



Loyalty Tested

Session 9 • Matthew 10:16-20,26-34

ENGAGE

PREPARE: Hang **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Matthew 1–13) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: Matthew Time Line) and **Pack Item 13** (Handout: The Disciples in History).

ASK: What brands, organizations, or activities hold your loyalty? What makes you loyal to them? (p. 83)

INTRODUCE: Call on a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 83. Note that genuine loyalty often requires making a sacrifice of some kind.

SHARE: Draw attention to **Pack Item 2** (Poster: Outline of Matthew 1–13). Explain that this session focuses on Jesus’s words to His disciples in Matthew 10. Point out that this chapter is identified as the Lord’s second discourse on the outline.

CONTEXT: To set the stage for this study, summarize this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 83):

- “After spending weeks and months with Jesus, the time had come for Him to send His disciples out to test what they had learned. They were to preach of the kingdom of God like Jesus did and engage

in a ministry of compassion as Jesus had done. Before sending them out, Jesus gave instructions about what they were to do, how they were to do it, and what to expect.”

TRANSITION: *Jesus wanted His followers to experience both the joys and the struggles of representing Him in the world. While all of them (except Judas) would help spread the news of God’s kingdom after Jesus went back to heaven, this was their first taste of that kind of ministry. By examining Jesus’s instruction to them, we can get a better idea of what He expects of us and how we can continue sharing His message with the world today.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXT: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: Matthew Time Line). Point out that the events in Matthew 10 would have taken place between AD 29–33.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read **Matthew 10:16–20** aloud as adults write their own paraphrases of Jesus’s instructions to His disciples in the margin of their DDG.

EXPLAIN: Talk about the group’s responses. Provide copies of **Pack Item 13** (Handout: The Disciples in History) and briefly highlight

each disciple. Note that Jesus had big plans for them, but this was their first taste of personal ministry. Share that Jesus wanted them to be well-prepared for this new adventure.

RECAP: To help explain the significance of shrewdness and innocence, summarize the following information:

- **(10:16)** Being “shrewd” did not mean being cunning. The apostles should be insightful as they worked among people who might harm them. At the same time, they were to be “innocent.” The term connotes a sense of sincerity and integrity.

ASK: Why are both shrewdness and innocence necessary qualities for Christ’s witnesses? (p. 85)

SAY: *Jesus’s words described what His disciples would face as they spread across Galilee, as well as what they would experience sharing the gospel around the world after He returned to heaven. He never watered down the danger, but He did emphasize the opportunities they would get to share His message. They would stand before governors and kings for God’s glory because they were willing to suffer.*

EMPHASIZE: Direct a volunteer to read Matthew 10:19-20. Highlight the promise that Jesus made related to the Holy Spirit. Affirm that allowing the Spirit to lead us allows us to see needs more clearly and to share Jesus with confidence and boldness. Challenge adults to ask God for a greater sensitivity to the Spirit’s guidance in their lives.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read Matthew 10:26-31 aloud while the group counts the number of times Jesus said not to fear.

IDENTIFY: Highlight the following contrasts Jesus drew in verses 26-28:

- Covered/Uncovered
- Known/Unknown
- Dark/Light
- Whisper/Proclaim

RECAP: Summarize the following information to explain the contrasts more fully:

- **(10:26)** Fear sometimes paralyzes people from following Jesus openly. Jesus encouraged His apostles not to be afraid of their adversaries because the truth ultimately will be brought to light. He emphasized His point by using Hebrew parallelism that repeats an idea with slightly different wording. What is “covered” will be “uncovered,” and what is “hidden” will be “made known.” Wrongdoing by the enemies of Christ will be exposed and believers will be vindicated. Christ’s messengers should courageously share His message to the world.

ASK: What is the connection between fearing God and not fearing man? (p. 85)

STATE: *The images of the sparrows and the hairs are really a call to boldness. They emphasize God’s care and sovereignty. Because He is with us, we don’t have to fear anyone or anything that stands against us as we follow His plans.*

READ: Direct the group to read **Matthew 10:32-34** silently and to circle the verbs or phrases that are repeated in each verse.

ASK: Based upon your reading of this passage, why would secret allegiance to Christ be impossible?

SHARE: Encourage adults to elaborate on their responses. Point out that proclaiming Jesus to the world isn't just a good idea. Explain that Jesus actually tied it to our identity as His people. Note that we can share Jesus boldly with others because we know that He is our advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1).

ASK: What are some ways you can acknowledge Christ before others? (p. 85)

RECAP: Affirm that rejecting Jesus comes with its own consequences. Summarize the following information:

- **(10:33)** “Denies” means more than what Peter did on the night before Jesus’s crucifixion (Matt. 26:69-75). Peter’s moment of weakness was followed by repentance and restoration. But Jesus was speaking of a deeper rejection. The word implies a base refusal to acknowledge Jesus as one’s Savior. One day people will give an account at the throne of God. His response will be based solely on what they chose to do with Jesus Christ in this life. Standing before God, it will be too late to change their minds and claim Christ.

SAY: *In many ways, Jesus is the most polarizing person in human history. This means those who follow Him will face*

hostile opposition from those who hate Him. But while He cannot promise peace every moment of our lives here on earth, He does promise eternal blessing and peace to all who demonstrate loyalty to Him as residents of His kingdom.

CHALLENGE

REFLECT: Group the adults into teams of three or four and give each team a sheet of paper and pen. Direct them to write the word “loyal” down the side of the paper in the form of an acrostic. Instruct the teams to use the letters in the word to identify specific ways believers can show loyalty to Christ on a daily basis. After a few minutes, allow a volunteer from each team to share their work. Write their responses on the board.

DISCUSS: Encourage the group to consider the **Apply the Text** suggestion on page 85. Lead a brief discussion on how the adults can hold one another accountable for living out their loyalty to Jesus in meaningful ways.

CLOSE: Close the session in prayer, asking God to help each adult know how to stand firm in the face of persecution.

AFTER THE SESSION

Text or email the group during the week and encourage them to look for opportunities to take a stand for Jesus, even when it might be difficult.