

“Follower or Fan?”

Not a Fan – part #2 – based on the book by Kyle Idleman

John 6:48-71

[64-title slide] *Welcome*

Prayer

[65-Concert fans] Have you ever seen someone famous in person? Here is my short list: Michael Jordan (saw him at a game once.) Chelsea Clinton (saw her while she attended Stanford and I visited friends). Charlton Heston (shook his hand once).

I’m a fan of a lot of people. Grant Norsworthy of Sonic Flood (I played in a band with him once). Stephen Colbert from the Late Show. (I went to the same university as him, but not at the same time). I could list many others, including Christian musicians: Matthew West, Chris Tomlin, David Crowder, Lincoln Brewster. I’ve seen them all on stage. They are great people.

But do I really know them?

There is a huge difference between knowing about someone and actually knowing someone. It’s the difference between knowing their birthday and actually sending them a card. Better yet, inviting them to your birthday and they actually attend.

You can know facts about someone, like their birthplace, their stats, how many points they’ve scored in their career, how many albums they’ve sold, their favorite food. But those are just facts, stuff you can research online. Knowing someone - really, truly knowing them - means learning their deepest fears, what makes them happy, recalling the time in their life when they really struggled.

[66-wedding] I’m a big fan of my wife. Katja and I have been married 20 years next month. I know where she was born, what her favorite food is (milk chocolate) and even her career scoring record in the NBA (spoiler: same as mine, zero.) And yet, despite our time together, there are still things we are learning about each other. The point is, we work hard to know each other. That’s the same with my children and my friends. The saying goes, “Friends help you move; true friends help you move bodies.”

[67-Jesus and crowds] In the scripture we read today, there is a discussion going on between Jesus and his fans. Jesus had just finished feeding 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish. The fans were excited. The passage ends with these words, “After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.’ Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.” (John 6:14-15)

Jesus clearly was not interested in popularity. He didn’t want to be their king. So the next day, when the people again came looking for him, Jesus pointed out they were just looking for the famous bread-maker. However, Jesus was ready to give them something more, much more.

[68-Jesus and bread] In verse 35 and again in verse 48, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life.” The bread he is comparing himself to is not that cheap, fluffy, white “Wonderbread” that you can crumpled into a ball. He’s talking about old-school bread, 77-grain, a-meal-in-itself, whole wheat bread. The kind that fills you up.

In verse 51 he says, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” At this point, the “fans” start to grumble and complain. Of course, Jesus is speaking in hyperbole. He is trying to explain a concept to those who can’t make up their mind to follow him.

Remember, these people saw the miracle, they ate with the 5,000. They came after Jesus. This is a chance for Jesus to start a revival and get the platform he has always wanted. Instead, he lays out a plan that asks, “Are you a true follower, or just a fan?”

When Jesus speaks about eating the bread from heaven, he is explaining the concept of the Hebrew word, *yada*. In his book, Not a Fan, Kyle Idleman defines *yada* as “to know completely and to be completely known.” (p.47)

[69-Yada] The word *yada* appears in the Bible first in Genesis 4:1. Adam “knew” Eve, and they had a baby. (Genesis 4:1) *Yada* doesn’t have to be sexual. The point is, *yada* is more than knowledge – it is intimacy, transparency, and

vulnerability. It is reflected in the kind of phone call a pastor gets when someone says, "I'm really struggling. Will you pray with me?"

When Jesus says, "eat" my flesh and "drink" my blood, he's not talking about cannibalism. (John 6:53-56) Jesus is drawing a picture of intimately knowing someone and being known. Later in John 17:3, Jesus says, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

[70-Jesus' hand] Write this down: Jesus wants to know us. Not just know facts about us. Jesus wants to *yada* us, know and be known. Can you be that transparent before Jesus? Can you seek him with everything that you are?

For many of us, that price sounds too high. We are like the fans who grumble. "You're making this too hard for us, Jesus. Why can't it just be simple like the miracle?"

Question: Would you want to marry someone who didn't know you? Would you want to take a trip around the world with someone you'd never met, much less talked to? Would you put someone in your will, make them the guardians of your children and the heir to your wealth if you didn't know the first thing about them? No!

So it shouldn't surprise us when Jesus warns us, too many of us are fans, not followers who really know Jesus. We need to change. Listen to what he says in these scriptures:

[71-verses] "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' ²⁶ "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!" (Luke 13:24-27)

[72-verses] "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is

in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Knowing Jesus is not about how often you attend church, what songs you sing in worship, what version of the Lord’s Prayer you memorize, what translation of the Bible you read, or even what pew you sit in. Jesus is asking us, “Do you really know me? Or are you just playing?”

Think about it. Would Jesus say to you, “Get away from me; I never knew you!”? That’s harsh! But Jesus isn’t trying to be popular. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is playing for keeps. He wants to know if you are all in.

[know Jesus] Do you long to know Jesus? Would you share your junk with him? Your fears? Your troubles? Your sins? Your struggles? Your doubts? Everything?

We can read the gospels and really get to know Jesus. He was tired, hungry, rejected, and even lonely. He prayed so hard he sweat drops of blood. His life is an open book to us, literally. In return, he asks us to let his Spirit read us, change us, transform us. That only happens when we really know Jesus.

Imagine trying out for a team. Coach calls you over and asks, “What position do you want to play?” You answer, “I can’t tell you that. You’ll just have to watch me and figure it out.” I suspect Coach would look at you funny.

Yet, how do we treat Jesus? Jesus asks, “Will you follow me? Will you lose your life for my sake?” And we answer, “I don’t know Jesus. Just stand over there and watch my life for a while and figure it out.” That’s just as silly. A true follower would never do that.

[Jesus cross] Jesus gives us his life. He gives us his flesh and blood, all that he is. He died for us on the cross to take away our sins. Jesus isn’t pretending to be interested in us. He really knows us.

One of the biggest issues facing our churches today is that the world views us as shallow, hypocritical, and insincere. We might have great music, even great preaching, but what about content? Where is the meat? Where is the

connection? Where is the commitment? Christians might be eager to ask, “Are you saved?” before we even know anything about our neighbors. In our own congregations, people sit next to each other for years, even decades, and don’t know the first thing about each other or their families. If we are ever going to build deep relationships, we must take a risk with each other.

That’s exactly what Jesus is saying. Jesus wants us to take a risk on him. As Idleman says, “I’m not asking if you know about Jesus, I am asking if you know him.” (Not a Fan, 51) Following Jesus is hard, but it is worth it.

One last thought: when you follow Jesus, you don’t need to be perfect. Look again at the end of this passage:

⁶⁶ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

⁶⁷ “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve.

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

⁷⁰ Then Jesus replied, “Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!” ⁷¹ (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.) (John 6:66-71)

If Jesus can even know and love Judas, there is nothing that can hold us back from knowing and being known by Jesus. I’ll say it again. Following Jesus is hard, but it is worth it. So make every effort to know who Jesus is, and allow him to know you in return. In fact, he probably already knows you better than you know yourself.

[title slide] Let’s pray.

Memory Verse: John 6:51 (NIV)

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever.”

Reflection Questions:

1. Have you ever encountered a celebrity? What was it like?

2. Who would you say knows you best? A friend, a parent, a spouse? How have you spent time getting to know each other?
3. Why does Jesus say we are to “eat his flesh” and “drink his blood”? What does that really mean?
4. How is partaking in the sacrament of communion part of intimately knowing Jesus and his life?
5. Have you spent time getting to know Jesus? Would you read his Word, pray to him, and open up to him about your life? What is stopping you from being a true follower of Jesus?