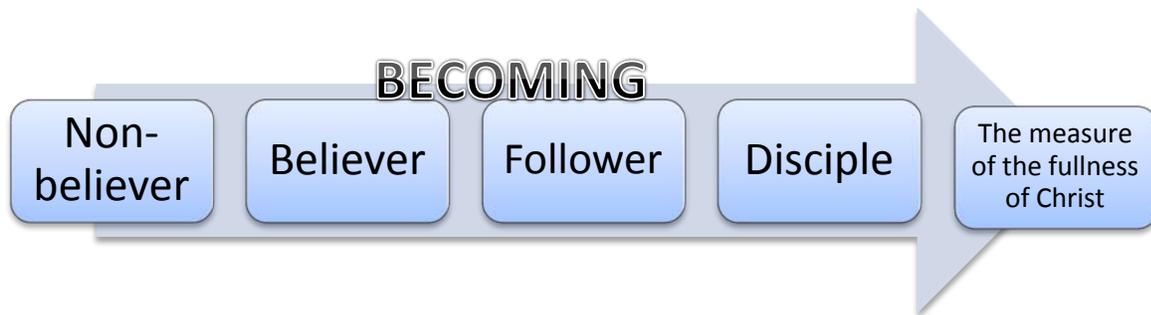


A fan is defined as “an enthusiastic admirer”.

A follower is someone becoming a completely committed disciple of Jesus Christ.



Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, (12) to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Last week we studied the 6th chapter of John. Recall:

- The enthusiasm of the crowd following Jesus. Why?
- The message Jesus lovingly but straightforwardly gave to the crowd
- The crowd’s response
- The disciple’s response

John 3:1-12 NIV Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. (2) He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." (3) Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

v.1 What does it mean when it says that Nicodemus was a member of the “Jewish ruling council”?

v.2 What does Nicodemus (and apparently others on the ruling council) believe to be true about Jesus?

v.2 What is implied by the statement that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night?

WHAT FOLLOWS (VS 3-15) IS AN ACCOUNT OF JESUS FORCING NICODEMUS’ FAITH OUT INTO THE OPEN

What did Nicodemus have to lose if he went public with his faith?

What did being a secret admirer cost Nicodemus?

The author's statements,

"Here is the reality that Nicodemus is about ready to have impressed on him: There is no way to follow Jesus without him interfering with your life. Following Jesus will cost you something... This brings up a very telling question for most fans: Has following Jesus cost you anything?"

Nicodemus had made a decision about Jesus, but that's not the same as following him. Jesus would not accept a relationship with Nicodemus where he simply believed; Jesus wanted Nicodemus to follow. Jesus didn't just want Nicodemus just at night; he wanted Nicodemus during the day too.

Exactly 5 times in the NIV Jesus said – "Believe in me"

20 times in the NIV – "Follow Me"

I'm not saying that following is more important than believing. What I am saying is that the two are firmly connected. They are the heart and lungs of faith. One can't live without the other. If you try and separate the message of follow from the message of believe, belief dies in the process. Our churches will continue to be full of fans until we break down the dichotomy between following and believing.

What did Nicodemus decide?

John 7:40-53 NIV On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." (41) Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? (42) Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" (43) Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. (44) Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. (45) Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?" (46) "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards replied. (47) "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. (48) "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? (49) No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law--there is a curse on them." (50) Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, (51) "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?" (52) They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." (53) Then they all went home,

Although he stops short of saying what he believes, he does risk his career and reputation and publicly speaks up on behalf of Jesus. This is no longer a private conversation about what he believes. He allows what he believes to interfere with his work, his relationships, and his financial future. In that moment he stops being just a fan and begins the journey of following.

John 19:38-40 NIV Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. (39) He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. (40) Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs.