

Study Questions for Matthew 10:16-20, 26-34

1. What does Jesus mean when He says He is sending His disciples out “as sheep in the midst of wolves”?

Reference: Matthew 10:16; John 10:11–14

Jesus is naming the reality of the mission before it begins. Sheep are not only vulnerable; they also lack natural defenses and survive entirely by the care of their shepherd. By contrast, wolves represent systems and people that operate through power, fear, and self-preservation. Jesus does not offer strategies for domination or withdrawal. Instead, He calls His followers to remain sheep—dependent on Him as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11)—while developing discernment (“wise as serpents”) and moral integrity (“harmless as doves”). Faithfulness, in Jesus’ vision, is neither passive nor predatory.

Everyday application: Following Christ doesn’t mean being naïve, but it also doesn’t mean becoming harsh or defensive. Wisdom and integrity can coexist.

2. Why does Jesus warn them about being delivered to councils and flogged?

Reference: Matthew 10:17–18; 2 Timothy 3:12

Jesus prepares His disciples for the reality that faithfulness may bring them into conflict with respected religious and civic authorities. The warning clarifies that opposition will not always come from clearly “evil” sources, but from institutions convinced they are preserving order or truth. This reframes suffering not as failure, but as a foreseeable cost of bearing witness (Matthew 10:18). Jesus’ honesty strengthens resilience by removing the shock factor from hardship.

Everyday application: Opposition doesn’t always mean we’re doing something wrong—sometimes it means we’re being faithful (2 Timothy 3:12).

3. How should believers understand Jesus’ promise that they will not need to worry about what to say?

Reference: Matthew 10:19–20; Luke 12:11–12

Jesus acknowledges moments when circumstances move faster than preparation. His promise shifts the disciples’ trust from their own competence to God’s active presence. The Spirit’s role is not merely to supply words, but to testify through them (Matthew 10:20). This places obedience ahead of performance and dependence ahead of control, echoing Jesus’ assurance that God speaks through willing servants in critical moments (Luke 12:12).

Everyday application: When conversations about faith feel intimidating, we can trust God to meet us in the moment, not just beforehand.

4. Why does Jesus repeatedly tell His followers not to be afraid?

Reference: Matthew 10:26–28; Isaiah 41:10

Jesus does not deny the reality of danger; He reorders the scale of what deserves fear. By contrasting human power with God’s authority over both body and soul (Matthew 10:28), He exposes how fear often distorts judgment and loyalty. Fear becomes spiritually dangerous not because it exists, but because it can quietly redefine what we obey. Jesus’ repeated command confronts fear as a rival authority.

Everyday application: Fear loses its power when we remember who truly holds our lives (Isaiah 41:10).

5. What does Jesus teach about our value through the example of sparrows?

Reference: Matthew 10:29–31; Psalm 147:3–5

Jesus uses sparrows to show that God’s care extends even where the world assigns little worth. The point is not sentimentality, but attentiveness: nothing is invisible to God’s sustaining presence. By connecting sparrows with numbered hairs, Jesus emphasizes that God’s knowledge is intimate, not abstract (Psalm 147:5). This assurance is given in the context of suffering, not comfort.

Everyday application: When we feel overlooked or insignificant, this reminds us that our lives are fully seen and valued by God.

6. What does it mean to acknowledge or deny Jesus before others?

Reference: Matthew 10:32–33; Romans 10:9–10

Acknowledging Jesus is fundamentally about loyalty—who or what shapes our identity and decisions. Denial does not always take the form of explicit rejection; it can appear as silence motivated by fear or alignment with competing values. Jesus frames acknowledgment relationally: our public allegiance reflects the reality of our inward commitment (Romans 10:9).

Everyday application: Faith shows up in everyday choices—how we speak, act, and align our values (Romans 10:9–10).

7. Why does Jesus say He came not to bring peace, but a sword?

Reference: Matthew 10:34–36; Micah 7:6

Jesus names the disruptive effect of truth in a divided world. He is not creating conflict for its own sake, but acknowledging that His call will surface competing loyalties, even within families. The “sword” represents division that results when ultimate allegiance is clarified (Matthew 10:36). This echoes the prophetic recognition that faithfulness can fracture even close relationships (Micah 7:6).

Everyday application: Choosing faith may bring tension in relationships, but honesty about our convictions matters more than forced harmony.

8. How should believers live with both courage and compassion in a divided world?

Reference: Matthew 10:16, 28, 31; Colossians 4:6

Jesus' teaching holds courage and compassion together by rooting both in trust. Courage grows from confidence in God's care and authority, while compassion governs how that courage is expressed. Speech shaped by grace and wisdom (Colossians 4:6) reflects a life that is neither ruled by fear nor driven by hostility. The result is faithfulness that is firm without becoming brittle.

Everyday application: We can stand firm in what we believe while still treating others with grace and respect.