

### Fans or Followers?



- Theme: Are you a fan of Jesus, or a follower? Proper 19 (24) 16th Sunday after Pentecost Yr B
- Object: Some items a person might wear or display to show that they are fans of a particular person, group, or sports team.
- Scripture: Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Mark 8:34 (NIV)

Have you ever been a member of a **fan club**? Some of you may not even know what a fan club is. A fan club is a group of enthusiastic supporters of a well-known person, music group, or a sports team. If you are a fan of a particular sports team, you might wear a t-shirt with the team name and a picture of their mascot on it. If you are a fan of a singer or a musical group, you might have their posters decorating the walls in your room.

One thing I have noticed about fan clubs is that the number of members in the club usually depends on how popular or successful the person or team is. If a sports team wins a lot of games, they will probably have a lot of fans. But if they start to lose, the fans usually fall away. (A few years ago the fans of one sports team went to the games with a brown paper bag over their head to hide their identity!) If a singer or music group has a lot of big hits, they will have a lot of fans, but if the hits stop coming, the fans will go away.

When Jesus was on earth, he had a lot of fans. As he traveled around performing miracles like feeding 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread or healing a blind man, there were huge crowds of fans everywhere he went. But do you know what? Jesus wasn't interested in having fans, **he wanted followers**. One day he said to a crowd of people, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."

To be a follower of Jesus means much more than being a member of his fan club. It means more than wearing an "I Love Jesus" t-shirt, a WWJD\* bracelet, or a necklace with a cross on it. It means to **follow the teachings of Jesus every day**. It means to **reach out to the poor**, to **feed the hungry**, to **be a friend of the friendless**, to **love the unlovely**. In other words, it means to **show the love that Jesus showed** to everyone we meet. That is what separates a fan from a follower.

**Being a follower means:** sticking up for the kid getting bullied; sitting at lunch with someone who has no friends or inviting that person to play with your group; listening to someone who needs to talk; making time for someone whom no one else will make time for.

Do you want to be a follower, or are you satisfied with just being a fan?

Father, help us to be more than fans — help us to be believers and followers of Jesus. In his name we pray, amen.

\*WWJD - What Would Jesus Do?

[www.sermons4kids.com](http://www.sermons4kids.com)

Peter "rebuked" Jesus. That means he scolded Jesus. Why? Well, if Jesus is as has just been said - "the Messiah," the holy one sent from God - surely he won't have to suffer; surely he won't have to die; surely he won't be rejected when all the evidence is heard. And what is this "after 3 days he will rise again?" Sounds spooky and like nothing we've ever heard before. Maybe Peter thought, "Now I'm getting a little nervous. It frightens me that my mentor says he will have to suffer – maybe I will have to suffer too!" Peter's tongue gave away his fear, and he "rebuked" Jesus, he censured Jesus, chided Jesus, tried to put Jesus in his place. A Dutchman might say, "Ach, don't talk so dumb!" – which prompted Jesus to go off on Peter, telling him *he's* off-base to the point of resembling the devil in his objection. This is God's plan, Jesus admonishes, and Jesus is here to fulfill it. In Jesus' world, one has to deny oneself, that is, sacrifice for the well-being of others. It might hurt. It will not accommodate a feet-up lifestyle. It will mean giving of

oneself and sharing one's possessions for the love of Christ. Still want to be a follower – or just remain a fan?

What causes us to rebuke Jesus in our lives? What gets our tongues wagging and causes, as James puts it, “both blessing and cursing coming from the same mouth” – which, by the way, James tells us, ought not occur. Bile and blessing ought not come out of the same mouth of the follower of Jesus. Who can “tame the tongue” of the human species? Especially when the internet and email exist, where one can vomit anonymously any feeling they choose without consequence, without having to be taken to task to explain how these feelings fit with being a Christian.

Back to the question: what causes *us* to rebuke Jesus? Oh, I never rebuke Jesus: not when I engage in winking thievery of work supplies; not when I knee-jerk judge others without thinking; not when I curse or cheat or little white lie; not when I ignore “what would Jesus do or think” in my daily living and opinionating. Never rebuke Jesus? Then we have nothing to confess, which is highly unlikely.

We're in pretty fast company when we get called on the carpet for rebuking Jesus – Peter did, and he learned from it. Fear, I think, is the main cause for rebuke, fear of what people will think of me, my own popularity, if I buck everyone else's view; fear of what will be required of me if I “deny myself, take up my cross, and follow” Jesus; fear of having to change a lifestyle if I'm going to “forfeit my life” for Jesus' sake; fear of losing what I'm familiar with for what I have no idea about, an adventure as yet unknown.

Why is fear so powerful? It's of the devil, I suppose. That's why Jesus called Peter “Satan” and told him to get out of his way. Fear sets our minds on human things, not godly things. It scares us into abandoning our faith in favor of not getting hurt. We are more afraid of standing up for what we believe than telling off a trespasser against us. I know a young woman who was hounded by a group of guys. They cat-called after her, told her what a good looking she was, wouldn't she like to get together with them. Her reply was simple and to the point and was spoken from the faith she espoused: “I'm not that kind of girl,” she said. She didn't play along with them or tease them. She didn't try to be cool and schmooze around them with a response that didn't put them off. She told it like it was: “I'm not that kind of girl.” Faith stronger than fear.

There was a fellow who was being groomed to be an executive in a large corporation. He was taken along on a national convention as part of his training and there discovered the lifestyle of the rich and famous in his company. They drank too much. He was told to “get a woman” from the cadre of females brought in for the occasion. He didn't play along with the executive lifestyle. When he refused, his boss wondered why. His boss even questioned his executive ability. The boss said he would overlook his unusual behavior at the convention if he promised it would never happen again. The man said that he would never engage in the type of behavior evident at the convention. The boss asked why. The man said, “Because I'm a Christian. I just don't do that.” He was fired a few weeks later. (Will Willimon, *Pulpit Resource*, September 13, 2015, p. 46) The man took up a cross and paid the price, but his conscience was clear, his First and Foremost Love understood beyond the shadow of a doubt. He was a follower of Jesus.

It's easier to go along to get along; that's why it may hurt to be a follower instead of a fan of Jesus. The baptized are not called into a fan club but the body of Christ. There has to be courage there or it isn't of Christ. The tongue that confesses Jesus as Lord must also give evidence of that. Fan or follower? It's up to us.

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