totally unexpected. The weather had been great up to this point and they'd shot a lot of the scenes already with sunny days. So they couldn't do it in the fog. So they sat there and they waited. And they needed a full day. By noon, they had not shot a single frame because it was still fogged in. So, just in case it cleared, in faith they frantically began rewriting the scenes to shorten them, so they could cram it all in at the last minute as they got some daylight. He mentioned that it would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to take all their sets, and all their camera equipment, and transport the whole staff somewhere else, or to come back later would have been even worse. So, about 3 pm, they were getting ready to pull out – it was still covered up. "Not enough time to finish now, we might as well bag it," they thought. So they walked out of their trailer and they saw the whole lake right there – no fog. He asked somebody – one of the crew out there – what happened. And they said, "Just a few moments before, a gust of wind blew the fog away. So they shot. They got ready. They set up quickly and began shooting. The actors, who always seem to be well-prepared, made no mistakes, so all their first runs soon worked. And, as the sun began to set, the light of the sun reflected off the clouds above, keeping it light enough to shoot until much later in the day.

Long story short, they got it all done, even though they started at 3 pm. He was telling the story, and he commented, "It was one of those Red Sea moments" – in a bad situation, but nothing he could do – helpless. He can control some things, like the script, organization and all that, but he can't control the weather. Then God shows up and everything changes. One of the questions he asked was, "Why does He do that? Why does He do it that way? Why does He always wait until the last possible minute?" Think about all the sick people. He could prevent them from getting sick in the first place, but He doesn't. Later, in the video, Dallas' answer was that he had a very

strong sense when he saw that lake open up like that. He said that God was saying to him, “I’ve got you.”

That took me back to when I was a kid. I was a senior in high school when God started to work with me, and I was listening to a minister on the radio, and he was talking right into my wheel house. I had always wanted to understand the Bible – not just the way my church taught it, but the *truth* of it. And I got more and more interested listening to him, but I knew no one who believed this way. I was completely on my own. So I applied to the college associated with the radio program and I got accepted. So then there was a great need for a job. At McDonald’s? I tried there – that was a new hamburger stand in town nobody had ever heard of before – and everywhere else I could think of – all the way up to Hewlett-Packard and Stanford Research Institute. And it took quite a bit of time to do all of that, because I put out – I don’t know – maybe a dozen, maybe more applications, and not a single response. So, graduation was headed my way and no job. The day before graduation – or maybe it was a few days before – I can’t remember exactly – I got a call from SRI (Stanford Research Institute) and started work the day after I graduated. So, I’d been praying for months, and at the very last minute, the job was there – not at McDonald’s either. It was SRI – the very best place to work. It was a great experience for me. So, way to go God!

So I worked a week, and on Friday, at the end of that day, there was a meeting for all the summer workers, and they told us that part of our project had been delayed in delivery. We were building a radio telescope antenna – putting together all the struts and the pieces for it. And that was all going to be bolted to what they called a torque tube, which was in the center part of it. And that had been delayed in production. They told us that our project was delayed in delivery and we would probably be laid off until it came in – *if* it came in. So I went home and asked God, “What’s going on here?” I told Him I did everything I knew to do. I put out lots of applications. I tithed. I was being good. So, I went in Monday and they said, “The torque tube has come in,” and I had the most fun summer job of ever!

I’ve thought of that experience from time to time, and I think a couple things about it. You know, it was just me and God in those days. I was small, but not too small to be noticed or heard. That’s one of the things I learned – God cared about *me*, even though I barely knew anything about Him. He could have let me know a month earlier about the job. He could have caused the torque tube to come in earlier. He was planning on all of this all along. But I also think I might not have made the connection or understood what was going on had it not been two last-minute things in a row. But I learned that He had my back. Thinking back about it, I call it *learning by waiting*. I think God’s time table is better for us than our own is.

Another thing happened after I graduated from college. Elaine and I got married, and we got sent to Little Rock, Arkansas, to train in the ministry. We had very little, but we had just enough to get by. We weren’t hurting for anything too much. We had to be careful. So one night after Bible study, we were loading the car to go home – it was a bad neighborhood – and I left Elaine’s Bible

on the top of the car and we drove off. It obviously fell off somewhere along the way unnoticed. Now, to make it worse, this wasn't just any Bible. This was her Oxford wide-margin version – leather bound Bible – with all of her college notes in it for four years. There really was no price you could put on that. There was no way to reproduce it. Even though it was a very expensive tool, and we grieved that loss, too, because replacing it was very expensive in those days. I was trying to remember how much they cost when we were in college, and I think they were \$75.00. Things are about 8-10 times more expensive now than they were back then. I've still never seen any Bible like that one – the India paper is very fine, the leather is great. We prayed about it. We waited. That part of town was rough, as I said. We didn't know if anybody would find it or what they'd even do with it if they did. Nobody called us. It was gone. And I felt so terrible about that. And there wasn't anything I could do about it. Maybe two week later, the police called. They had it. And we went down and picked it up. God knew where it was all along. For that matter, He probably knew I was going to leave without it. So why did He wait so long? And why did He let me do that? You know, I think He did that to show me what He can do – and not just me. Elaine, too.

In 2 Peter 3:9, on this whole topic, Peter said:

2 Peter 3:9 – *The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

Now, I know, if you read the context of this verse, Peter's talking about the return of Christ. But, I think, in a more general sense, it's still true. I think it's about God doing the things He does the way He does them to help us attain eternal life. Sometimes we can understand how that might work and sometimes we can't.

So let's think about the Israelites when they were backed up against the Red Sea with the entire Egyptian army bearing down on them. That's what Dallas Perkins was referring to – “a Red Sea moment.” They weren't camping there for fun. They were in desperate straits. God could have knocked all the chariot wheels off of the Egyptian chariots, even before they left Egypt. But I think He knows that we often need drama to remember the lessons He has to teach us. You know, they were really panicky and afraid for their lives, which is understandable. And God's instruction to them was to stand still and watch the salvation of the Lord take place. “Get ready for it. You don't want to miss what's going to happen next. I've got this!” I think He's still doing that very often in all of our lives.

I think another thing He wants us to know – and this will be my last point on this – is to *remember* what He's done. And that's why He does it in these last-minute situations sometimes. If the fog had blown out in the morning for Dallas Perkins, he probably would have just thought, “Well, there's the weather for you.” But the way God did it, it was clear that there some intervention there. That helps us remember. God says, “Remember!” over and over again – especially in the Old Testament to the people of Israel. “Remember what I've done.”

I have a handle to hang on to that Bible example and my early experience with God when I was alone. It's because of the way He did it. So remember what God has done. Don't fear. Be strong. Trust God and keep waiting. Wait to see what He's going to do.

Okay, don't forget to check out our Website, liferesource.org. We've had some great donations lately and we really appreciate that. That's going to help us so much. It's pretty expensive to maintain a Website these days – at least, at the level we're doing it. It's a huge Website. So we thank you for your help there.

Anybody have any ideas about presentations? Sometimes people give me the best ones, so if you'd like to send something in – something you're worried about or curious about or would like to learn more about – if I can contribute anything, I would be happy to do that.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.