

Matthew 10:24-39 (NLT)

²⁴ "Students are not greater than their teacher, and slaves are not greater than their master. ²⁵ Students are to be like their teacher, and slaves are to be like their master. And since I, the master of the household, have been called the prince of demons, the members of my household will be called by even worse names!

²⁶ "But don't be afraid of those who threaten you. For the time is coming when everything that is covered will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. ²⁷ What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

²⁸ "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in gehenna. ²⁹ What is the price of two sparrows—one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

³² "Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ "Don't imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ 'I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ Your enemies will be right in your own household!'

³⁷ "If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁸ If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. ³⁹ If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it.

Q.1. In v.24 Jesus speaks of 'students', 'teachers', 'slaves' and 'masters'; how do these ideas unfold in v.25?

Q.2. 'Don't be afraid' says Jesus in vv.26, 27 & 31. It is also the most common command in the Bible. Why is 'fear' such a problem for us humans?

Q.3. In v.26 Jesus tells us not to be afraid because a time is coming when everything will be revealed; how might this relieve our fears?

Q.4. In v.27 Jesus commands us to be vocal about sharing our faith. What 'fears' hold us back?

Q.5. V.28 calls upon us to fear God, why and how should we do that?

Q.6. In vv.29-31 Jesus gives us an extra-ordinary promise about God's care for us. How would you explain this to an interested person?

Q.7. Vv.32-33 seem very black and white – how would you reword them or paraphrase? What might 'deny' mean in v.33?

Q.8. How might following Jesus cause the divisions within a family as in vv.34-36?

Q.9. What's the basic point Jesus is making in vv.37-39?

Q.10. Jesus says 'If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine' v.38. What might 'take up your cross' mean?

Application: for reflection, prayer and action

Q.11. In these verses what is Jesus telling us we might face if we are sincere and vocal followers of Jesus?

Q.12. Imagine living in a country that banned Bible reading, banned Christian prayers and fellowship. What would you do?

Q.13. What care does God offer us in this passage as we follow Jesus?

Matthew 10:24-39 (my suggested answers)

NB. Please answer the questions yourself. We all have different ways of answering; God may give you greater insights than mine. Put '*John thinks*' ... before each answer.

Q.1. We are students and servant/followers of Jesus. If he was harshly treated don't expect anything less for us.

Q.2. 'Fear' is a problem because it makes us inward and selfishly focussed – not trusting God. Fear disempowers us from brave action.

Q.3. Everything will be revealed – i.e. God will reveal truth and justice to the world and we of faith with that. Our perseverance in godly behaviour (despite hardships) and trust in Jesus (despite sneers or worse) will be shown to be right.

Q.4. There are lots of fears about witnessing: Do I know enough to answer people's questions? Will others reject me? Will I be laughed or sneered at? Is witnessing impolite? Am I a hypocrite?

Q.5. We should fear God because as Judge, he alone has the right over body & soul and their eternal destination. Fear here is not terror but awe or reverence.

Q.6. We are told that God's care extends to the smallest detail of our lives (e.g. the number of hairs we have) and his care for us is big and wide (as his image bearers in the world and as those he loves).

Q.7. Jesus exaggerates to make the point. He deserves top spot in our lives and our relationships with others. This will take prayer, Bible reading, repentance, forgiveness and accountability on our part.

Q.8. In many parts of the world following Jesus is the worst thing to do and even loving families can be divided in some cases. In Australia this is very unlikely but some marriages or families have been divided because Jesus is followed wholeheartedly.

Q.9. The basic point is easy: Jesus must be loved ahead of family. The daily outworking of this is much more difficult – see Q.7. answer.

Q.10. Everyone in Jesus day knew what 'take up your cross' meant. It was what the Romans made condemned criminals do – carry their cross to the place of crucifixion. Jesus uses it as a sign of 'allegiance' to him and his kingdom movement. V.39 makes the same point.

Q.11. If we are sincere and vocal followers of Jesus with a humble and kind attitude we will be noticed. Sometimes that may mean we are dismissed, sneered at, insulted or marginalised. Sometimes it will mean the opposite – admired and listened to. Jesus face both.

Q.12. Very hard to imagine but if I did, I hope I would trust God enough to pray, read the Bible if I had one and seek out fellow believers for quiet worship and fellowship. There would be great danger every day.

Q.13. God cares for us deeply and personally – he know us so well he can tell us the number of hairs on our heads. He looks after sparrows so he will look after us. V.29. And if we live putting Jesus and his work first, all will be revealed in the end – we will be vindicated.