

Not A Fan Final Exam

Introduction

The basic question we have been challenged to ask ourselves is **what distinguishes a follower from a fan**. As we have pursued the answer, we have been asking ourselves specific questions relating to various themes. I have compiled a rather comprehensive list of questions that are designed to pull together all the concepts and themes of this series with a view of helping each of us to sing with more confidence and conviction the chorus, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus."

As it is true that following Jesus is much more than an intellectual exercise, so should this final exam. The questions are probing intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. To benefit from this examination, we must be willing to concentrate and devote ourselves to serious introspection. When approached properly, this examination will be anything but easy. You cannot answer any question without giving it candid consideration.

DEFINE THE RELATIONSHIP

John 6 5,000 fed; next day crowd went to Capernaum, where Jesus had gone; Jesus said (v. 26), "You seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled." When Jesus' teaching became too challenging for some, v. 66 says, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

Lk. 14 Jesus says our love for Him must eclipse all other loves – even self love – to such a degree that all other loves look like hate by comparison. This includes our love for possessions, for Jesus says, "So then, none of you can be My disciples who does not give up all his own possessions." (v. 33)

Jesus defined the relationship and so must we. Use these questions to count the cost of discipleship as He call you to follow Him today. But before we proceed, we must emphasize one very important point to dispel any misunderstandings Satan would feed. Becoming a follower is not a process, but an event. When Jesus called Matthew, he left his tax office. When Jesus called Peter, Andrew, James and John, they left their fishing nets. It wasn't a process. It was a decision. You will leave here today either a fan or a follower. The fans will remain merely admirers of Jesus. The followers will be disciples. I am not asking you to go home and think about this. I am calling for a decision before you leave the room.

How have you defined the relationship?

Why are you here? Is it just for what you can **get** or is it for what you can **give**? Is it about you or is it about Him?

What would prompt you to quit following Jesus?

Do you just wear the team colors or display the team insignia, or are you on the team? All in?

Do you have a tattoo that portrays a Christian theme? A bumper sticker? A Jesus ICTHUS on your car or business card? Do you wear "witness wear" clothing? Are there times you hide those? Or wish you could hide them? Do you act differently when displaying them than at other times?

Have you fully committed to Christ? Is your relationship to Him better characterized as a hobby – a sideline – or is it your very life?

Is your relationship to Jesus like trying on clothes in that you find a style of discipleship that feels comfortable and you put back on the rack that confining and defining style that Jesus prescribes?

Are you close enough to Jesus to get all the benefits but not so close that it requires anything from you?

Are you here to be **comfortable** or to **conform** to the will and way of Jesus?

Is Jesus one among many? First among many? Or your one and only?

Which word more accurately describes your regard for and relationship to Jesus – admiration or adoration?

Is your relationship with Jesus a **casual acquaintance** or a **committed devotion**?

How close to Jesus are you / want to be? Just close enough to get all the benefits, but not so close that it requires anything from you? What has your relationship with Jesus cost you? How has Jesus interfered with your life? Is your relationship with Jesus on **your** terms or on **His**?

Which matters more to you? The kind of relationship you have with Christ or the kind of relationship Jesus wants to have with you?

Which posture better describes your relationship to Jesus -- Sitting (the primary posture of a fan, or standing and walking (that of a follower)?)

If Jesus were to look you in the eye and ask you to define the relationship you have with Him, would you be able to say it is an **exclusive** relationship? Is it just a weekend thing?

Are you an enthusiastic admirer of Jesus? Are you content to sit in the stands of this church stadium to merely cheer on the team when all is going well, but will walk away when the game gets tough? Or are you in the game, ready to sacrifice and suffer pain on the field to advance Team Jesus?

Have you made it your own?

Is it real?

NO DISCLAIMERS

What exclusions or exceptions are in your covenant with Jesus? Have you tried to add some fine print to the covenant Jesus offered?

What would Jesus' kingdom forfeit if you left it?

Are you truly invested (financially, emotionally, physically, mentally)?

How would your life be different if Jesus left you?

How would the church suffer if you left it? Or would it suffer?

If you quit attending this church, would anyone notice? Would your absence leave a void or vacancy?

If you quit giving financially, would the church budget suffer noticeably? What ministry of this congregation would suffer loss if you quit coming?

Do you consciously think about pursuing the likeness of Jesus every day or is it relegated to game day, the one day a week when everyone comes to the stadium (otherwise called the church auditorium)?

Jesus said that anyone who denies himself and takes up his cross may follow Him. Have you added any other qualifications?

Who or what are you most tempted to put ahead of Jesus, to love more than Jesus?

Is Jesus one of many, or is he your one and only?

What words appropriately describe your relationship to Jesus? Obsessive, impulsive, reckless, passionate, Convenient, opportunistic,

What best describes your approach to God? Antiseptic. Sterile. Professional. Choreographed. Safe (on his turf). Programmed. Automatic (didn't have to think). Familiar. Cerebral.

haphazard. Impetuous. Reckless. Demonstrative. Extravagant. Emotional. Spontaneous

Where is your focus? Learning about Jesus or becoming like Jesus?

Into what chamber of your heart have you refused Jesus access?

Is your testimony of life consistent with the ICTHUS Jesus fish on your car or business card?

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Luke 7:36-50 Jesus at the Pharisee's house; prostitute entered, weeping, washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, and poured out expensive perfume on them while kissing them. Jesus told the parable of the two debtors, teaching the lesson that our transition from fan to follower corresponds to the degree to which we recognize we have been forgiven much.

How does your life express a proper realization of how much you have been forgiven?

Does your response to Jesus' forgiveness display gratitude that is both emotional and extravagant?

Have I mistaken the relationship my parents had with Jesus with my own relationship with Jesus? Is my relationship to Jesus more because of **heritage** or my **heart**?

Is my relationship with Jesus a **profession** or an **obsession**?

Which more accurately describes your current situation – going to church or pursuing Christ?

Is your relationship to Jesus seen most by your **words** or by your **walk**? Is your response to Jesus a decision or a passion?

Do your prayers focus more on **your** heart or on **Jesus'** heart? On your benefits or on the benefits to the Kingdom of God? On you feeling better, looking better, performing better? Or on matters close to God's heart?

Are you more concerned about what people see (your outward show of piety) or upon what God can see (your heart)?

Is your life characterized more by resolutions, desires and decisions to be like Christ, or are you moving with determination and passion to that goal?

In what way have you poured out your life before the Lord with emotion and passion?

COMFORTABLE CROSS

Luke 9:23 "If any one wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

Luke 9:57-62 ". . . someone said to [Jesus], 'I will follow You wherever You go.' And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.' He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, permit me first to and bury my father.' . . . Another also said, 'I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.'"

How do you die daily?

What does the cross you carry look like? Is it padded? Shiny or scarred? Rugged or smooth?

Comfortable? Splintered or sanded?

Is your cross something you are able to carry, or do you require help?

Is the path to your Golgotha rocky and uphill or smooth and level ground? Is the path narrow or broad? Safe or dangerous?

What sacrifice have you made because of your relationship to Jesus?

How has your life changed because you have decided to follow Jesus?

When Jesus called people to follow Him, some put Him off with excuses that began with the words, "But first." Have you responded to Jesus with a "But first?" If you were to do so, what is it you first want to do? What is it that is more important and urgent than following Jesus?

What possession, skill or identity is most difficult for you to sign over to Jesus? Why?

If following Jesus cost you everything, would it still be worth it?

What am I willing to pay for the bread? Am I here for the free bread? Am I guilty of selling Jesus' bread too cheaply?

After all Jesus has sacrificed for you and done to serve you, is there any sacrifice or service you would refuse Him?

Will you, like the disciples in Jn. 6, stop following Jesus when His teachings become too challenging?

Fans will bail on Jesus when He asks them to sacrifice, to take up their cross, to die to self.

DETERMINE THE RULES

Do you devote more attention to what you look like on the outside or what you are on the inside? In what you appear to be to people or how God views you? On your conduct that men can see or on the condition of your soul?

To what extent is image your primary concern for yourself and for your congregation?

In regard to yourself and to others are you committed as much to rules as you are to relationship?

To what extent do you assess your relationship to Jesus by your adherence to a set of rules?

To what degree do you measure your relationship to Jesus by comparing yourself to others' adherence to rules?

To what extent do you define Christianity in the context of keeping rules and observing rituals? Have you elevated rules above people? Ritual above righteousness? Image above reality? Obedience above grace?

To what degree do you evaluate others' devotion to God upon the basis of **showing up and dressing up**?

How much of your Christianity is a production and a performance? Upon compliance with expectations and regulations?

To what degree do you measure devotion to God upon you think, talk and act like a Christian?

Is your motivation to obey **God imposed from the exterior** or **compelled from the inside**?

Is your relationship to Jesus measured by the word "Do" or the word "Done?" Upon what you do or upon what Jesus has done?

What concerns you more? Processes and procedures in a worship service? Or people needs?

Were you raised in church but not in Christ? Did you raise your children in church but not in Christ?

Are you living in church but not in Christ? Are you living your life in church or in Christ?

Is your relationship to Jesus merely intellectual or intimate? Do you know Jesus or merely know about Jesus?

Is your assessment that you are a follower based upon your level of Bible knowledge or upon your commitment that moves you? Is your focus on following rules or following Jesus?

Are you more focused on the outside than on the inside? On rules more than relationship? Laws over love? Guilt over grace?

CONCLUSION

To what extent does your life display your understanding that being a follower means not merely knowing *about* Jesus? Not about keeping a list of rules? Not about perfection or performance but about commitment to the Person of Jesus Christ -- a commitment that is unwavering, unshakable, non-negotiable, uncompromising?

When people speak at your funeral, will it be obvious that you were a follower?

When you stand before Jesus, will He acknowledge you as a follower?

Do you have enough of Jesus? Are you satisfied with a little bit of Jesus?

Does Jesus have enough of you? Is Jesus enough for you?

Why are you here? Did you come today to receive or to give? Is Jesus truly enough for you?

Would you still follow Him

- if He didn't provide miraculously?
- after your friends leave Him?
- If we had to meet under a shade tree?
- If we didn't offer amenities?
- If the music and programs don't suit you?

Where is your focus regarding this congregation – its numerical size or its level of commitment to Jesus?

Do you readily accept and obey Jesus' teaching as it relates to sexual purity? Complete honesty? Sacrificial giving? Moral and ethical integrity?

Who or what do you love more than Jesus?

When was the last time you did something for Jesus that raised eyebrows?

Mark Atterberry was one of the speakers at the 2012 Missouri Christian Convention. He addressed the topic of Authentic Devotion. In his message he read a passage from Lawrence Wilson's book, [A Different Kind of Crazy](#).

"I don't suppose anyone fully knows what it means to be a Christian when he first signs on. We crave forgiveness or we see the beauty of Christ's life and we want that for ourselves. And rightly so. But we can't know what it means to drink that cup that He drank; to fully offer our lives to God without reservation any more than a kid standing in a Marines recruiter's office understands war. We revel in forgiveness and freedom, enjoying the knowledge that Jesus is our friend. We change in subtle ways. We're not so cantankerous. We drink less. We start giving money to the church. But at some point we realize Jesus is not exactly who we thought He was. And we start to wonder who He really is and where He really intends to lead us. Ultimately we come to that 'What did I sign up for?' feeling. The same one that whittled Jesus' following from a massive crowd down to a band of twelve, and finally to a few women standing around the cross. Every disciple seems to face this realization that being a disciple of Jesus means more than he ever dreamed. And that's when he must decide to either keep going on this uncertain road or turn back. What it all comes down to is this. We must give Jesus our full allegiance or none at all."

Mark Atterberry then commented, "Now, if you don't have authentic devotion you can still go to church. You can put your good clothes on every Sunday and go and mix and mingle with your friends and sing the songs and put a little money in the plate. And you can still be counted as a part of that evangelical demographic. There are millions of Christians who do that every week. They go to church and play the game. But there are other things they love more than Jesus. They are fans. Satan has deceived them into thinking they are Christians. Jesus has called you to be His follower. Will you?"