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CHOSEN

Let's play a game of Bible License Plates.

- Identify the person whose personalized plate it is:

PARTED C = Moses

DNID 3X = Peter

OLD DAD = Abraham

1ST KING = Saul

SHE 8 I 8 = Adam

PRPL SLR = Lydia

HAD 2 LAF = Sarah

SLEW GNT = David

ARK MAN = Noah

CLMB TRE = Zaccheaus

WMN JDG = Deborah (not Judy)

IM SO YY = Solomon

WTRWAKR = (JESUS) Peter

1ST 2C = Mary Magdalene

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All of us could use this one: CHOSEN.

- John 15:16 tells us, "You did not choose ME, but I chose you."

- And it continues: "...and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in MY name the FATHER will give you."

It is essential to our identity, our understanding of who we are in relationship to GOD to know that we are chosen.

- We need to know what it is to be chosen.

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First, we need to know that being chosen includes both pain and glory.

I was not always the fine, athletic specimen that you see before you today.

- As a youngster, I lived in fear of those three words, "Let's...choose...teams."

- When I heard those words, the first thing I would do was look around to see if there was at least one person who would likely be chosen after me.
  - The worst thing that could happen to you was to be chosen last.
  - I did feel a little bit sorry for the one who was chosen last, but I felt more grateful that it wasn't me.
- The truth was I knew I had been chosen only because they had to choose everyone.
  - It was always painful to know that you were selected only because you had to be.

On the other hand, it is a wonderful feeling to be chosen by someone who wants you on their team.

- We all want to be wanted, and being chosen by someone else can do wonders for one's self-image.
  - Whether on a team, for a special project, as a friend, or as a life partner, being chosen can feel great.

That is why it is important to know that JESUS chose us.

- "I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my FATHER I have made known to you."
- Don't we share very special information only with our closest friends? - JESUS says, "I chose you!"

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It's also important to recognize that it is not our choice.

- "You did not choose me, but I chose you."

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I have a friend who ends all of his emails, "I chose HIM."

- One time I replied back to him with this passage from John 15.
  - My friend responded, "HE chose me so that I could choose HIM."

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We like to think we have control over our lives.

- We like to think the future is in our hands.
  - So, what JESUS says here may upset us, because we like to think that we chose HIM.
  - The truth is that we can only reject JESUS.
    - Before we ever had the chance, JESUS chose us.
    - Now, you can only say, "I don't want that."

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Rabbis choose their disciples; disciples don't choose their rabbi.

- If the rabbi feels the potential student's views are too far from his, the rabbi rejects the student.

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We don't choose to believe.

- No one wakes up one day and says, "Today, I guess I'll start believing."
  - Faith is a gift given by the HOLY SPIRIT to all.
    - For some, it is never awakened.
    - For others, it is rejected.
      - But it is never earned or achieved.

Faith is a gift that we can claim as our own,

- a gift given by the ONE who chose it for us,
- the ONE who has appointed us.

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That's another thing we should recognize.

- JESUS says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."
- I talked about bearing fruit last week, but let me suggest a different perspective for thinking about it today.

I already mentioned that a rabbi chooses his disciples.

- When rabbis interview candidates for their rabbinic school, they look to the best of the synagogue students.
- If the student by age twelve or so has memorized the entire Old Testament, if this student is the best of the best, the rabbi will ask questions to see if the candidate can carry the rabbi's yoke.
  - The yoke was the set of teachings of the rabbi, the theological interpretation of the scriptures.
- If the student disagrees with the rabbi's thoughts, the student is passed over, rejected.
  - But, if the rabbi feels the student can learn the rabbi's interpretation, the rabbi would invite the student to, "Follow me."
    - Then the student follows the rabbi for about eighteen years, listening and asking questions and learning so that he might one day carry the rabbi's yoke.

In Matthew 11:29, JESUS says, "Take MY yoke upon you and learn from ME...for MY yoke is easy and MY burden is light."

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Our RABBI, JESUS, has chosen us to follow HIM and learn HIS yoke of teaching.

Our RABBI, JESUS, has chosen us to follow HIM and carry HIS yoke.

Our RABBI, JESUS, has chosen us to follow HIM and carry HIS yoke and bear lasting fruit.

And what is JESUS yoke, the easy and light yoke?

- What is this teaching we are to carry?
- What is this lasting fruit we are to produce?

"This is MY command," JESUS says.

- Love one another.
  - Treat each other, not with jealousy.
  - Treat each other, not with a desire to control.
  - Treat each other, not so that you get the outcome you want.
    - Rather, treat each other with love.

Can you do that?

- Can you love each other?
  - Can you carry that yoke and love one another?
  - Can you bear that fruit that will last to love others as JESUS has loved us?
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Loving others changes everything.

- When there is love, there is no more conflict in the Middle East or Ukraine.
  - When there is love, there is no more beheading by the Islamic State.
  - When there is love, there is no more kidnapping by Boko Haram.
  - When there is love, there is no more killing of police officers on duty.
  - When there is love, there is no more violent demonstration.
  - When there is love, there is no more sex trafficking.
  - When there is love, there is no more discrimination.
  - When there is love, there is no more malaria.
  - When there is love, there are no more women's shelters or food pantries, because they are no longer needed.
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We are chosen by JESUS.

- We are called friend by JESUS.
- We are appointed by JESUS.
  - So now, do this.
  - Love each other.