

Book: The Gospels
Series: Following Jesus
Lesson: *Jesus' Discourse on Discipleship: What Does it Mean to Be a Follower of Jesus? Part 2*
Text: Matthew 10:5-42
Date: Sunday, December 9, 2012

Colonial Hills
ARE
Baptist Church

Key



= Teacher Information



= Discussion Starter

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TEACHING TIP

You may want to do a quick 2-3 minute review of last week's points, provided below for you. In this lesson, you'll undoubtedly find good discussion and provoking application throughout, but there are some helpful summary considerations in the conclusion, too. And, because of the amount of material in these verse, we will take a concept-by-concept, rather than phrase-by-phrase approach.

NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Luke 19:28-44

INTRODUCTION

Last week and this week, we're reviewing Jesus' discourse on discipleship. Throughout this study, I hope you'll become convinced that ***you must follow Jesus Christ as His disciple***. As we study His discourse and consider its application, we'll discover five aspects of discipleship. Each aspect answers our questions regarding discipleship and compels us to follow Christ.

THE MOTIVATION FOR DISCIPLESHIP (9:35-38)

1. *Jesus' compassion should motivate us to follow Him (vv. 35-36).*
2. *Jesus' commission should motivate us to follow Him (vv. 37-38).*

THE PARTICIPATION IN DISCIPLESHIP (10:1-4)

1. *Disciples have extraordinary power (v. 1).*
2. *Disciples are ordinary people (vv. 2-4).*

THE INSTRUCTION FOR DISCIPLESHIP (10:5-15)

Following Jesus is not just about seeing and submitting to Jesus; it's also about being sent by Jesus. Indeed, this is the privilege and glory of being His disciple (notice how Paul and Peter felt about it [Titus 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1])—that He new commissions us to be His representative in the harvest fields (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:11, 14-15, 18-21).

This is a very important consideration to think through. When Jesus called His very first disciples, it was not so that they would merely follow His words and way of living, but so that they would then embody His words and way of living as they made disciples. That is obvious from His very first call to them—“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Although Jesus' call to you was not audible, His burden was the same. He wants to take you (2 Corinthians 5:16), transform you (2 Corinthians 5:17), and commission you (2 Corinthians 5:18). When Jesus commands “Follow Me,” He never expects it to lead to a static, hidden, quiet Christian. At the heart of discipleship is representing and promoting Jesus.

This truth is obvious in Jesus' discourse. He has been burdened that the laborers are few (9:37), He gave the solution to that in prayer for more workers (9:38), He then “called” twelve men to answer that prayer (10:1), and He “sends [them] forth” (10:5) to preach “the kingdom of heaven” (10:7) of which He was the King. Indeed it was their identity with Him that would bring so much opposition throughout their public ministry (10:22).

In verses 5-15, Jesus gives His first disciples some basic instruction regarding their ministry of representation and proclamation. We'll briefly outline and consider that instruction.

1. *The audience for our mission (vv. 5-6)*

In these two verses, we discover both that our audience differs from the first twelve disciples and that our message is the same. The first twelve disciples were sent only to

the “lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and they were told to bypass the Gentiles and even the Samaritans. At His ascension, Jesus broadened His commission to all His disciples, saying, “Go ye therefore and [make disciples of¹] all nations” (Matthew 28:19; cf. Acts 1:8).²

2. *The message of our mission (v. 7)*

While our audience differs from the first twelve disciples, the message has never changed: “The kingdom of heaven is at hand!” MacArthur provides a wondering explanation of this message:

In Scripture, the kingdom of heaven can be viewed in three aspects. First, it is manifest in conversion, when a person enters the sovereign rule of God by trusting in Christ for salvation (cf. Matt. 18:3). Second, it is manifest in consecration, as believers live out the divine principles of God's revelation by obedience to His Word. “The kingdom of God is...righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Third, the kingdom will be seen in its glorious millennial form when Christ returns to earth to establish and rule it in person and then sets up His eternal kingdom (Matt. 25:31; Acts 3:19–21; Rev. 11:15; 20:4).

The central message of the kingdom is the message about the King....The gospel of the kingdom has many practical ramifications, social as well as personal. But until its central message of God's sovereign provision for man's salvation is clearly understood, accepted, and obeyed, trying to apply it to any other area of life is both disobedient to Christ's command and futile. The gospel transforms society only as it transforms individuals.³

3. *The confirmation of our mission (v. 8)*

Illustration: “Doctors, lawyers, and other professionals prominently display the diplomas and other documents that certify their qualifications and authority to practice. In a far more important way, those who represent Christ must have credentials that confirm their divine mission and message [cf. 2 Corinthians 2:12].”⁴

Verse 8 refers to these confirming credentials, that even Jesus performed to authenticate His ministry (cf. Matthew 11:4-5; John 9:30-33). These were not bizarre abilities—like, for example, the ability to disappear and reappear—but were purposeful, identifying demonstrations. They “demonstrated the sympathetic heart of God” and “predicted the millennium” (cf. Isaiah 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:7).⁵

We recognize that these “gifts of miraculous powers were restricted to the apostolic age, and no believer today manifests such supernatural apostolic credentials. But though it is shown in less dramatic and physically awesome ways, the mark of divine power still validates the work of those God sends out to do His will.”⁶



Application: What are the confirming evidences of authentic, divine power in true disciples of Jesus today? *Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.” This evidences itself in ministry to (if not miraculous healing of) the sick, spiritual life-giving to the dead, and triumphant ministry in Satan’s realm through the proclamation of truth. While today’s confirmation may not be as physically and miraculously apparent, the genuine disciple of Jesus will “freely give” because he’s “freely received” (cf. Luke 7:40-47; 2 Corinthians 12:15). Discipleship ministry is liberal both in its object and in its extent—this is the confirming mark of Jesus’ followers.*

4. *The compensation for our mission (vv. 9-10)*

The two basic ideas in these verses are that ministers should take care of the essentials, and then should trust God to provide through others. “The apostles were to go forth with a minimum of clothing and supplies, trusting the Lord to provide whatever else they needed. God Himself established the principle that the worker is worthy of his support, and He will see that it is fulfilled.”⁷

5. *The response to our mission (vv. 11-15)*

To keep our considerations simple, we’ll again consider two basic ideas from these verses: first, partner with those who will be supportive of your ministry (vv. 11-13a); second, don’t become vexed by those who don’t support your ministry (vv. 13b-14). While our burden and ministry should be for all men (cf. Colossians 1:28-29), Jesus here begins to shape a principle of reaching the reachable and teaching the teachable.

*It is not that we are to turn away from those who reject the gospel at first hearing or even after several hearings. Had that practice been followed, many believers would not be in the kingdom today...(2 Cor. 5:20...2 Pet. 3:9)...Jesus was not speaking of those who are slow to understand or believe but of those who, after hearing a clear testimony of the gospel and seeing dramatic and irrefutable signs of confirmation, continue to resist and oppose it. When a person’s mind is firmly set against God, we should turn our efforts to others.*⁸

Illustration: Consider the following imaginary account provided by S. D. Gordon in his book *Quiet Talks on Service*. He depicts a conversation between Jesus and Gabriel upon Jesus’ ascension and return to heaven.

THE CAUTION ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP (10:16-39)

As the angel Gabriel greets Jesus he asks, “Master, You died for the world, did You not?” to which the Lord replies, “Yes.” “You must have suffered much,” the angel says; and again Jesus answers, “Yes.” “Do they all know that you died for them?” Gabriel continues. “No. Only a few in Palestine know about it so far,” Jesus says. “Well, then, what is Your plan for telling the rest of the world that You shed Your blood for them?” Jesus responds, “Well, I asked Peter and James and John and Andrew and a few others if they would make it the business of their lives to tell others. And then the ones that they tell could tell others, and they in turn could tell still others, and finally it would reach the farthest corner of the earth and all would know the thrill and power of the gospel.” “But suppose Peter fails? And suppose after a while John just doesn’t tell anyone? And what if James and Andrew are ashamed or afraid? Then what?” Gabriel asks. “I have no other plans,” Jesus is said to have answered; “I am counting entirely on them.”⁹

Jesus’ disciples are Jesus’ plan for reaching the world with His good news—and as it has been widely noted, He has no Plan B. While its effect in a person’s heart is entirely up to God’s Spirit, the declaration of the gospel is firmly in our hands. We must not drop the ball!



Application: Consider some of the comments that were made as we introduced this main point. How is your understanding of being a follower of Jesus starting to change or how is it being adjusted? *open discussion*

Transition: We must follow Jesus Christ as His disciple. As we gaze upon the compassion of Jesus and glory in His commission, we are earnestly motivated to follow Him. As we begin to follow Him, we discover His power to use ordinary us to accomplish extraordinary results, as we grasp His instructions to represent Him and proclaim His message of good news. Now, with all that said, Jesus spends the greatest amount of time in this discourse warning us and providing us with cautions as we follow Him.

It is in this passage, in particular, that Jesus bluntly details for us what is the cost of following Him. His warnings of “wolves” (v. 16), arrest (v. 19), “death” (v. 21), “hatred” (v. 22), persecution (v. 23), and “sword” (v. 34), and His use of the words “will/shall” and “when” unpatronizingly emphasizes that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). We’ll summarize Jesus’ comments under three key cautions.

1. **Don’t make trouble for yourself; it will come anyways (vv. 16-23; 34-36).**

Jesus’ disciples don’t live in denial or in hiding; they live wisely and by faith.

a. **Be discerning (v. 16).**

The basic idea of verse 16 “The basic idea is that of saying the right thing at the right time and place, of having a sense of propriety and appropriateness, and of trying to discover the best means to achieve the highest goal. It is neither wise nor loving to be needlessly accusatory or inflammatory”¹⁰ or belligerent or obnoxious. This is what Paul reminded us of in Colossians 4:5 and 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

b. **Be aware (vv. 17-18, 21-22, 34-36).**

Jesus tells us to “beware”—those to whom we minister may oppress us. We would be naïve to ignore or deny that reality. Behind the people we see are forces we don’t see (Ephesians 6:12) who desperately want to kill our message (and us—cf. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4).¹¹ Throughout this passage, Jesus predicts that persecution will come to us from religion (v. 17), government (v. 18), and society (v. 22), and sometimes Satan’s agents are unfortunately the members of our own households (vv. 21, 34-36). Again, Jesus is being

really honest and giving us the black-and-white heads-up on what to expect as His followers.



If Jesus is the “Prince of peace” (Isaiah 9:6), whose birth promised “peace” (Luke 2:14) and whose ministry granted “peace” (John 14:27; 16:33), how can it be that He didn’t “come to send peace on earth...but a sword” (v. 34)? *“At the second coming of Christ a perfect kingdom of peace on earth will be established, ushered in and sovereignly sustained by the Prince of Peace. But for now during the interval between His two comings, the gospel that brings inner peace to those who believe [Romans 5:1] will also be the cause of their being misunderstood, maligned, and mistreated by those who do not believe—including those nearest and dearest to them.”*¹² Notice that this verse militates against any kind of prosperity gospel.

However, believers should also be aware of God’s patient sovereignty, even in the midst of persecution. Even when they are “brought before governors and kings” to be tried and punished (v. 18), God has ironically ordained that situation as an opportunity for them to be “a testimony [to] them and the Gentiles” (v. 18). This is exactly what Paul related in Philippians 1:12-14, “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places, and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

c. Be confident (vv. 19-20).

With that knowledge in mind, we can even be confident in the midst of severe persecution. Yes, “To be maligned, persecuted, arrested, and beaten is traumatic, and while that is being experienced it is

extremely difficult not to become anxious. When we are charged with a wrongdoing, the natural reaction is to speak out in our own defense, to convince our accusers of our innocence.”¹³ However, “Those who suffer for Christ will be defended by Christ,”¹⁴ for He will “give you in that same hour what ye shall speak” (v. 19).¹⁵

Here we are reminded that God gives specific grace for specific situations. This is a promise that we must stand on. We may get discouraged as we consider the possibility of persecution and the boldness of those who have experienced it, and we may wonder if we would be so bold. If we walk by faith in this promise of God, we will experience His divine enablement in those moments, exactly when we need it.

Illustration: Church history reveals that God has been true to His promise of sustaining grace for the moment of persecution and even martyrdom. Ignatius, a student of the disciple John, was ordered by the emperor to be arrested and was sentenced to be thrown to the wild beasts in Rome. He responded, “May the wild beasts be eager to rush upon me. If they be unwilling, I will compel them. Come, crowds of wild beasts; come, tearings and manglings, wracking of bones and hacking of limbs; come, cruel tortures of the devil. Only let me attain unto Christ!” Polycarp was the last to be taught personally by the apostles. He was arrested and brought into an amphitheater filled with a great multitude of people. Wood was collected and made into a pile. Polycarp asked not to be fastened to the stake. “Leave me thus,” he said, “He who strengthens me to endure the flames will also enable me to stand firm at the stake without being fastened with nails.” The woodpile was lighted, and as the flames consumed him, Polycarp prayed with a loud voice, “Lord God Almighty, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I praise Thee that Thou hast judged me worthy

of this day and of this hour, to participate in the number of Thy witnesses and in the cup of Thy Christ.” Justin Martyr was scourged and beheaded in Rome with six other Christians. His last words were, “We desire nothing more than to suffer for our Lord Jesus Christ, for this gives us salvation and joyfulness before His dreadful judgment seat.”

d. Be steadfast (vv. 22-23).

Among the crowds that followed Jesus, there were both wheat and chaff. While some followed Jesus because they were compelled by His person, most were interested only in His performances (John 6:26). Persecution has a way of burning away the chaff and revealing, through the evidence of their endurance, those who truly are committed to Christ.¹⁶

So, Jesus looks into the faces of His first twelve disciples, and He encourages them to be steadfast in their commitment to Him, knowing that “he that endureth to the end [no matter what He endures to get there] shall be saved” (v. 22).

Some people have interpreted these predictions of persecution and warnings to endure to indicate that we should seek, invite, or pray for persecution. However, Jesus makes the opposite point here. In verse 23, He recommends that the steadfast, committed disciple “flee” the persecution, so that he can continue his representative proclamation for Christ elsewhere.¹⁷ Paul models this for us in Acts 12-14, 17.

2. As goes the Master, so goes the disciples (vv. 24-33).

a. Don’t expect any better treatment than Christ (vv. 24-25).

The argument here is proverbial—“The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (v. 24). So, if the Master has been blasphemed, maligned, and mistreated (e.g., “called...Beelzebub”—cf. Matthew 12:24), “how much more” will His followers face such treatment (v. 25). This was a common teaching from Jesus to His disciples (cf. John 13:16; 15:18-19, 20).

b. Don’t fear the oppressors (vv. 26-31).

In these verses, Jesus uses a logical progression of truth to comfort the trembling hearts of His disciples. They know clearly now to expect oppression, but they should “not fear” their oppressors for three reasons.¹⁸

First, the wrongdoers will be exposed and their deeds will be “revealed” (v. 26). God will vindicate His disciples through the public message that they proclaim (v. 27).


Second, there is Someone else that you should fear, and He can do more damage than the oppressors (v. 28). Jesus reasons here from the lesser to the greater. As we follow Christ, the worst we can expect is physical death; if we reject Christ, the worst we can expect is spiritual death. Reverence for God is a powerful motivation for His disciples (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:11).


Illustration: “When Hugh Latimer was preaching one day in the presence of King Henry VIII, he reports that he said to himself, ‘Latimer! Latimer! Remember that the king is here; be careful what you say.’ Then he said to himself, ‘Latimer! Latimer! Remember that the King of kings is here; be careful what you do not say.’ For such unflinching faithfulness Latimer was eventually burned at the stake. But He feared failing God more than he feared offending men.”¹⁹

In these verses, Jesus is clearly, but lovingly, adjusting our focus so that we see ministry and opposition through the lens of faith and not sight. Therefore, a third reason to “not fear” oppressors is now given. Third, God’s followers are very precious to Him. Jesus uses the illustration of a sparrow—another argument from the lesser to the greater—to picture the great care of the “Father” for His children. Sparrows are rather insignificant, but they do not escape the notice of intervention of God (v. 29). God’s knowledge of us is equally and more profoundly intimate (v. 30), and we “are of more value than many sparrows” (v. 31).


c. Don’t deny your Master (vv. 32-33).

These verses state the same caution both negatively and positively. We can either “confess” (v. 32) or “deny” (v. 33) Jesus (and we know which of the two we have chosen, when we are faced with public pressure—“before men”); but remember that Jesus will respond to that by either “confessing” or “denying” us “before [His] Father.”

 **Application:** How do we “confess [Jesus] before men”? *“A true disciple is willing to openly identify with Christ wherever he is, whether before a fellowship of other believers, a group of serious inquirers, or a hostile crowd of unbelievers [cf. Revelation 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:6-7 contrast with 4:10]...The church does not lack for supporters when it is popular and respected; but when the world turns against it, its fair-weather friends are not to be found. Believers can be silenced by much less than persecution. Simple embarrassment or friendly ridicule has closed many Christian mouths.”²⁰*

 How do we “deny [Jesus] before men”? *“It is possible to deny Christ before men by silence, by failing to witness for Him, and trying to be an unnoticed Christian—whose friends and neighbors, and perhaps even family, would never suspect of being a believer. It is*

also possible to deny Christ by actions, living like the rest of the world lives, with no higher standards or values. It is possible to deny Christ by words, using the world’s profanity, vulgarity, and blasphemy. It is possible to deny Christ in many ways that are short of verbally and publicly renouncing Him.”²¹

 Is Jesus referring to a one-time decision or a lifestyle commitment? *“Every believer has lapses of faithfulness, which is why the Lord’s promise of 1 John 1:9 is so dear: ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ Peter denied the Lord, but he could not live with his denial and he went out and wept bitterly. His heart was broken because he had so terribly failed and grieved His Lord. Timothy was Paul’s most promising protégé, yet years after he had himself become a leader in the church, Timothy apparently had become reticent about openly proclaiming the gospel. Paul therefore admonished him. ‘Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord’ (2 Tim. 1:8).”²²*

3. So, count the cost (vv. 37-39).

With cutting clarity, Jesus now climaxes in His discourse on the cost of following Him. It’s as if He puts His hand on our most precious delights—our relationships (v. 37) and our very life (v. 38)—looks us squarely in the eyes, and asks us, “_____, do you love Me more than these? Will you part with them in order to have Me?” If our answer is “no,” Jesus says that we are “not worthy of [Him],” for we have committed idolatry, “left [our] first love” (Revelation 2:4), and “hewed...out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jeremiah 2:13). The sacrifice of family, friends, and one’s own life to the lordship of Jesus Christ is the extent of the first and great commandment—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all

thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37) and “Him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

True followers of Jesus are willing to bear “[their] cross” (v. 38). The “cross” is not merely a hard or tragic difficulty that results from following Jesus.²³ It is the symbol, not just of excruciating pain and heartless cruelty, but of death, and “taking it up” means “to abandon [oneself] without reservation to Jesus’ lordship, with no consideration of cost—even of life itself....A cross is the willing sacrifice of everything one has, including life, for the sake of Christ. It is something that, like the Lord Himself, a believer must take on himself when it is thrust upon him by the unbelieving world because of his relationship to God.”²⁴

Illustration: This may be as excruciating as it sounds. A loving and faithful husband/father can easily lose his breath when he considers what this may realistically mean. John Bunyan knew the agony of the cross, for to follow Jesus meant for him, not only imprisonment, but also the total destitution of his family. He chose Christ and His cross, but he describes the difficulty of that:

*The parting with my wife and poor children hath often been to me in this place as the pulling of the flesh from my bones; and that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I would have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all I have besides. Oh, the thought of the hardship I thought my blind one might go under would break my heart to pieces. ... But yet, recalling myself, thought I, I must venture all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. Oh, I saw in this condition, I was a man who was pulling down his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet thought I, I must do it. I must do it.*²⁵



Application: How would you evaluate your own commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ? How would you answer the hypothetical question from Jesus in the first paragraph? What is keeping you from being willing to forsake your relationships and even life itself, to take up your cross, and to follow Jesus single-heartedly? *open discussion—many things will undoubtedly be suggested, but I think what we need to see in this passage is that perhaps Jesus and His claims are not as real to us as they were to these twelve men as they looked Jesus in the face and heard His words spoken; perhaps Jesus’ performance has distracted you from His person; perhaps He’s more of a good idea or an ethereal force than a real Master*

If you are having a hard time imagining how anyone could ever make that kind of commitment to Jesus, perhaps your “value system” is messed up, which is what Jesus talks about in verse 39. Jesus explains that “no sacrifice for Him compares with what is received from Christ.”²⁶ In this verse, we learn that following Christ is not inexpensive, but it is worth it. The one who figuratively or literally “loseth his life for My sake, shall find it.” In those three little words, “shall find it,” inexpressible and everlasting fulfillment is promised (cf. Psalm 16:11; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Unfortunately, sometimes the children of this world have a better grasp on value than we do.

Illustration: Umm Nidal, the woman known as “Mother of Martyrs,” made headlines around the world after an interview she gave on December 21, 2005. Umm Nidal is a politically active Palestinian mother of ten sons who, to date, has voluntarily sacrificed three of her sons for the sake of resisting the occupiers—Israel. She said in the interview, “We cannot stop sacrificing just because we feel pain. What is the meaning of sacrifice? One sacrifices what is precious, not what is of little value. My children are the most precious thing in my life. That is why I

sacrificed them for a greater cause—for Allah, who is more precious than them. My son is not more precious than his God.” She added, “He who chooses a difficult road must be ready to bear the consequences.”

Perhaps we do not understand the surpassing value of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:7-14), and so participating in His sufferings and experiencing the loss of all things for Him are concepts that really bother us. This passage makes it really simple for us and reminds us that “Jesus + nothing = everything” and that “everything - Jesus = nothing.” And, friends, that is a reality that our world fights hard to conceal, but eternity will reveal it in striking clarity.

This, then, is why we must add to our faith excellence and knowledge and the character of Christ, so that the engine of our heart is enflamed with experienced relational passion, so that we lovingly follow Christ even when it’s tough.



Application: Consider those things that are keeping you from this kind of whole-hearted, loving commitment to Jesus. How does the real and living person, promises, and work of Jesus (i.e., the gospel—everything Jesus is, everything Jesus says, everything Jesus does) put the value of those things into their proper perspective? *open discussion*



Application: What motivations from the character of God are found in this passage to empower us to follow Him, even when it is expensive? *sacrifice (9:35), compassion (9:36), kindness (v. 18), defense (vv. 19-20), salvation (v. 22-23), vindication (vv. 26-27), judgment (v. 28), knowledge and sovereignty (v. 29), reward (vv. 39-42)*

Transition: In verses 40-42, Jesus reiterates the concept of “finding our lives” when we follow Jesus by promising His followers “rewards.”

THE RECOGNITION FOR DISCIPLESHIP (10:40-42)

These verses assure us that our Lord loves to reward His followers and is faithful in doing so. Indeed, although these rewards are largely reserved in heaven (cf. Ephesians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:4), we can have confidence that a faithful disciple “shall in no wise lose his reward” (v. 42).

CONCLUSION

As we review what we’ve heard from our Master about following Him, we remember:

- As Jesus’ disciple, we are compelled to follow Him because of His compassion and mission.
- As Jesus’ disciple, we are enabled to make an impact for Him even though we are nothing special.
- As Jesus’ disciple, we are commissioned to represent Him before the world.
- As Jesus’ disciple, we are going to have unique opportunities and face major difficulties.
- As Jesus’ disciple, we are going to be richly rewarded for our faithfulness, and the end will be worth it all.

This is what it means to be a Christ-ian, a disciple and follower of Jesus—to have Him be our entire identity. And “because the truths of Matthew 10 are so foundational and so profound, believers who have wholeheartedly lived out these truths are the men and women who have made great marks on the world for Jesus Christ. They are the ones with total dedication, total commitment, and total obedience.”²⁷

But, really, when we just read through this passage in our private devotions, it’s easy to recognize that the type of Christianity Christ describes here is not the type of Christianity that we face today. So, perhaps we just read through it and then move on to the “more applicable material” in chapter 11. Maybe we just “shelve” this chapter and put it “on hold” until American Christianity actually faces this kind of persecution.

However, if “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16), then we must wrestle with the implications of this passage for us now. Even though we might not physically experience the extremes of what Jesus prepares us for in these verses, let us suggest to ourselves at least three primary responses to this passage.

1. Not facing Matthew 10-type Christianity is a manifestation of God’s grace, and I should be grateful. Let us actively, verbally, and regularly thank God for the anomaly that America is, especially in light of picture painted by this passage.
2. Not facing Matthew 10-type Christianity is a manifestation of God’s grace, and I should be faithful. We must understand that the purpose of freedom is the same as persecution: “for Jesus’ sake to be a testimony” (v. 18). To our shame, though, many of us have a difficulty “enduring to the end” (v. 22) when faced with the minor suffering that we face in America. We are indeed receiving better treatment than our Master did, and in light of verses 24-25, that can only be due to God’s grace.

It’s sometimes vocalized that American Christianity needs some persecution to revive and energize us. It’s sometimes bemoaned that persecuted brothers and sisters in China, etc. seem to experience blessings unknown to the American church. But the inverse is also true: American believers experience blessings unknown to our persecuted family around the world. Therefore, we don’t really need persecution to give us passion and vision; our Lord Himself provides us with that—we just need to renew our commitment to follow Jesus and faithfully take advantage of the freedom He’s given us to do so without distraction and obstacle.

3. Facing Matthew 10-type Christianity is a reality, and I should count the cost. Following Jesus is not inexpensive, but it is worth it.

*Lord Jesus, shall it ever be
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?*

*Ashamed of Jesus? Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star.
He sheds the beams of light divine
Over this darkened soul of mine.*

*Ashamed of Jesus? Just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon.
'Tis midnight with my soul till He,
Bright Morning Star, bids darkness flee.*

*Ashamed of Jesus, that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend?
No—when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.*

*Ashamed of Jesus? Yes, I may
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tear to wipe, no joy to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.*

*Till then—nor is my boasting vain—
Till then I boast a Savior slain.
And oh, may this my portion be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!*

ENDNOTES

¹ The word translated “teach” (Gk. *mathetes*) in our KJV is actually the same word for “disciples” (Gk. *matheteuo*), just in its verb form. Therefore, the most accurate translation is “to make disciples.”

² “That this was a temporary command is seen not only from the clear call of the Great Commission but from the fact that Jesus had already ministered both to Gentiles and to Samaritans. He had healed the Gentile centurion’s servant (Matt. 8:5–13) and had first revealed Himself publicly as the Messiah to the Samaritan woman of Sychar, who believed in Him herself and led other Samaritans to saving faith (John 4:7–42)....

There are perhaps three reasons that Jesus chose to restrict the apostles’ ministry at this time to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. First was the Jews’ special place in God’s plan.... Second, Jesus sent the apostles to preach first to Jews because they were barely up to the task of witnessing effectively to their own people, much less of witnessing to Gentiles and Samaritans, whose cultures and ways they little understood and greatly despised.... Third, Jesus probably restricted the apostles’ first ministry to the Jews for the practical reason that the twelve needed a special point of attack, a limited and familiar field in which they could concentrate their fledgling efforts” (John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Matthew*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary [Chicago: Moody Press, 1985]).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Cited in Herbert Lockyer, *All the Apostles of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), p. 31 quoted in Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Again, notice the unashamed clarity of Jesus here: “Jesus’ purpose in warning about persecution was not to frighten the apostles and make them suspicious of every human being who was not a believer. Their very mission was to convert the unsaved and win them to Christ’s kingdom. But they needed to be warned not to expect the world to receive the gospel and its messengers with open arms. Satan’s world system, of whom every unbeliever is a part, is diametrically opposed to Christ, His people, and His kingdom. Satan will enlist the support of every unbeliever possible in his fight against God. Jesus’ purpose in this text was to caution the apostles, and all of His people, not to be surprised when they are criticized, ostracized, and even imprisoned and put to death for His sake” (Ibid.).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “For the apostles, that promise included the added provision of divine inspiration. When Paul, for example, gave testimony while he was on trial, he spoke the Word of God. For it is not you who speak, Jesus assured the apostles, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (Ibid.).

¹⁶ “Endurance of persecution is the hallmark of genuine salvation: It is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. Endurance does not produce or protect salvation, which is totally the work of God’s grace. But endurance is evidence of salvation, proof that a person is truly redeemed and a child of God. God gives eternal life ‘to those who by perseverance in doing

good seek for glory and honor and immortality,’ Paul says (Rom. 2:7). The writer of Hebrews expresses the same truth in these words: ‘For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end’ (3:14). We do not earn our salvation by endurance, but prove it. Continuance is a verification of being a real Christian. Theologians call this the perseverance of the saints. The following Scriptures also emphasize perseverance: Matthew 24:13; John 8:31; 1 Corinthians 15:1–2; Colossians 1:21–23; Hebrews 2:1–3; 4:14; 6:11–12; 10:39; 12:14; 2 Peter 1:10. Persecution quickly burns away chaff in the church. Those who have made only a superficial profession of Christ have no new nature to motivate them to suffer for Christ and no divine power to enable them to endure it if they wanted to. Nothing is more spiritually purifying and strengthening than persecution (cf. James 1:12). It is because God’s Word assures us that absolutely nothing can separate us from Christ that we can count on such unshakable endurance... (Rom. 8:35, 37–39)” (Ibid.).

¹⁷ “Persecution is never to be sought or endured for its own sake; nor should we intentionally bring it on ourselves, supposedly for Christ’s sake. We have no right to provoke animosity or ridicule. And Christ here urges escaping persecution when doing so is expedient and possible. We are not obligated to stay in a place of opposition and danger until we are killed, or even imprisoned. Whenever they persecute you in this city, Jesus says, flee to the next” (Ibid.).

¹⁸ MacArthur helpful summarizes these points under vindication by God (vv. 26–27), veneration of God (v. 28), and valuation by God (vv. 29–31). Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ “No matter how terrible they may be, the hardships and tragedies of human living that often befall Christians are not the crosses of which Jesus speaks. Such things as a cruel spouse, a rebellious child, a debilitating or terminal illness, the loss of a job, or destruction of a house by a tornado or flood, may strongly test a believer’s faith; but those are not crosses. The cross of a believer is not a mystical or spiritual identification with the cross of Christ or some ‘crucified life’ idea. Such concepts are foreign to the context, and the cross of Christ was yet future when Jesus spoke here. The disciples would hear cross and think only of physical death” (Ibid.).

²⁴ Ibid. Also, by way of **illustration**: “Henry Drummond, the Scottish author and evangelist who wrote the well-known booklet *The Greatest Thing in the World*, was once invited to speak to an exclusive men’s club in London. He began his talk with a provocative analogy that those men easily understood: ‘Gentlemen, the entrance fee into the kingdom of heaven is nothing; however, the annual subscription is everything’” (Ibid.).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. Also by way of **illustration**:

Florence Nightingale wrote in her diary: “I am thirty years of age, the age at which Christ began His mission. Now no more childish things, no more vain things.” Years later, near the end of her heroic life of service, she was asked the secret of her ability to accomplish so much for the Lord. She replied, “I can give only one explanation, and that is this: I have kept nothing back from God.” That is exactly what Jesus is talking about in this passage—keeping nothing back from Him.

When the famous surgeon Howard A. Kelly graduated from medical school he wrote in his diary: “Today I dedicate myself, my time, my capabilities, my ambition, everything to Him. Blessed Lord, sanctify me to Thy uses; give me no worldly success which may not lead me nearer to my Saviour.”

Soon after graduating from college, Jim Elliot wrote in his diary: “God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life that I may burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not

a long life but a full one like You, Lord Jesus." God answered that prayer, and in the flower of young manhood Jim Elliot's life was cut short by the spear of an Auca Indian as he and several other young men sought to take the gospel deep into the jungles of Ecuador.

From among the finest athletes in the Roman Empire, Nero selected a group called The Emperor's Wrestlers. Their motto was: "We, the wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Emperor, to win for thee the victory and from thee, the victor's crown." The wrestlers were also soldiers and were often sent out on special military campaigns. On a certain mission in Gaul (modern France), many of the wrestlers were converted to Christ. Upon hearing the news, Nero ordered the commander, Vespasian, to execute any wrestler who refused to renounce Christ and swear religious as well as military allegiance to the emperor. The emperor's orders were received in the dead of winter, as the men were encamped on the shore of a frozen lake. When Vespasian assembled the soldiers and asked how many were Christians, forty men stepped forward. Hoping not to lose any of these fine men, many of whom were his friends, he gave them until sundown the next day to reconsider. But at the given hour, all of them still refused to renounce Christ. In order that they not die at the hands of their comrades, the commander ordered the forty men to disrobe and walk naked out onto the ice. Throughout the night the soldiers on shore could hear the forty sentenced men singing triumphantly, "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory, and from Thee, the victor's crown." The singing grew fainter as morning neared, and at dawn a lone figure walked back and approached the fire. He confessed that his faith was not strong enough to face death. When Vespasian then heard the faint strains of "Thirty-nine wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ," he was so moved that he threw off his armor and clothes and marched out to join the others, shouting as he went, "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, to win for Thee the victory, and from Thee, the victor's crown." (Ibid.)