

Following Jesus or Following the Rules?

Matt Emmons. One shot away from a guaranteed win of the gold medal at the 50-meter three-position rifle event at the 2004 Olympics.

In Matthew 23 Jesus addresses the religious leaders – the Sanhedrin. If working hard at being religious (following the do's and don'ts) were graded – they'd get an A+. But they are aiming at the wrong target.

Jesus is not interested in someone obeying the rules, he wants a personal relationship with his followers.

So here is another clarifying factor that **differentiates a fan from a follower**. Let's review them at the top of the next column:

A little more history on the 72 men called the **Sanhedrin**. Composed of two groups of religious people who (go figure) could not get along

Some fans are like Sadducees. They were born into their faith and never made it their own. Their faith has been more about honoring their heritage than surrendering their heart.

Some fans are like Pharisees. They work hard at learning and following the rules. They have intellectual knowledge and behavioral compliance.

In both cases they were **hypocrites**. So Jesus called them publicly to their faces.

"It's interesting to note that as severe as Jesus was with these religious leaders he is just as tender and encouraging to those who have genuinely given him their hearts, even if they don't have it all together on the outside. Please don't miss this: Jesus doesn't expect followers to be perfect, but he does call them to be authentic."

Diagnosing Fandom Questions

Have you made a decision for Jesus or have you committed to Jesus?

Do you just know about Jesus or do you really know him?

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

Are you more focused on the outside than on the inside?

Sadducees: *quite liberal at their interpretation of Scripture. They served the role as Chief Priests and Elders. They were born into the position of Sadducee.*

Pharisees: *quite conservative at Scripture interpretation. They worked hard to become a Pharisee. Incredible amount of textual study and theological training.*

Meaning of the term 'hypocrite' – On side 2, circle each occurrence of the term.

Matthew 23:1-33 NIV Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: (2) "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. (3) So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. (4) They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

(5) "Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; (6) they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; (7) they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others. ...

(13) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. (15) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

(16) "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' (17) You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? (18) You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.' (19) You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? (20) Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. (21) And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. (22) And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it. (23) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. (24) You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

(25) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (26) Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. (27) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. (28) In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (29) "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.

"I grew up going to a Christian school. It was a great school, but there were a lot of rules. You couldn't have your hair over your ears if you were a boy. Girls' skirts couldn't be more than a couple of inches above their knees. Boys had to wear collared shirts. Girls had certain rules about make-up and jewelry. Now don't misunderstand what I'm saying, I don't think any of these rules were wrong or inappropriate...a lot of my friends didn't associate all of those rules and regulations with school. Instead they connected the rules and regulations with being a Christian...When they got older they didn't like the rules, and because they associated following a bunch of rules with following Jesus, they walked away from both."

v.1 Who is Jesus addressing?

v.2 What does "sitting in Moses' seat" mean?

v. 4 **A Fan Demonstrates Guilt over Grace** - (MSG) v.4 "Instead of giving you God's Law as food and drink by which you can banquet on God, they package it in bundles of rules, loading you down like pack animals. They seem to take pleasure in watching you stagger under these loads, and wouldn't think of lifting a finger to help.

Vss. 5-12 **A Fan Is More Concerned About the Outside than the Inside.**
See also vss. 25-29.

v. 13-15 **Fans Produce Fans**

v. 16 What does Jesus call them?

Vss. 16-24 **Fans Choose Law over Love.** "The point of the law was for people to deal truthfully with one another, treating others with honor and respect (love)."

This is what angered them about Jesus healing on the Sabbath.