# Not a Fan Sermon:

## Introduction

Introduction and reference to the Corps Officers.

Enjoying Rugby World Cup?

Continuing our series of Lessons from the Rugby World Cup, and today, we’re going to look at the role of fans.

Jesus has always had lots of fans. When He was on earth, He attracted large crowds. If Jesus had a Facebook page, I reckon he would have lots of friends! Actually, I checked and Jesus does have a Facebook page – and nearly 6 million people like him!

Today, we’re going to ask ourselves the question – does Jesus want us to be a fan, or does he want something else?

I’m broken my talk into a number of shorter talks, and I’m going to give a chocolate fish award for the first child who can come up here at the end and repeat to me the three things I want you to remember.

Acknowledge Kyle Idleman – Not a Fan series, and a sermon by Joe Wittner from a Church called Life Centre in the USA.

*Take a moment to say hello to the people around you.*

## 1. What is a Fan?

*[MasterCard video clip. Message: Fans = Enthusiastic Admirers.]*

So what is a fan? A simple definition is that a fan is an ‘enthusiastic admirer’.

We can be fans of lots of things. Are there any Taylor Swift fans out there?

What about fans of Jesters pies?

Since we’re talking about the rugby world cup, do we have any fans of the All Blacks?

There are different levels of fans.

* For example, some of you will have very little interest in rugby, yet you’ve got on board for the rugby world cup. At work, we’ve had to draw teams out of a hat, so for the last few weeks, I’ve been supporting Romania.
* At the other end of the scale are the fully devoted fans, like Tim in the MasterCard ad. They buy the gear, are happy to wear ridiculous clothing, cheer and chant and even spend lots of money travelling to away games.
* And what about the Phoenix fans, who if their team is winning, take their shirts off 10 minutes from the end, regardless of the temperature. Even the women!

Fans are very important.

* An empty stadium lacks atmosphere, while a full stadium can be electric.
* Most teams have a better winning percentage at home than away – in part because fans give their team a lift.
* And perhaps most importantly, by buying supporters gear, tickets to games, sponsor’s products and TV subscriptions, we fans pay the bills. And in return, we hopefully get a better product and so more entertainment.

However, at the end of the day, no matter how devoted, a fan is still just an enthusiastic admirer. If you’re a fan of Richie McCaw, chances are you’ve never met him, and he doesn’t know you exist. As a fan, you are not IN the game. You have no direct influence on the game, and either happy or disappointed, afterwards, you’ll return to your normal life.

But for the people in the game, it affects every part of their life. They need to train, watch their diet, get rest, not go out before a game, be away from their families, and potentially be dropped for a poor performance.

Unfortunately, in the western world, many churches are dying. Could it be that we’ve become filled with spectators at religious events on Sundays, rather than disciples of Jesus?

Could it be that we are just enthusiastic admirers, rather than letting Jesus affect every part of our lives?

**FANS = ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRERS**

[Clive – Big 3, GLS]

## 2. Fans are after benefits

[Mexican wave]

Let’s have a DTR.

How many of you know what a DTR is? Sooner or later, every couple who is romantically interested in each other has to have a DTR.

What does DTR stand for? Define The Relationship. This is the official talk that happens at some point in a romantic relationship to define the level of commitment. Are we just friends? Is this casual or are we committed?

I think Jesus wants to have a DTR with us. Imagine sitting in a coffee shop and Jesus comes in. He sits down and says, “It’s time we defined this relationship.” He wants to know how you feel about him. Is the relationship exclusive? Is it just a casual Sunday morning thing, or has it moved beyond that? Are you a follower of Jesus?

I want you to sit with that question for a moment: are you a follower of Jesus?

Many of us automatically think, “Of course I am.” And we think of all the obvious indicators:

* I go to church.
* I raised my hand once at the end of a sermon.
* I own three or more Bibles.
* My ringtone is a worship song.
* Under “religious views” on my Facebook page, it says “Christ follower.”

Am I a follower of Jesus? Well…yeah!

Actually, all those things show is that you belong to the Christian subculture. But you can belong to that and still be just a fan of Jesus, not a follower.

To look at the differences between a fan and a follower of Jesus, we’re going to look at some events that John, one of the disciples, recorded in the Bible. If you want to follow along, we’re looking at John chapter 6.

The chapter starts with a fairly well known story. Thousands of people are listening to Jesus as He teaches near Lake Galilee. It’s getting late, everyone is hungry, so Jesus decides to feed them. He takes a small boy’s lunch of some bread rolls and fishes and feeds over 5000 men, not counting women and children!

When the people saw what Jesus had done, they were impressed and wanted to make him king on the spot! Imagine having a king that can take a few rolls and some fish, and make free Fillet-o-Fish burgers for everyone! Awesome! (Although I’d prefer a Big Mac).

But Jesus knew what they were thinking and slipped away. The next morning, the crowd realised that Jesus wasn’t there and went looking for Him. They found Him on the far side of the lake and they asked Jesus for more takeaways. But Jesus makes it clear that they are looking for the wrong thing.

Listen to what Jesus says in verses 26–27. *Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs. 27 But don’t be so concerned about perishable things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that the Son of Man can give you.”*

They continued to miss the point and kept asking for food so a little later, Jesus replied, *“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry again. Whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”*

This is not what they wanted to hear and they started to grumble. They wanted real food—like McDonalds—not some mumbo jumbo about Jesus being the bread of life.

Rather than smoothing this out, Jesus makes it worse. He goes on to say in verse 53: *“I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you cannot have eternal life within you.”*

What! Did you hear that correctly – Jesus is saying that we need to eat his flesh and drink his blood? That’s really odd!

Now Jesus wasn’t meaning to eat him literally – but rather, he was saying that his life must become your own. In other words, we strive to know him so well that he guides our every decision. We call this being a follower.

Anyway, that finished them off! Not only was there no more free food, but now Jesus was talking crazy!

So John records that *“At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him.”* Those who wanted to make him king yesterday now walk away grumbling and unhappy.

You know what I find interesting? Jesus didn’t chase after them. He didn’t soften His message to make it more appealing. “Just kidding. Would you like fries with those burgers?” Jesus seemed OK with the fact that his popularity took a big hit. It wasn’t the size of the crowd that Jesus cared about; it was the level of their commitment.

This isn’t the only time something like this happened. When crowds gathered, Jesus often said things that sent people heading for home.

In our Bible reading today, the historian Luke recorded Jesus telling the crowds that to follow him, they needed to hate their families and carry their cross. Now we know that Jesus was meaning that you cannot love anyone or anything as much as you love Jesus, but telling a crowd to hate their mums, that’s a good way to lose some fans! And telling people they would die. That will lose some fans!

Jesus also challenged individuals. Luke recorded a time that a rich young ruler came to visit Jesus (Luke 18). If Jesus was looking for a pin up boy for his new movement, how about this guy? Young, rich, and so devout that he could say to Jesus, “I’ve kept all the commandments since I was a boy.” I’m sure the disciples were thinking “Sign this guy up - he’ll make a great Christian!” But Jesus had a DTR with him. He knew that this young man was not whole-hearted, that there was one thing holding him back. So he asked the young man to “Sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor…then come follow me.” (Luke 18:22) The young man walked away sad. He couldn’t let go of his stuff. He couldn’t follow with his whole heart. He was a fan.

I’m sure the disciples were thinking, “Jesus, what’s wrong with you! The dude was awesome. And we could use the cash! You should have told him to bring his money and come with us.” But Jesus isn’t looking for fans; he’s looking for followers—whole-hearted followers.

It’s not that being a fan is bad; it’s that for Jesus, it’s not enough. Fans are fine, but fans won’t change the world.

Here are three differences between fans and followers from this teaching from Jesus:

1. Fans are in it for them, while followers are in it for God.

The crowd wanted the free lunch, and when Jesus offered Himself, it wasn’t enough. You know you’re a fan when it’s really about you.

If your relationship with Jesus is only about making sure you get into heaven, or that he keeps you safe and stops bad things from happening to you, that sounds like it’s about you. And if it’s all about you—that’s a fan. If it’s all about God—that’s a follower.

1. Fans come and go; but followers stay. When the fans left, Jesus turned to the disciples and asked, “What about you? Are you leaving too?” I love what Peter said. “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life.” Peter is a follower—he is sticking with Jesus through thick and thin.
2. Fans are kind of in, but followers are all in. The crowds followed Jesus around for a day or two and then went back to their lives. But when Jesus called the disciples, the gospels record that “they left everything and followed Him.” They were all in. Whole-hearted. There is no such thing as a “kind of follower” of Jesus; that’s just a fan.

So what do I want you to remember?

1. FANS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRERS.
2. FANS ARE AFTER BENEFITS, BUT FOLLOWERS ARE AFTER JESUS.

[Offer a chance to connect with God through music.

Cast aside your morning, week. Close eyes. Picture of God.

SONG – High Above]

## 3. Whole Hearted Followers are growing in Four Areas

If Jesus wants followers instead of fans, what exactly is a whole-hearted follower of Jesus?

Joe Wittner has come up with four simple things, and to help us learn them, I need everyone to help with some actions.

* God: I have an authentic relationship with God.
* Me: I am becoming more like Jesus.
* We: I have healthy relationships with others.
* World: I am using my gifts to serve others.

Let me break it down.

First, God [point up]. A follower has an authentic relationship with God. You love God with all you’ve got. You know God and God knows you. You talk with each other. Christianity is fundamentally relational. It is about loving God with all you’ve got and loving people. The whole thing starts here: an authentic relationship with God. You don’t just know about God, you know God, and you live with Him every day. First – God.

Second, Me [point to chest]. A follower is becoming more like Jesus. As you get to know Jesus, you change. You are becoming a new and different person. God is at work in your life. You become more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, and self-controlled. First – God, Second - Me.

Third, We [hug]. A follower is building healthy relationships with others. Your relationship with God transforms you, and the new you has better relationships with others. You become a better husband or wife, a better mum or dad, a better friend, a better employer or employee, a better neighbour. God, me, we.

Fourth, world [both hands out]. A follower uses their gifts to serve others. When you have a relationship with God that transforms you and your relationships with others, you have something worth sharing. Followers understand that they are blessed to be a blessing; they are given much so that they can share much. Followers pass it on. They use what God has given them to help others follow Christ and to heal and change a broken world. They serve.

God, me, we, world [with actions]. This is how we can describe a whole-hearted follower. Does this sound like something you want? If so, **how do you become one?**

The short answer is, by the grace of God! You simply turn to God and say that you want to follow Him.

Then you begin to follow. You make a decision in a moment, but following takes a lifetime. Both are important. You have to make the decision to start but then you need to live the life—actually follow Jesus every day.

Imagine the difference this church could make filled with followers of Jesus – people who genuinely love God?

Imagine the difference it would make if we all allow Jesus to change us to become more like Him – to become better people, but also to grow in our concern for others?

Imagine the quality of our marriages and families, if we were all following Jesus wholeheartedly. What sort of example could we set in our community?

Imagine the difference a bunch of fired up followers could make in our community that were trying to follow Jesus and live his way?

And imagine how much we would want to tell our friends about the difference Jesus is making in our lives, when he was making a difference.

That’s why I believe Jesus wants followers. Fans are OK, but they won’t change their world.

1. FANS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRERS
2. FANS ARE AFTER BENEFITS BUT FOLLOWERS ARE AFTER JESUS
3. WHOLEHEARTED FOLLOWERS ARE GROWING IN FOUR DIRECTIONS – GOD, ME, WE, WORLD.

[Offering and prayer]

## 4. Response

So, let’s do that DTR.

Is your relationship with Jesus just a casual thing – perhaps a just on Sunday thing – or is it something more? Like the song asks – how do you show Jesus? Do people see Jesus when they are with you?

Or is Jesus just a ticket to heaven; someone who protects you and looks after you?

Are you a fan of Jesus, or a follower of Jesus?

The real test comes when you’re facing a situation where you have to make a choice. You’ll be faced with “do I do what I know Jesus is asking me to do, or will I do what I want to do?” That’s when you’ll know if you’re a fan or a follower.

Kyle Idleman tells a story about a young man in his church. Before meeting Jesus, his life consisted of “going out, drinking, taking drugs and chasing girls.”

But when he met Jesus, this guy did a 180 and went all in. One day, he asked if Kyle would meet with him and his mum. Kyle knew that his mum went to another church in town. He assumed that she wanted to thank him for the change in her son’s life. But she didn’t. She was upset with Kyle and the church and her son. “He’s taken all this too far,” she said. She wasn’t pleased with all the time he spent at church, or that he was passing out CD’s of the sermons, or that he was giving some of his hard earned money to the church, or that he was talking about going on a mission trip. Frustrated, she asked, “Can you please tell him that the Bible teaches ‘everything in moderation’? Can you please tell him that it doesn’t have to be all or nothing?”

Kyle pointed out that Jesus never said, “everything in moderation.” But He did say, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

**Response time**

* I want to give you the opportunity this morning, to respond to God.
* The music team is going to play some music, and while they do, I’ll like you to pause and define your relationship.
* Perhaps you’ve never before understood that Jesus wants to have a relationship with you. So today, maybe Jesus is asking you to choose to follow Him for the first time and make him first in your life.
* For others of you, Jesus might be saying “I want more”. I want to be your number one.
* We all make mistakes, and get it wrong often. So perhaps today, Jesus is asking you to say sorry for letting him down, and to ask him to help you be bolder.
* Opportunity to come to the front if you would like someone to pray with you. Recognise that this is a family service – someone will look after your children.
* Do you need to change the relationship? Reflect on that as we listen, and come to the front if you would like someone to pray with you.

[Song: With all I am]

## Benediction

Re-cap

* FANS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ADMIRERS
* FANS ARE AFTER BENEFITS BUT FOLLOWERS ARE AFTER JESUS
* WHOLEHEARTED FOLLOWERS ARE GROWING IN FOUR AREAS

Morning tea

Intergenerational worship slide:

* Ask a child about a school project they have completed recently (or about their certificate)
* Ask an adult about the best place they’ve visited

Benediction – From John 6

***66****From this time on, many of his disciples turned back. They no longer followed him.*

***67****“You don’t want to leave also, do you?” Jesus asked the 12 disciples.*

***68****Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, who can we go to? You have the words of eternal life.****69****We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”*