

Matthew 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Jesus tells us to come and “*follow Me*”, not come and be “My fan”.

You may be thinking, “So, what’s the difference between a “follower” and a “fan” of Jesus? Think of your favorite singer or music group. Now that singer or musician has been doing what they do for a long time, with years and years of hard work and practice, practice, practice. They have learned over the years from their failures and mistakes and even by their triumphs. So, what a fan sees is the fruit of their labor or work and dedication to what they are doing, and a fan admires that fruit and are a huge fan of theirs because of that fruit. The sad thing is they (Singers musicians) say to “Follow them” on social media.

But to be a true follower the way Jesus is talking about is not one who is a fan, sitting on the side lines watching the one they are following do all the work, and they reap the harvest (the enjoyment of their music) of someone else’s work. No, a follower does the same thing that the person they are following is doing.

Just like Jesus did not call His disciples, or even us to be His fan and watch Him do all the work. Rather Jesus called the disciples, and us, to watch and learn (*learn from Me*) and to do the same things that He is doing. Even Jesus said that we will do even “*greater works than these*” and it’s not by being His fan, but His follower.

† **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.* (underlined for emphasis)

† **John 14:12** *Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.* (underlined for emphasis)

Some Christians are fans of their pastor, or a certain denomination of church, (Baptist, Calvary Chapel, Lutheran, Catholic, etc....) They love their pastor’s teaching or love the way the church does things, but they are simply fans, sitting on the sidelines watching the pastor and/or the church do all the work, but they still want to benefit from the fruit. They will brag saying, “*Yeah I go to such and such a church*” because it’s a well know church, yet they sit on the sidelines or in the pews watching everyone else doing the work and not lifting a finger.

During football season, I am amazed as I would watch TV when the camera goes into the bleachers showing the fans. Almost everyone has their favorite teams jersey on, and some go as far as wearing their favorite player’s number. Then there are the extremists that paint their entire

body their team's color, and they wear ridiculous costumes representing their team. I mean they go all out. Yet the reality is that they sit on the sidelines watching the players do all the work, and they get all excited when they get a touchdown or field goal (The fruit of the teams labor), and they act like they had a part in it.

“Well I cheer them on, which plays a part in it” you may be thinking. Yeah..., but that's a long stretch, because during covid, there were no fans in the bleachers and the teams continued to play and got touchdowns and field goals.

Yet, the bible teaches us to encourage one another:

† **Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT2)** *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*
(underlined for emphasis)

And to be an encourager, is not to be a cheerleader, because a cheerleader sits on the sidelines doing nothing. The best way to encourage someone is to be an example to them, and teach them just like Jesus did, because a cheerleader cannot throw or kick a football like those on the field can. All they do is sit back and admire what others can do but never learning themselves how to do it.

In this next verse, Jesus is talking about how to fast, and He gives the examples of those who do it to be recognized and admired by others (The fans), and those who do it for the Lord (The followers).

† **Matthew 6:16-18 (NLT2)** *And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

One more thought.

A Fan is like a shoe shopper, those out there shopping to look good with their brand-new shoes, yet their feet are filthy inside those shoes.

A Follower is a foot washer, not caring what others think about them, as long as they are following Jesus.

Which one are you?

† **John 13:12-15 (NLT2)** *After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have*

washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."