

What Should We Make of the Pride Flag Controversy on Set of 'The Chosen?'

Dallas Jenkins, producer of "The Chosen," has responded directly to the question of why a crew member of the hit series about Jesus was allowed to display an LGBTQ pride flag on set, in particular during "Pride" month. What should we make of his very candid and personal response?

When I began to read about the controversy online, I tweeted, "Here's a simple question for @thechosentv that can remove all controversy and concern. We understand that not every crew member you hire will hold to biblical values, but can you state here unequivocally that you the producers of The Chosen reject the celebration of Pride Month?"

I then added, "For those who don't know why I asked this, it's because The Chosen is now under fire because an LGBTQ Pride flag was spotted on-site during a recent film shoot. We just need The Chosen to say emphatically that they do not celebrate LGBTQ Pride (while still loving the people)."

What, then, did Jenkins say?

My goal here is not to fuel the fires of Christian gossip, nor is it to deepen the controversy. To the contrary, I want to respond in the most constructive and helpful way possible. But before I interact with what Jenkins had to say, let me share two comments that were made in response to my radio show where I commented on his YouTube video.

One listener wrote, "Thank you for your compassionate insight. *The Chosen has brought me back to the Bible.* It hurts me to see people wanting to boycott and stop this beautiful message from being spread. The world needs more compassion" (my

emphasis).

Another wrote, after expressing his agreement with my position (which I'll share shortly), "The Chosen played an impact upon ME being saved by Jesus."

So, whatever issues you or I might have with the series in terms of biblical accuracy, let's not forget the positive impact it is having on multitudes of viewers. (For my friendly disagreement with one episode, see [here](#).)

In his response, Dallas Jenkins explained that he does not respond to social media critics but rather seeks to honor the Lord. Good for him! His reason for putting out the video was to help viewers who might have been confused by the reports they read online. That was his target audience.

He also realized, quite rightly, that with every episode, "The Chosen" would lose certain viewers, since someone, somewhere will always be offended with something. Again, good for him in setting the goal of honoring the Lord rather than pleasing people. Inevitably, if you please one group you will alienate another. Pleasing God is what counts.

As for the specific controversy, he explained that "The Chosen" is not a church or a ministry, and as long as someone does their job, they are welcome. This would be like a Christian-owned construction company hiring non-Christians, as long as they did their jobs.

Jenkins also noted that Solomon built the Temple with the help of non-Israelites (idol-worshippers) like Hiram. Surely, he and his team could produce a quality series about Jesus with the help of non-believers too.

Of course, it would be great if every member of every crew associated with "The Chosen," including every camera person, every makeup person, every IT person, every wardrobe person, every set building person, every marketing person—you get the

idea—was a committed Jesus-follower. And it would be amazing if every shoot began with joint prayer.

But again, this is not a church or a ministry, and I fully respect what Jenkins explained.

As for the Pride flag that was displayed, Jenkins made a few things clear.

First, the flag was displayed by a hardworking crew member whom he appreciated; second, this person always had the flag on his camera (in other words, this was not specifically about Pride Month); and third, since Jenkins saw how more and more Christians have been forbidden from sharing their views while doing their jobs in other settings, he did not want to be guilty of that on his set.

In other words, if it would be wrong for a secular movie producer to forbid a Christian from wearing an “Only Jesus Saves” t-shirt, it would be wrong for him to forbid one of his workers from wearing an LGBTQ Pride shirt. In that same spirit, a worker could wear a MAGA hat or Biden-Harris hat, as long as they did their jobs. (Some viewers have asked if a satanic symbol would be accepted on site or if Jenkins would tolerate a Confederate flag. These are fair questions.)

As for his personal views, Jenkins explained that he is a conservative evangelical who does not celebrate Pride month. At the same time, he does not police what his actors and crew do on social media, and they can express themselves freely, even if he differs.

But it is at this point that I take issue with Jenkins and encourage him to offer a public apology.

That’s because some of the show’s prominent actors had some ugly words for those who took issue with the Pride flag. As reported on the Not the Bee website, “Multiple ‘Chosen’ actors who portray Jesus’ disciples decry ‘homophobia and ignorance’

of fans after show defends LGBT flag on set.”

So, some of the very people who were part of the crowdfunding of “The Chosen” and some of the people who represent the core viewers of the program were trashed by some of the show’s prominent actors. Surely, this is not the kind of thing where you say, “Hey, everyone is allowed their viewpoint, and I do not police what they post.” Rather, at this point, it’s important to show some solidarity with your viewers and not just with your employees.

The fact is, without the viewers there would be no employees. Shouldn’t this be a real concern, not out of a desire for fame or fortune but out of Christian love and ethics?

To give further context to the online interaction in question, Giavani Cairo, who plays the apostle Thaddeus, tweeted, “Another one of the actors on The Chosen here. Anyone who is going to go at one of our family members for something like this, is no fan of ours. They can close the door on the way out ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ We stand with our brother.”

Talk about being tone deaf. Cairo plays the role of an apostle—yes, he’s an actor, but everyone knows him now as Thaddeus—he quotes the words of Jesus in his tweet, calling us to love another as Jesus loved us, then he trashes a concerned viewer. Really?

To paraphrase, “Jesus calls us to love another, so get out of here, you jerk! And be sure not to come back. We stand with LGBT pride, not with you, the concerned Christian viewers.”

In response, Jon Root (@JonnyRoot_), who describes himself as a “Christ Follower” and an “ANTI-WOKE SPORTZ GUY,” tweeted, “The actor who plays Thaddeus in @thechosentv stands by the display of the Pride flag on set & believes that Biblical love is an acceptance of homosexuality...”

In response to Root, Jordan Ross, who plays the apostle James on the show, tweeted, “My brother @GCairo06 isn’t the only one who stands by the LGBTQ members of our Chosen family, get outta here with your hate, homophobia and ignorance. Not very Jesus-like of you, Jonny.”

So, by questioning the appropriateness of actors on “The Chosen” defending LGBTQ Pride—remember that this is a Christian-funded, Christian-empowered movie series that purports to “honor the authentic Jesus”—Root was guilty of “hate, homophobia and ignorance.” Seriously? And he was the one who was not acting in a Christ-like way?

No wonder that many other Christians were offended, even while recognizing that these are actors, not apostles.

Do these actors and crew members have the right to express themselves freely? Absolutely.

Is it good that they showed solidarity with one of their own? To a certain extent, yes.

But they should have been far more considerate of the people who watch their work and help fund it. And they should ask themselves some deeper questions about Jesus, the Bible, Christian love and LGBTQ Pride.

In my view, the right thing to do from here in order to honor the Lord and honor the viewers, is this: First, Jenkins should apologize for these hateful and harsh comments, saying that they absolutely do not speak for him or the team behind “The Chosen” and that he regrets the pain they have caused.

Second, the actors should make clear that while they love and stand with their crew and personally reject hateful attitudes, they owe the viewers an apology for their harsh, judgmental and un-Christlike comments.

I believe most viewers would forgive and move on. Isn’t this

the path of wisdom, love, integrity and truth?

Writer's Note: Since writing this article, these comments from the actors Giavani Cairo and Jordan Ross were brought to my attention. I appreciate that these actors offered personal apologies and clarifications. For Ross, see [here](#). For Cario, see [here](#). {eo}

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