

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Kingdom: A Study of Matthew 8–13

STUDY NINE

A Severe Checklist for Disciples

Matthew 10:32–11:1

Loyal disciples acknowledge that there is one commitment that supersedes all other commitments. Love for Christ is greater than all other loves.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

UNTIL Jesus sent the twelve disciples to minister on their own, they lived in the shadow of their Master. They watched Jesus teach the crowds, show compassion to the needy, answer questions, and confront His critics. But now they would be the ones to engage the spiritual enemy and feel the heat of persecution.

None of these men had any experience in public ministry, and none had been without Jesus. So, to outfit them for the struggles ahead, Jesus issued His new recruits the essentials to persevere. Think of it as a kind of checklist of commitments they would need in order to press on and not panic—to stand their ground and not run from hard times.

In his commentary, Pastor Chuck Swindoll describes the gravity of Jesus' instructions.

Jesus was like a commander preparing His platoon for spiritual combat. There was no room for “making them feel good” about the situation. They needed to think realistically about it. In helping them do this, Jesus pointed to four vital qualities of a loyal disciple enlisted in the Master's service.¹

Like the apostles, we enter our own spiritual battles every day. Let's listen closely as our Commander outfits us for combat with this checklist for loyal disciples.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

On every front in our culture, attacks on Christian values intensify. Do you worry about family members and friends who are easy targets for the enemy? Do you sometimes feel battle fatigue fighting for what's right? As you study Christ's teachings, take a moment to tell the Lord your concerns and ask Him for renewed strength and courage from His Word.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Read *Matthew 10:32–11:1*. You can almost hear the rumble of war in the background, can't you? While Jesus was prepping His apostles for the struggles ahead, He assured them of the victory and the rewards awaiting them. Now let's examine each section in more detail.



Observation: A Checklist for Loyal Disciples

Notice how Jesus made His points memorable by using these three *poetical devices*:

- **Couplet:** two lines beside each other developing or contrasting the same topic
- **Inclusio:** a stanza beginning and ending with a similar idea for thematic completion
- **Repetition:** a repeated word or thought for emphasis

Let's look at Jesus' instructions through these literary lenses, and then we'll draw principles based on the interpretation of what we observe.²



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Acknowledging versus Denying—Matthew 10:32–33

Read the two-verse *couplet* in *Matthew 10:32–33* in which verse 32 makes a statement and verse 33 contrasts it. What points of the *couplet* are similar and what points are opposite?

Christ's soldiers stand not on some lofty ideal but on a person. We fight under Jesus' flag, defend His honor, and confess His name. Why do you think Jesus placed such importance on public confession?

In the next section, Jesus tells His followers that, when they go public, they should expect conflicts even in their closest relationships.

Expecting Conflicts—Matthew 10:34–36

In *Matthew 10:34–36*, Jesus uses an *inclusio* to make His point. How does 10:36 explain 10:34? How do the middle lines in 10:35 illustrate the kind of sharp conflict (or “sword”) His disciples might have to face at home?



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So, we observe how one experience leads to the next. Publicly confessing Jesus' name leads to conflicts in close relationships, and, as Jesus explains next, these conflicts lead to difficult choices.

Choosing Priorities—Matthew 10:37–39

Observe the *repetition* in [Matthew 10:37–38](#). What phrase did Jesus repeat, and what might make a disciple “not worthy”?

Remember, Jesus was prepping His disciples for spiritual battles. When family members force us to choose between love of family or love of Jesus, we always choose Jesus. Enemies may even force us to choose between life or death! In this ultimate battle, what did Jesus say we must be willing to do, according to [10:38–39](#)?

Thankfully, not all people would be enemies drawing swords. Some would open their arms to Jesus' followers as they would to Jesus Himself. Along with the battles would come victories and rewards.



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Anticipating Rewards—Matthew 10:40–42

According to *Matthew 10:40*, what did Jesus say to inspire His disciples? Were the disciples *really* on their own?

Jesus used repetition again to emphasize the positive side of ministry. What could Jesus' followers expect when they ministered to “prophets,” “righteous people,” and “the least of [Jesus'] followers,” according to *10:41–42*? What refrain did Jesus use as an encouragement?

Every deed done for the glory of God, every righteous act, every self-denial, God notices. He remembers, and He will reward. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Questions and Answers

While the meaning of Jesus' teaching may have been crystal clear to His original audience, we may be a bit puzzled. In the interpretive phase of *Searching the Scriptures*, we seek answers.



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What did Jesus mean by, “I came not to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34)? To find the answer, read Pastor Chuck’s interpretation of this statement on pages 203–204 of his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 1–15*. For an online resource, consult [Constable’s Notes](#) at [netbible.org](#). What meaning do you discover?

What did Jesus mean by, “If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine” (10:38)? The article, “Carrying Your Cross,” on page 205 of Pastor Chuck’s commentary explains the meaning of “take up your cross.” Read this article and explain how far a worthy disciple is willing to go in following Jesus.

Throughout history, countless Christians have chosen to die as martyrs rather than deny their Lord. While we may not lose our lives for following Christ today, we may lose our livelihood. What might it mean in your context to “give up your life for [Jesus]” (10:39)?



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Jesus promised a person who is willing to give up his or her life for His sake will “find it” (Matthew 10:39). What does this promise mean for Christians in the present and for their future?

What does “take up your cross” mean in the twenty-first century? It means self-denial. It means being willing to die to yourself for the purposes of Christ. To carry out His will, not your will. To walk His way, not yours. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Denial and Forgiveness

Jesus will acknowledge us before the Father in heaven when we publicly acknowledge Him before people on earth (Matthew 10:32). However, if one retreats under fire and publicly denies Him, Jesus will deny him or her before the Father (10:33). The most famous soldier of Christ who wilted in combat was Peter. Read the account of Peter's denials in [Mark 14:66–72](#) in light of Jesus' instructions to him and the other apostles in our passage.

In what ways did Peter fail to be loyal to Jesus during this intense spiritual battle in his life?



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Realizing his cowardice, Peter “broke down and wept” (Matthew 14:72). Can you identify with Peter’s sorrow in some ways? If so, how?

As long as there is life, there is a *lifeline of hope* from Jesus’ heart. After His resurrection, Jesus reinstated Peter, according to [John 21:15–17](#), by asking Peter to publicly confess his love for Jesus three times. What does Jesus’ grace toward Peter reveal about His longing to forgive your moments of weakness on the battlefield?

Jesus intended His checklist not to intimidate us but to be like steel rods to help us stand strong. As we conclude our study, let’s formulate four principles based on Jesus’ teaching that we can apply today.



Application: Principles for Loyal Disciples

First, *loyal disciples openly acknowledge Christ before the world*. Do you ever have opportunities to declare your faith? In what ways might you publicly state that you’re a follower of Jesus?



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Second, *loyal disciples willingly accept rejection, even from their own family members*. Have you endured conflict in your family because of your faith? If so, what rejection have you faced or might have to face?

Third, *loyal disciples sacrificially choose their essential priorities*. Are you willing to sacrifice everything, even your life, for Christ? Spend some time with the Lord, sharing your heart of commitment to Him.

Fourth, *loyal disciples humbly anticipate and accept eternal rewards*. God sees our courage to speak out, willingness to accept rejection, and determination to make sacrificial choices. How do His promises encourage you to keep ministering even in the heat of battle and giving cups of “cold water” in His name to those who are struggling (Matthew 10:42)?



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Today's enemies of Christ launch attacks in all areas of society. They bombard us in the media, the courts, and the halls of government. Even our children and grandchildren are involved in skirmishes in their schools. Jesus issued marching orders to steady us in the fight. The struggles we face are not new to Him or unexpected. We can be certain that He will be with us to the end.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I admit that fear of opposition sometimes robs me of courage. Fear paints my enemies bigger than they really are. Help me to see life as You do in proper perspective. You are all-powerful and in charge, even when I feel weak. Strengthen me with Your promises as I follow in faith. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 1–15*, vol. 1A (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 202.
2. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

