

**HOW REAL IS YOUR FAITH?
NOT A FAN
MARK 8:31-37; 9:30-36; 10:32-45
JUNE 24, 2012**

They went out to dinner at a nice restaurant.

They'd been dating pretty regularly for seven months,
and it all seemed to be going well.

But while she knew she had feelings for him,
feelings that were growing more serious with time,
and she'd even told him, "I love you,"
she really had no idea what he felt.

Oh, he kept asking her out, and he seemed to enjoy their time together.
But he'd never really said anything very definitive.

So she looked across the table,
drew in a deep breath and asked,
"What are your feelings for me?
Where do you see our relationship going?"

All the blood drained out of his face.
It wasn't that he didn't like her or enjoy being with her.
But he'd never really thought about it.
He'd just been going with the flow,
taking things one step at a time,
and having a good time.

But now that she asked,
he'd have to make a decision, perhaps even commit himself.

It was what is called a DTR moment.
Define the relationship.
There comes a time when it is appropriate to define the relationship.

I want today to be a DTR moment,
a time for each one of us to be honest about what our relationship with Jesus is... and what it's not.
DTR: Define the relationship.

Who is he to you?
What is your level of commitment to him?

I want to frame the question the way a recent book does.
The book title is *Not a Fan*.
And the question is: Are you a fan of Jesus or a follower of Jesus?

A fan is an enthusiastic admirer.
Like a sports fan.
A sports fan loves to watch their team play.
They cheer them on,
on top of the world when they win,
in the dumps when they lose.
Have you ever been to a Spurs game?
A Missions baseball game?
You can tell with one quick glance at the crowd,
there are an awful lot of sports fans who do not play the game.
They just sit with their beer in hand, watch the game and enjoy.

Most of them could use the exercise of
 actually being on the court playing the game.
 But they're not players; just fans.

There are many people who are fans of Jesus.

And he had plenty of fans when he was on earth.

But Jesus is not all that interested in fans.

He never was.

But it is easy to fall into the trap of being a fan of Jesus and thinking that's good enough.

You were raised in the church,

so there was never any question about it.

It's just what you do on Sunday mornings.

There's no good TV on then anyway.

So you find a church where you enjoy the music,

the seats are comfortable,

and the sermon is at least OK.

Maybe you weren't raised in the church,

but you started going to please a boyfriend or girlfriend, a husband or wife.

Or you feel like the kids need it.

And you get into the habit, and it's all good.

So you're here more Sundays than not.

You can even find the Scripture readings without checking the table of contents.

You know how to find things in the Bible,

and you know many of the stories.

You sing the songs and take in the sermon.

And on your drive home afterward you give the service a thumbs up or thumbs down.

And you'll be back next week,

because you're a fan of Jesus and the church.

Jesus had fans back in his day, too.

But from time to time he would declare it was time to define the relationship.

In John 6 a great crowd came to Jesus "because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed." (Jn.6:2)

Jesus fed the thousands with a few loaves and fishes.

They were so excited by that, they conspired to "make him king by force."

But Jesus knew what was in their hearts,

and he withdrew from them.

(Jn.6:14-15, 64)

Just a bit later he decided to have the DTR talk.

He laid out the challenge of what it really meant to follow him.

And, John writes, "From this time many of his disciples turned back."

(Jn.6:66)

More than one said, "THIS is not what I signed up for."

He said to the twelve,

"Are you going to leave, too?"

They said, "Where would we go?

You have the words of eternal life.

We believe you're the Holy One of God."

(Jn.6:67-69)

It was a DTR moment.

So, how about a DTR moment for us?

Everyone who is in favor of Jesus,

give him a round of applause.

If you think Jesus is a great moral example,

give him your applause.

If you really appreciate how much he loves you and all he did that you might be saved,
give him your applause.

Now...

Everyone who is following Jesus,
truly seeking to grow into his character,
to love as he loved,
to serve as he served,
to give sacrificially as he gave himself,
give him a round of applause.

Are you a follower of Jesus or just a fan?

Even with his inner circle,
he repeatedly worked to define the relationship,
to clarify what it really meant to be not a fan, but a follower.

In Mark's Gospel he gave the challenge in similar words three different times.

Three times, as if to make sure they really got it.

MARK 8:31-37

Jesus tried to explain what kind of messiah he was.

But the whole thing of rejection, suffering and death did not fit with their expectations,
and Peter tried to straighten him out.

Jesus rebuked him in the sharpest terms,
and told Peter that, not only would the messiah suffer,
but his followers would have to deny themselves as well.

If Jesus did not seek his own comfort, even his own life,
but gave it up in order to save others,
then following him means doing as he did.

That's what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

A DTR talk.

Deny yourself,

your own pleasure and comfort, your own desires,

take up your cross,

let all that "self" stuff DIE,

KILL it,

and come follow me.

Lesson learned, right?

Well, turn the page.

MARK 9:30-36

They didn't get it.

Not only did Mark tell us that in verse 32,
but you can tell from their argument about who among them was the greatest; self promotion.

Peter said, "He calls me Rock."

John said, "I'm his beloved disciple."

Judas Iscariot insisted, "He entrusted me with the treasury."

And on it went.

Until Jesus interrupted them.

Stop it with the self-promotion.

Following me is about humbling yourself,

not advancing yourself.

Ah, that ties back into the "deny yourself and take up your cross" theme from before.

Surely they've got it now.

Turn the page again.

This time they're on the way to Jerusalem,
moving steadily toward the cross.

The disciples are afraid and would like to turn back, but Jesus moves forward.
He talks about going to the cross.

This time Jesus was more explicit and detailed than ever before.

MARK 10:32-45

Such details:

betrayed, condemned to death, handed over to the Gentiles, mocking, spitting, flogging, death.
And on the third day he will rise.

What must his followers have thought?

This is the third DTR conversation.

The third time's a charm, right?

It's pretty clear they still didn't get it.

James and John wanted places of power and prestige.

The others were indignant,
not because of James and John's ambition,
but because James and John got their request in first.

And once again, Jesus had to pull back on their reins.

He used the language of drinking from his cup and being baptized with his baptism,
and they were sure they'd go along with him.

But they didn't realize he was talking about his crucifixion.

So he taught, once again, about what it means to follow him.

Not having power over others,
but power for others,
serving others.
"For the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many."

He didn't say the words, but his call remained the same:

Follow me.

Come with me, deny yourself, and serve others.

But still they didn't really understand.

For them, that would only come later,
after the crucifixion, after the resurrection,
after the Holy Spirit opened their hearts and minds to the fullness of who Jesus is.
Then they realized what it meant to be a follower, a REAL follower, of Jesus.

Jesus' life, ministry and teaching, his death and resurrection, are recorded in Scripture for us
to present us with a DTR moment.

Today let's take a step toward defining the relationship.

Will we be followers, REAL followers of Jesus?

Or will we settle for being fans?

I'd like to suggest three questions to help us start defining the relationship.

1. Why are you here this morning?

The crowd in John 6 came because of his miracles, the healings and the bread.
Some people come to church for healing, for friendship, for fun, for whatever.
It can all be pretty "me" centered.

For Jesus the most important thing is his relationship with you.

Does that fit in with why you are here?

Your relationship with Jesus?

2. Have you made it personal?

Are you here because your parents raised you to attend worship, and you got used to it?

Like when you carpool with someone, and they always play their music on the radio.

You don't really love their style of music, but you get used to it.

Are you here because you're used to it?

Are you here because you think your kids need it?

I'm amazed by families that come to church long enough to

get their child through confirmation class or high school and then disappear.

Are you here because you think your kids need a moral or spiritual upbringing?

Is it to please your husband or wife?

Jesus pushed on making him more important than family when he said,

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate

his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters,

yes, even his own life,

he cannot be my disciple."

(Luke 14:26)

For followers, coming to worship is not about your mom or dad, your spouse or your kids.

It's about you and Jesus.

Are you here because you are overwhelmed by the love of Jesus,

and you need and want to express your love back to him?

3. Are you all in?

Being a follower of Jesus requires a 100% commitment.

Not 50%, not 75%, not 90%.

100%.

What is much more common is a customized Christianity.

I follow Jesus, except he better not talk to me about how I handle my money.

I love Jesus, but I don't want him messing with my sex life.

I follow Jesus, but don't ask me to forgive that person who hurt me.

I follow Jesus, but he's got to leave my free time out of it.

I follow Jesus, but don't talk to me about helping the poor.

I want to follow Jesus in the areas of my life that I choose.

But 100%?

That's extreme.

That's fan-atical.

No, that's what Jesus called a follower.

Remember the beginning of the sermon, the guy sitting in the restaurant with his girlfriend?

They'd been dating awhile.

So now she asked him the big Define The Relationship question,

"What are your feelings for me?"

"Where do you see our relationship going?"

And all the blood drained out of his face.

What do you think he said?

He could say, "We're just having fun together."

He might say, "I'm not sure. Let's see where it goes."

Or he might say,

"I love you more all the time, and I'd like to take our relationship to the next level."

What do you think he said to her?

What do you say to Jesus?