



June 22 • 2008

**Focus Scripture**  
**Matthew 10:24–39**  
Additional Scriptures  
Genesis 21:8–21  
Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17  
Romans 6:1b–11

Almighty God,  
bathe us in Spirit-  
filled courage as we  
move out with the  
gospel message of  
your love and sal-  
vation for all. Hold  
us close in times  
of fear, and raise  
us to new hope in  
your coming reign.  
Amen.

# Daring Discipleship

Moving out into the world, empowered by the Spirit of Pentecost, Jesus' disciples encounter division and conflict. Jesus knew that following God's leading would not prevent such situations; it may bring them on. But scripture proclaims this good news: God hears voices raised in need and responds. Daring disciples, then and now, move forward with courage.

## Focus Scripture: Matthew 10:24–39

In the tenth chapter of Matthew, we encounter Jesus teaching about the promise and cost of discipleship. In the verses preceding the focus passage, Jesus addresses the authority that forms disciples and suggests the persecution that may come to those who follow God's leading. Following today's passage, Jesus speaks about the meaning of welcoming disciples. In today's verses, Jesus affirms the courage necessary to face the possible costs and risks of discipleship.

It is important to hear these verses in the context of Matthew's first readers. This church still lived in some degree of connection with Judaism. The verses speak of divisions within "households" (verses 25, 36). Knowing that the fear of conflict can act to silence disruptive or "contrary" voices within close-knit communities, Matthew urges the church to not allow such fear to muffle its witness. While those who follow Jesus may face the kind of opposition that Jesus did, they also can trust in Jesus' promise that they have life with God.

Three times in this passage, Matthew brings fear into the spotlight: fear generated by public slander (verse 26), fear created by those who can kill (verse 28), and fear of not being valued by God (verses 29–31). To be known so deeply and completely by God as these latter verses suggest may even trigger anxiety for some. Such knowledge, however, serves to undergird our lives as disciples. Matthew raises fear out of secret places and corners where it can fester. Even when living in a climate of fear, disciples can be daring in claiming a different focus for life together.

The imagery of faith that leads to family divisions (verses 35–37) may be disturbing. Yet it reflects the truth that faith sometimes differentiates us from

those closest to us. Understanding and practicing Christian faith in ways that diverge from parents, peers, or community – sometimes even professing Christian faith at all – may create conflict or lead to estrangement. Daring disciples, in this situation, journey into a deeper experience of what it means to trust and love God wholly.

Conflict among family members also stamps **Genesis 21:8–21**, as it narrates the fracturing of Abraham's household in the conflict between Sarah and Hagar. In compassion, God makes a promise of "a nation" for Hagar's son and is "with the child" as he grows. Deep and lasting implications of this episode linger to this day. Tradition holds Sarah's child, Isaac, as forerunner of the Jewish people; and Hagar's child, Ishmael, as the progenitor of the Arab people.

Each reading calls us to courage and trust in God. **Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17** opens with words that could easily be the cry of Hagar or persecuted disciples. Yet the psalm declares trust in and praise for God's goodness. Paul's explanation of our "baptism into Christ's death" in **Romans 6:1b–11** confirms that we share with Jesus the cost of discipleship, and we also share Christ's resurrection, where "death no longer has dominion."



Our identity as Christ's disciples means we share a calling and a purpose not always welcomed by this world. Sometimes, it may even bring us into conflict with those in our homes, congregations, or neighbourhoods. Which is the stronger force: that which unites people or that which divides? How is Christ calling you and your church to respond to the divisions you face?

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