

The Commands of Jesus in Matthew

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Matthew presents Jesus not merely as a teacher of wisdom, but as the authoritative King who speaks with the right to command His people.

That emphasis begins early in the Gospel and becomes especially clear in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew deliberately places Jesus on a mountain, teaching His disciples in a way that echoes Moses at Sinai. But the comparison also reveals the difference. Moses received the Law from God and delivered it to the people. Jesus speaks with an authority that belongs uniquely to Him. Again and again He says, **“You have heard that it was said... but I say to you.”** He does not simply repeat the Law or offer another rabbinic interpretation of it. He fulfills it, exposes its deepest intent, and declares how life under the reign of God is to be lived.

Jesus states this plainly in Matthew 5:17 when He says, **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”** His commands reach beyond outward conformity and into the heart. Anger, lust, truthfulness, forgiveness, generosity, prayer, love for enemies, and devotion to God all come under His authority.

That same emphasis continues throughout Matthew. Jesus calls people to follow Him, deny themselves, forgive others, serve rather than seek status, remain watchful, love God completely, love their neighbors, and live ready for His return. Then, at the end of the Gospel, His authority becomes the basis for the Great Commission. Jesus declares, **“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me,”** and then commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations, **“teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”** (Matthew 28:18–20).

For Matthew, then, discipleship is not simply admiring Jesus, believing certain truths about Him, or receiving His forgiveness. It means coming under His authority and learning to obey His words. Jesus is the Savior who gives grace, but He is also the Lord who gives commands. The following guide gathers the major commands of Jesus in Matthew so that they can be read not as isolated sayings, but as part of His larger call to live faithfully under the rule of the King.

Matthew 4

Repent — Matthew 4:17

"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

Jesus begins His public preaching with a call to turn from sin and reorient life around the arrival of God's kingdom.

Follow Me — Matthew 4:19

"And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'" Discipleship begins with personal allegiance to Jesus. Following Him means allowing His call and mission to reshape the direction of our lives.

Matthew 5

Rejoice — Matthew 5:12

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Jesus calls His followers to view suffering for righteousness through the lens of eternity, rejoicing because their reward is with God.

Let Your Light Shine — Matthew 5:16

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." The visible goodness of a disciple's life should point beyond the disciple and lead others to glorify the Father.

Honor God's Law — Matthew 5:17-19

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus does not dismiss God's revealed will. He fulfills the Law and calls His followers to take God's commands seriously.

Be Reconciled — Matthew 5:24-25

"Leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison." Reconciliation with others is not secondary to worship. Jesus calls His followers to address broken relationships quickly and honestly.

Do Not Lust — Matthew 5:28-30

"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell." Jesus presses sexual purity beyond outward behavior to the desires of the heart and calls for decisive action against sin.

Keep Your Word — Matthew 5:37

"Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." A disciple's speech should be so truthful and reliable that elaborate promises are unnecessary. Integrity should mark ordinary conversation.

Go the Second Mile — Matthew 5:38-42

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you,

and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." Rather than living by retaliation, followers of Jesus are called to respond to wrongs with unusual generosity, restraint, and grace.

Love Your Enemies — Matthew 5:44

"But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," Jesus commands a love that reaches even those who oppose us, expressed not only in attitude but also in prayer for them.

Be Perfect — Matthew 5:48

"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Jesus calls His followers toward wholehearted maturity that reflects the character of the Father rather than settling for selective righteousness.

Matthew 6

Practice Secret Disciplines (Giving, Praying, Fasting) — Matthew 6:1-18

[Due to the length, this passage outlines Jesus' teaching on giving to the needy, praying, and fasting, emphasizing doing these actions not to be seen by others but in secret, where your Father who sees in secret will reward you.] Spiritual disciplines are to be practiced for the Father rather than for public recognition. Jesus confronts the desire to appear spiritual before others.

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven — Matthew 6:19-21

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Jesus commands His followers to invest their hearts and resources in what lasts eternally rather than making earthly possessions their ultimate treasure.

Seek God's Kingdom — Matthew 6:33

"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." The kingdom and righteousness of God are to take priority over the anxieties and pursuits that normally dominate life.

Matthew 7

Judge Not — Matthew 7:1-2

"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you." Jesus warns against a condemning spirit that scrutinizes others while ignoring one's own need for repentance and humility.

Do Not Throw Pearls to Pigs — Matthew 7:6

"Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you." Grace does not eliminate discernment. Jesus teaches His followers to recognize when holy things are being treated with hardened contempt.

Ask, Seek, Knock — Matthew 7:7-8

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened." Jesus encourages persistent, dependent prayer that trusts the goodness of the Father and continues to seek Him.

Do Unto Others — Matthew 7:12

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Jesus summarizes relational righteousness by calling us to treat others with the same care and consideration we would desire from them.

Choose the Narrow Way — Matthew 7:13-14

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Jesus calls for a deliberate choice to follow the difficult path that leads to life rather than the broad path of easy conformity.

Beware of False Prophets — Matthew 7:15

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." Followers of Jesus must test spiritual teachers carefully, recognizing that outward appearance can conceal destructive teaching and character.

Matthew 9

Pray for Laborers — Matthew 9:38

"Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." Jesus commands prayer for more workers because the spiritual harvest is great and the need for faithful gospel ministry is urgent.

Matthew 10

Be Wise as Serpents — Matthew 10:16

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." Mission requires both discernment and purity. Jesus calls His followers to be shrewd about danger without becoming deceptive or corrupt.

Fear Not — Matthew 10:28

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." Jesus redirects fear away from human opposition and toward reverence for God, whose authority extends beyond this present life.

Matthew 11

Hear God's Voice — Matthew 11:15

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Jesus repeatedly calls people to hear with spiritual attentiveness rather than merely receiving His words at a surface level.

Take My Yoke — Matthew 11:29

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Jesus calls weary people into a life of discipleship under His teaching, promising that His rule is gentle and His way brings rest.

Matthew 15

Honor Your Parents — Matthew 15:4

"For God commanded, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.'" Jesus affirms God's command to honor father and mother and rejects religious reasoning that is used to avoid clear responsibilities.

Matthew 16

Beware of Leaven — Matthew 16:6

"Jesus said to them, 'Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'" Jesus warns His disciples to guard against teaching and influence that quietly spreads unbelief, hypocrisy, and spiritual distortion.

Deny Yourself — Matthew 16:24

"Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" Following Jesus requires surrender of self-rule. A disciple embraces costly obedience and places loyalty to Christ above self-preservation.

Matthew 18

Do Not Despise Little Ones — Matthew 18:10

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven." Jesus commands His followers to value those who may seem insignificant, weak, or easily overlooked because they matter deeply to the Father.

Go to Offenders — Matthew 18:15

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." When sin damages a relationship, Jesus directs believers toward personal, private confrontation aimed at restoration rather than gossip or public embarrassment.

Forgive Offenders — Matthew 18:21-22

"Then Peter came up and said to him, 'Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.'" Forgiveness is not to be rationed according to a small quota. Jesus calls His followers to cultivate a disposition ready to forgive again and again.

Matthew 19

Honor Marriage — Matthew 19:6

"So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Jesus treats marriage as a covenant joined by God and calls people to honor its permanence rather than treating it casually.

Matthew 20

Be a Servant — Matthew 20:26-27

"It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave," Greatness in Christ's kingdom is measured by service rather than status. Those who would lead must learn to place themselves at the service of others.

Matthew 21

Be a House of Prayer — Matthew 21:13

"He said to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers.'" Jesus confronts worship corrupted by selfish gain and insists that God's house be devoted to prayer and the purposes of God.

Ask in Faith — Matthew 21:21-22

"And Jesus answered them, 'Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith.'" Jesus teaches His disciples to pray with confidence in God rather than approaching Him with a heart shaped by unbelief.

Matthew 22

Render to Caesar — Matthew 22:19-21

"Show me the coin for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said, 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them, 'Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'" Jesus distinguishes legitimate civic obligations from the ultimate allegiance owed to God. Human authority never replaces God's claim on our lives.

Love the Lord — Matthew 22:37

"And he said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" The greatest command is wholehearted love for God—engaging the heart, soul, and mind rather than offering Him divided allegiance.

Love Your Neighbor — Matthew 22:39

"And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love for God necessarily expresses itself in active concern for others. Jesus places love of neighbor at the center of faithful obedience.

Matthew 24

Await My Return — Matthew 24:42-44

"Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Because the timing of Christ's return is unknown, disciples are commanded to live with alertness, faithfulness, and readiness.

Matthew 26

Celebrate the Lord's Supper — Matthew 26:26-27

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you,'" Jesus gives His followers a meal of remembrance centered on His body and blood, keeping His sacrificial death before the church.

Watch and Pray — Matthew 26:41

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Spiritual willingness is not enough by itself. Jesus commands vigilance and prayer because temptation exposes the weakness of the flesh.

Matthew 28

Baptize My Disciples — Matthew 28:19

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Jesus commands that those who become His disciples be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a public mark of belonging to Him.

Teach Them to Obey My Commands — Matthew 28:20

"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Christian mission includes more than conversion. Disciples are to be taught to observe everything Jesus commanded.

Make Disciples — Matthew 28:19-20

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The final commission gathers Jesus' commands into a worldwide mission: go, make disciples, baptize them, and teach them to live in obedience to Christ.

A Final Observation

The commands of Jesus in Matthew reach into every part of life: repentance, worship, relationships, sexuality, speech, money, prayer, forgiveness, leadership, mission, and readiness for His return. They are not a means of earning salvation. They describe the life of those who

have come under the rule of Christ. Matthew closes by making obedience part of the church's mission itself: disciples are to be taught to observe all that Jesus commanded.