

Loyalty Tested

JESUS IS WORTH EVERYTHING.

Matthew 10:16–20, 26–34

WHAT BRANDS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR ACTIVITIES HOLD YOUR LOYALTY?

WHAT MAKES YOU LOYAL TO THEM?

Think about it: most of us are loyal to something.

A brand. A team. A friend group. A cause. A hobby.

Apple or Android?

Nike or Adidas?

One sports team you'll defend no matter how bad their season is?

Loyalty usually comes from connection, trust, or identity. We stick with things that feel worth it.

But here's the real question Jesus pushes us to ask: Is what I'm loyal to actually worthy of my loyalty?

Even more challenging, is it worth everything?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Jesus' time, being a disciple wasn't casual. You didn't just show up for a weekly lesson. You followed your teacher everywhere. You listened to how they talked, watched how they lived, and learned how they treated people. The goal was to eventually live and lead the way your teacher did.

Jesus had spent a lot of time with His disciples, teaching them, modeling truth, and letting them watch how He lived. Now, He was about to send them out.

This was like the test after training. They were sent to:

- Preach about the kingdom of God
- Care for people like Jesus did
- Trust God instead of themselves

Jesus gave them authority (Matt. 10:1) and called them apostles, which means sent ones. They weren't going in their own name, they were representing Jesus.

But Jesus didn't sugarcoat it. He warned them:

- Some people would reject them
- Some would be hostile
- Some would even persecute them

These instructions weren't just for the disciples back then. They're for every believer who tries to follow Jesus in a world that doesn't always welcome Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Snakes and Doves (Matt. 10:16–20)

Following Jesus doesn't mean everyone will be happy about it. Sometimes faith creates friction.

Jesus tells His disciples to live with wisdom and integrity at the same time.

Think about it:

Why do you think Jesus wants His followers to be both wise and pure when representing Him?

2. Sparrows and Hairs (Matt. 10:26–31)

Fear is real but Jesus reminds us who's actually in control.

If God notices a bird that most people overlook, and He knows every detail about you, then fear doesn't get the final word.

Think about it:

How does trusting God's care change the way you handle pressure or criticism?

3. Peace and Swords (Matt. 10:32–34)

Jesus makes it clear: loyalty to Him comes first.

That doesn't mean we're aggressive or unloving but it does mean we don't hide our faith to keep things comfortable.

Think about it:

What are practical ways you can acknowledge Jesus in your everyday life?

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Matthew 10:16

Circle the words “wise” and “innocent.”

Matthew 10:16 (ESV)

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Jesus starts with honesty. Following Him won’t always be comfortable or popular. Sheep don’t have claws or sharp teeth. They survive by staying close to the shepherd. Jesus is saying His followers will sometimes feel exposed, outnumbered, or misunderstood.

That’s why He gives two commands that go together:

- **Be wise** — pay attention, think before you act, don’t be careless.
- **Be innocent** — live with integrity, don’t compromise just to fit in.

Jesus isn’t telling His followers to be sneaky or fake. He’s calling them to live with **wisdom and purity at the same time**.

Think about it:

Why is it hard to be both wise and innocent when you’re following Jesus at school or online?

Day 2: Matthew 10:17–21

Compare Matthew 10:17–18 with John 15:20–21.

Matthew 10:17–21 (ESV)

“Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues...

...for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

Jesus warns His disciples that following Him may bring pushback. They would be rejected not because they were doing something wrong, but **because they belonged to Jesus.**

The world rejected Jesus, so it shouldn't surprise us when faith brings tension. But Jesus also gives hope: when the pressure is on, **God doesn't leave His people alone.** The Holy Spirit helps them know what to say and how to respond.

Think about it:

What helps you stay grounded in your faith when you feel pressured or questioned?

Day 3: Matthew 10:26–27

Underline “do not fear.”

Matthew 10:26–27 (ESV)

“So have no fear of them... What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.”

Jesus repeats a command His followers really needed to hear: **don't be afraid.** Fear can make us silent. Fear can make us hide what we believe.

Jesus reminds His disciples that truth always comes into the light. The gospel was never meant to stay private or hidden. What they learned from Jesus personally was meant to be shared publicly.

Think about it:

What would it look like for you to live out your faith more openly this week?

Day 4: Matthew 10:28–31

Underline “do not fear” and “do not be afraid.”

Matthew 10:28–31 (ESV)

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul...
Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

Jesus points out the difference between **temporary fear** and **eternal truth**. People may have influence over your reputation or circumstances, but only God has authority over your soul.

Then Jesus gives comfort: if God notices something as small as a sparrow, He definitely sees you. God knows every detail of your life, and nothing happens outside of His care.

Think about it:

How does trusting God’s care help you handle fear differently?

Day 5: Matthew 10:32–34

Pay attention to the words “acknowledge” and “deny.”

Matthew 10:32–34 (ESV)

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven...

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Jesus makes it clear: loyalty to Him can’t be hidden. Following Jesus is a public decision, not a private one. Acknowledging Him means living in a way that shows who you belong to.

Jesus also explains that faith can create tension. Choosing Him may cause conflict in relationships, but He is worth it. True peace comes from being right with God, not from avoiding hard choices.

Think about it:

What are some simple, everyday ways you can acknowledge Jesus before others?