

'The Chosen'

What keeps Jenkins, the actors and the crew going is the feedback they get from fans of "The Chosen," which exceeds enthusiasm.

"It's not just engaging them, but it's literally changing their lives," he said. "It's an extraordinary thing to be part of, and it also is the juice in the battery that keeps you going. And you meet the people and you realize — OK, this is bigger than we are. This isn't just entertainment. We've got to keep going."

Amazing backstory

"The Chosen" grew out of a short film Jenkins made in 2017, "The Shepherd," a crowd-funding brought in millions to produce the series, and — in the first three seasons — Jenkins partnered with Utah-based Angel Studios (which grew out of the streaming service VidAngel). Because of a legal dispute with Angel Studios, Season 4 episodes — which played in theaters — have not yet been released for streaming. But, Jenkins said, that should happen soon.

To date, the series has been available on "The Chosen" website and app, YouTube, Facebook, Prime Video, BYUtv, The CW, Peacock, Trinity Broadcasting, UPTV and Netflix. Jenkins isn't ready to make an announcement about where Season 4 (and, eventually, seasons 5-7) will stream, but, clearly, there's an announcement coming. Eventually, we'll find a more exclusive partner," Jenkins said. "Because for us to sustain ourselves as a company long term, we do need to start getting people towards watching in specific places."

It's one more obstacle in a rather remarkable journey for "The Chosen." Maybe the only person who isn't surprised that Jenkins has made it this far is Jenkins himself.

He said he's not surprised that his short film has turned into a TV series that has been seen (at least in part) by more than 100



Director Dallas Jenkins, left, works with Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus, during taping of Season 3 of "The Chosen."

million people on a variety of outlets. "The fact that it's been so widely distributed hasn't necessarily generated a lot of money, but it has gotten a lot of eyeballs on it. That's our goal. We want it to be seen by as many people as possible."

"Honestly, I don't think about the future. I really don't," Jenkins said. "My whole life changed about six, seven years ago. I gave up focusing on results. I gave up focusing on goals. So this hasn't totally shocked me, because I believe God can do anything."

However, he admitted that he "didn't expect" that "The Chosen" would produce a single season, let alone five — with plans for two more.

"I'm just trying to make sure that each season is good. We've got enough to worry about making sure that our show is good — and that God is pleased — to start thinking about what the future might hold and whether or not I'm living up to expectations. ... If I'm sitting in front of a blank computer screen and I start

thinking about avoiding criticism, or gaining praise, or trying to hit a goal, or seeing what my future could be, that is too big — adding too much to what I'm already carrying."

All-consuming

In the midst of filming Season 5, Jenkins has in the back of his mind that he's still got Seasons 6 and 7 over the horizon — that he's got to raise the money to produce them, write the episodes and get his actors back in front of the cameras.

"When people ask me how I'm doing, or if I'm excited, or how I feel about things, I always say, 'I'll let you know in 2027 or so, when we're finally finished with all of this,'" he said.

Jenkins is not just writing, producing and directing "The Chosen" — he's also the co-founder and chairman of the board of a film company with 65 employees that is "growing faster than we can keep up with. And then I've also got to make the show

and sell the show. And we have to create things from scratch because we don't have a studio or a network behind us."

It has, quite simply, consumed Jenkins' life. He recalled reading a book that quoted David Benioff and D.B. Weiss, the showrunners of "Game of Thrones," saying "that pretty much for eight years, all they did was that show. ... They just lived and breathed it year-round. And I really identified with that."

It's been both "the hardest" time for Jenkins and his family, and the "most rewarding."

"But, yeah," he said, "it is an all-consuming thing. ... But it's tough to complain when it's having the kind of impact that it's having."

Living, breathing human beings

Jenkins theorizes that the reason "The Chosen" has struck a chord with so many people is "the way that we're doing this portrayal of Jesus and

the disciples as living, breathing human beings — as opposed to stained glass windows." He said he's received positive feedback from viewers who range in age from 6 to 90.

One of the extras in Goshen told him her 8-year-old is a "huge fan." Another told him, through tears, that his mother — who died the previous week at the age of 91 — kept telling me that I needed to tell Dallas when I met him on the set that he needs to keep going and that the show changed her life. And that she was watching it on her phone in the hospital. And this woman was 91 years old ...

"And so that gives you an indication that generation, culture, language all over the world doesn't seem to be a barrier."

It's going great

Production on Season 5 is "going great," Jenkins said. "Really, every day has been going very, very well. We're on time, on budget. The scenes look incredible. I don't get ahead of myself. I'll have a better answer for you when the season's over. But right now, we really are feeling blessed."

As of mid-May, they're about a month into production on Season 5, which is scheduled to wrap at the end of July.

"And then we've got two more seasons after that. This is a seven-season show," he said. "So we are on the back half. But there's still a lot of work to be done."

And, even though he'd like Utah weather to be a bit nicer — or at least more consistent — he's not really complaining. And he is thankful that he can use the Latter-day Saints sets.

"They're so hospitable. It looks beautiful," Jenkins said. "I mean, obviously, the mountains and the desert — it really does look like first-century Israel. And it's been an extraordinary backdrop for us."

Even though "the wind comes and goes on a whim," which makes filming "challenging. But I think that's part of it. I think it shows on the screen. I think it makes it feel authentic. It's hard, yes, but it's worth it."

One last step into defensive tempo

We have been studying tempo on defense. Usually the defenders should be looking, dancing quickly to gain the tricks needed to defeat the contract. But if the opponents have stretched to their contract or the dummy is relatively balanced, then the defenders should fox trot, moving slowly and awaiting their winners.

Which applies in this deal? How should the defense proceed against four spades after West leads the heart king?

It has been said that a four-heart pre-empt is a transfer to four spades for the other side. Here, South does not know who can make what, so he bids four spades as a three-way shot. Maybe he will make his contract, perhaps West would have brought home four hearts, possibly the opponents will misjudge, going to five hearts and failing when four spades is also going down. Seeing two losing hearts in the dummy, East should not thoughtlessly



BRIDGE

Phillip Alder

encourage with his heart seven. South will happily ruff West's heart continuation, draw trumps, and run the diamond nine. Yes, the finesse loses, but declarer wins 11 tricks: six spades, four diamonds and one club.

Knowing West has six hearts for his opening bid, East should realize that there is only one heart trick for the defense. And that diamond suit in the dummy is threatening. Rather than signaling with his heart two and hoping partner will shift to a club at trick two, East should overtake with the heart ace and lead the club queen himself. That results in one down instead of one over.

When you can see the best defense, try to take charge.

North		05-25-24	
♠ J 10 8			
♥ 8 4			
♦ A Q J 10 2			
♣ 8 5 2			
West		East	
♠ 2		♠ 7 4 3	
♥ K Q J 10 9 8		♥ A 7 3 2	
♥ 7 5		♦ K 2	
♠ A 7 4		♣ Q J 10 9	
South			
♠ A K Q 9 8 5			
♥ 10			
♦ 9 8 4			
♣ A 8 2			
Dealer: West			
Vulnerable: Both			
South	West	North	East
♠ 4	♠ 10	♠ 7	♠ 6
♥ 10	♥ 9	♥ 8	♥ 7
♦ 10	♦ 9	♦ 8	♦ 7
♣ 10	♣ 9	♣ 8	♣ 7
Opening lead ♥ K			

SUDOKU ANSWER ON D2

E	C	5	4			F	8		1
	4	9	8					5	3
		E	6	D	1	0	4		9
9	0	A	C		6	5	2		
		F	7			E		3	4
B	6			5		A			8
	A				1	2		9	F
8	2		0		4		B	7	9
C	3	B	8	D		E		2	7
4		E	2	A	5				D
0	9		3			B		E	6
8	6		B		7	4			
	A	0		2		C		D	6
A		1	7	B	8		F	2	
	E	9				D	0	1	
7		C	4			9	6		2

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

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