

Lesson 9: Chapter 10 “Do not fear, follow Me”

Servant’s preparation:

http://www.suscpts.org/pdf/presentations/biblestudy/NT/Matthew/Matthew_10.pdf

Brief introduction:

At the beginning of each lesson in the bible study of St. Matthew, please mention this book overview.

- ✓ Who is St. Matthew? He was one of the twelve disciples; he was a tax-collector before Jesus called him to follow Him.
- ✓ Who did he write his gospel to? The Jews, it is designed to prove that Jesus is the Messianic king of Old Testament (OT) prophecy.
- ✓ What is its theme? Jesus is the King of the Heavenly kingdom, Israel’s long-awaited Messiah.

Remember:

Last lesson we studied chapter 9 which focused on Jesus performing various miracles, including healing a paralytic man by forgiving his sins, calling Matthew the tax collector to follow Him, raising a ruler's daughter from the dead, healing a woman with a blood issue, restoring sight to blind men, and casting out demons, all demonstrating His authority and compassion for the sick and marginalized.

Memory verse:

10:28 “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Or 10:32 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Lesson opener:

Reflecting on verses 10:32-33: Is it true that your faith could be a matter of the heart and does not need to show in your actions?

There is a movie called “Silence.” This movie was about missionaries who went to Japan and encountered serious persecution. The missionary “heroes” all ended up denouncing their faith. The main hero even turned to the local Japanese religions and worshiped idols. At the end of the movie, he was depicted as still having a faith in Christ in his heart even though all his actions showed otherwise. The lesson of the movie was that actions don’t matter. You can believe in your heart and then do whatever you want. Do you agree with this? We cannot say, “Just believe in your heart and it is fine. God knows your heart. He understands.” The idea that faith needs no action or even confession is heretical and blatantly against the Bible. Even though the movie had high reviews, we can say that it had a misleading message against our faith.

Lesson Goal:

There is a cost for becoming a disciple [a true Christian]. Jesus wants us to carry our cross and follow Him.

Lesson body:

Sending The Twelve Apostles (10:1 The Twelve Apostles (10:1 -4)

We read at the end of chapter 9 that Jesus said the “harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” In chapter 10, He pairs up His 12 closest followers, the disciples, and sends them out. Notice that His instructions to the Twelve are to minister to the Jews only. It was His purpose to convince them first during His earthly ministry. After His resurrection He would commission the disciples to pursue His ministry into all the world (more specifically, the Gentiles).

The twelve had already been called and had followed the Lord for some time. They were now commissioned and sent forth as apostles. It is time to stop observing and start witnessing, like all Christians should do. They don't serve unless they were disciples [prepared] first. [Pre-servants ministry at our church]

There are three pairs of brothers among them:

1. Andrew and Peter
2. James and John
3. James the Less and Judas, or Thaddeus

St Matthew mentioned the names of the twelve apostles, after he had declared the power, they were given from the Lord, over the unclean spirits so they expel them. Also, they were granted the healing power over diseases and all weaknesses. We notice two points in this selection of disciples:

- ✓ Firstly: The disciples were not of unusual talents, neither were they prominent figures in society. They were ordinary people. God works with anyone who follows Him.
- ✓ Secondly: The selection was an amazing combination of personalities. A tax-collector, Simon the Zealous [among a group of Jewish radicals], a doubtful person like Thomas, a bold person like Peter and so forth. Remember that God can and does use anyone who is willing to be His disciple.

Sending Out the Twelve (10:5-15)

In the beginning of their preaching, He put limits to their preaching area ‘the Jewish nation’ without going out of bounds to the city of Samaria, or to the way of the Gentiles. But before His ascension He told them to preach to all the nations, baptizing them. He has not allowed them to preach among the Gentiles until the Jews declared their rejection to the Messiah. This was not a bias to the Jews against the Gentiles, but it was for the Jews not to be skeptical of His Messianic message. Once they rejected Him, the door for the Gentiles was opened, even though Jesus Himself did not deprive Samaria and some of the Gentiles of His service. The distinction between Jew and Gentile was destroyed after resurrection.

What is The Topic of their Preaching? He defined the topic of preaching, which is ‘repentance’ since this is the way to the heavenly kingdom. “The Kingdom of Heaven Is At Hand!”

How do they support their preaching? Jesus says to go perform the miracles like the ones He has done in the last two chapters. Jesus has given them the authority to perform these miracles for free to give it to others for free as well.

Before He asked them not to possess gold, silver or copper, He offered them wonderful abilities that support them in the service, such as healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, casting out demons.

When they enter a city or a village asking for a home that has a good name, they then stay in it, and they do not go from one house to the other, not to seem dissatisfied with the hospitality of the people; so, their serving the word would not be transformed to a service of favors. They should concentrate their thoughts and struggle in the preaching service alone.

They had to teach the word as it is, and not to get disturbed if it is refused by anyone! If rejected, they shake off the dust, which was a custom for the Jews when they return from a pagan territory as a symbol of the "uncleanness" of the pagans.

The judgment of covenant brothers and sisters [Jews] who reject their message of the coming of the kingdom will be greater than the judgment on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Persecutions Are Coming (10:16-26)

God wants us to be witnesses to the world, but at the same time not “trust” the world.

The disciples were to be careful and alert, for they would be met with strong and powerful opposition and antagonism everywhere they traveled. According to verse 16, they were to be as innocent as doves but as shrewd as snakes. They were, after all, sheep among wolves.

Doves, of course, are associated with peace and innocence. Snakes have a long tradition of symbolism. The Jewish attributed a sly sort of wisdom to snakes. They are very cautious in avoiding danger. They hide their heads when being attacked. “Being wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” is a wonderful combination. The wisdom of snakes would save them from unnecessary exposure to danger; the harmlessness of the dove, from sinful ways to escape danger.

The other metaphor was less theological and more practical, as the wild and natural wolf was the primary predator of the sheep, a helpless and innocent animal. Sheep are humble. Sheep do not fight “fire with fire”. Each animal Jesus mentions has certain qualities that we can imitate. The sheep’s good qualities are meekness. But that doesn’t mean we should be dumb like a sheep. On the contrary, believers are to be wise as snakes.

How would you like it if your job description included certainty of persecution and arrest? The disciples, though they may have appreciated Jesus’ forthright honesty, probably looked at each other and thought, “Wow, I could’ve just stayed home, tended my nets, and had supper with my

family tonight.” At the same time, they must have shivered with excitement of doing something that would make an eternal difference in the history of humankind. Even during persecution, they should witness to their very captors. The guards, soldiers, leaders, judges, jury, etc. are all people who are sinners and need Christ. Remember what Peter and John did in Acts 4-5.

Jesus assures them that even in their persecution, they need not worry or fear (10:19-20), echoing His sermon admonition (6:25-34). The Spirit of their Father would provide them with the right words to say, just like Peter and Paul used to do in front of the governors and officials.

The message they would be carrying was inherently volatile enough to cause division among the ranks, even within the same household. Family members who do not believe in Jesus would turn against their own family members that believed like in the stories of many saints killed by their parents e.g.: St Barbara.

Nevertheless, they were to be comforted that no persecution they would face would be able to ever silence them. Nothing could happen to them without God’s permission.

They would persevere by faith. Even should they be martyred for the message they proclaimed, the eternal reward of heaven awaited those who obeyed His teaching and commands. Those who accept the disciples, accept Him; and all those who acknowledge Jesus will be acknowledged to God by Christ at the Judgment.

Jesus Teaches the Fear of God (10:27-31)

Therefore, do not fear them. This phrase is repeated several times in this passage. We are not to fear man. Several reasons are given:

1. V27: Because of what the disciples carry as hidden divine glories, and what they have been granted as spiritual blessings will not be suppressed forever. It will be partially revealed at this age and completely fulfilled in the coming age. The disciples may have worried about their mission. They may have feared that persecution would keep them from spreading the good news effectively. If the disciples were killed before performing their mission, the truth would be suppressed forever. Jesus encourages them here by saying, “Don’t fear! The truth will not be suppressed! Your mission will be successful! Only be bold to speak out and let it be known everywhere.”
2. V28: They were not to fear man, because man has no power over their soul. Do not fear, or let your heart get weakened, and do not be disturbed when your money, food, drink, pleasures, clothes, house or even your very body is taken. But fear the adversary that pulls away your spirit from the faith, and from relying on God, and the love to God and the close ones. This is when you lose your body and spirit by going Hell for eternity. One day when you face the judgment, who will be on that throne? If the answer is your boss or human authority, then by all means obey them. Fear them. If the answer is God. Then obey and fear Him and do not worry about what the people around you will think.

3. V29: You Father cares more for you than for a sparrow. He is sovereign over your life as well. Therefore, you should not fear. It does not mean that He will not allow you to be persecuted. It does mean that the persecution which you face He specifically allows for a specific and a good purpose. He only allows it because He wants to accomplish something important through it. Your hair is numbered does not mean that you will never suffer but it means that everything happening to you is under His control even when one hair falls off.

Confess Christ Before Men (10:32-33)

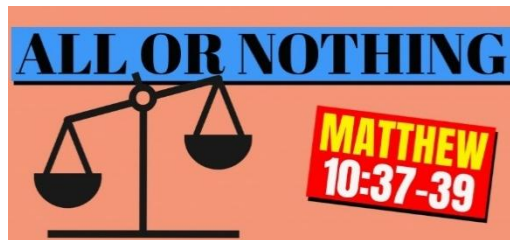
Christ who is sitting on the throne of judgment promises to acknowledge as His own faithful brother everyone who has thus acknowledged Him before men.

Christ Brings Division (10:34-42)

This is taken from Micah 7:6, Jesus did not mean that the purpose of His coming was to cause contention because He came to give us His peace, but He meant that the persecution would be one of the effects of His coming, since part of the family could believe and the other does not.

God presents His priority to all. There is no one to reign over the heart but Him. No one is allowed to enter the heart except it be through Him. The Holy Bible commands us to obey our parents. Yes indeed, but he who loves them more than he loves Christ, loses himself.

What Jesus is saying is that “To follow Me, you have to be prepared even to die.” You have to be prepared to give up everything you have, even your life. We know that all the disciples except for John did indeed give their lives for Jesus, just as we know a countless number of martyrs of our Coptic church. They all loved Jesus more than anyone. Remember St. Demiana when her dad denounced his faith to protect her, she told him, if you love me, go declare your faith in Jesus or else I am not your daughter. They were both martyrs.



God honors His disciples and apostles, and He considers them His agents. All acceptances of them means an acceptance of Him. Every gift given to them is only offered to Him personally. What great honor this is that God grants to His honest servants. This is why our church teaches us to honor the clergy and church servants because they serve in the name of God.

Takeaway and lesson delivery ideas:

How to follow Jesus?

“38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it”.

Follow after me : This is a key part of being a disciple. It requires sacrifice. It requires submitting ourselves, our goals, our desires, and our plans to Christ. It requires making Christ the Lord of our life.

While salvation is free because we cannot earn it, there is a very real cost to following Christ. There will be some things that we want to do, which Christ will say “No, you cannot.” A true disciple doesn’t merely follow Christ when he feels like it or when he wants the same thing that Christ does.

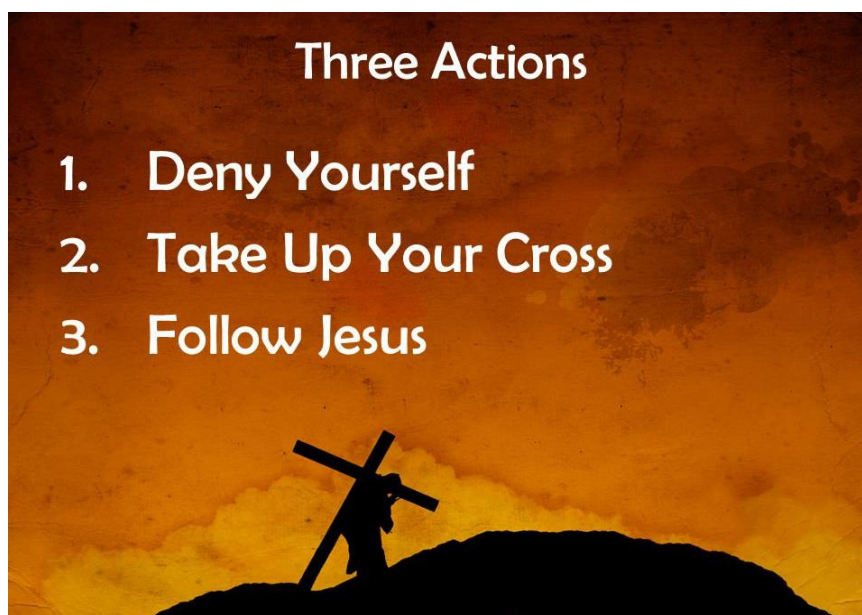
For example, confessing our sins to God is something we should do, but we also want to receive forgiveness. At times it may be more difficult to forgive others. When Jesus tells us to forgive that person who has hurt us so deeply, our flesh might say, “I don’t want to.” And that is when we have a decision to make. Do we want to follow Christ. If the answer is “yes” then there is only one real alternative and that is obedience.

Denying ourselves doesn’t necessarily mean giving up all things that we like and becoming a monk or nun. It doesn’t mean we inflict pain or discomfort on ourselves for no reason. It doesn’t mean I can’t eat the cake because it is too enjoyable, and God doesn’t want me to have anything nice. What it does mean is subjecting my desires to His.

If God asks me to move to serve in a certain place or wants me to love a person who hurts me or cut down on a habit or an app that keeping me away from Him, I have to be willing to say “yes.”

It doesn't mean you have to give up the things that are normal and needful in this life, such as education, career, material possessions, food and healthful activities, rest, and recreation, caring for others. But these things must be secondary and fit Jesus’s framework, not a “me first” framework.

Everyday there are many opportunities to apply this. What choices did you face today where there was a cost to following Christ? Some daily choices include giving up our time to pray and read the Bible, giving up our “rights” by showing patience or compassion to those who don’t deserve it, giving up ourselves to serve others and love the unlovable. Jesus’ disciples were not perfect. They had many weaknesses and flaws. But did they deny themselves in order to follow Christ. **Absolutely.**



Another delivery idea meditating on Jesus sending His disciples:

Many youths, even those raised in the church, do not understand the depth of commitment that Jesus calls for from those who would label themselves as His disciples [=True Christians]

What is a Christian?

This activity helps your youths to begin thinking about just what a Christian really is. Below are 8 definitions of a "Christian." Your students are to rank these definitions from 1-8. All these definitions are true or have an element of truth in them.

Rank the following definitions of a Christian from 1 to 8, with 1 being the best definition and 8 being the worst.

1. __ A Christian is someone who goes to church every Sunday, contributes regularly to the offering, and lives a decent life.
2. __ A Christian is someone who doesn't drink, doesn't smoke and doesn't use bad language.
3. __ A Christian is someone who loves other people and tries to treat them right.
4. __ A Christian is someone who reads the Bible and tries to live according to what it says.
5. __ A Christian is someone who attempts to live his life as close as possible to the teachings and example of Christ.
6. __ A Christian is someone who willingly gives up his own comfort or desires for the sake of others.
7. __ A Christian is someone who is not a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Jew, an agnostic, or an atheist.
8. __ A Christian is someone who always has a happy disposition, believes the best about everyone, and never gets angry, sad, or depressed.

After youth have had time to work individually, take a "vote" by show of hands on the best definition, the second best, the third best, etc. If you have time, ask your youth why they selected the definitions they did.

[I think all statements are true but the best, in my opinion, is #5 because our goal is to be like Christ, accordingly we do all the other points mentioned in the other statements]