

Whose kid actually ends up going into the lemonade stand business? You've seen them before; maybe your child tried it one afternoon. But there really are professional lemonade stands out there, so logic would dictate that some kid somewhere ended up going into the lemonade stand business full time. He wanted to try it one hot summer afternoon after seeing some of the other kids in his neighborhood doing it, or maybe he saw one set up at a baseball park and thought, "I could make a little on top of my allowance with this."

So he tries it out. Gets his dad to help him set up a rickety little stand. Hand paints a sign—"Lemonade – Fifty Cents." And after one successful day, he tries it again. And again. And again. Then he gets invited to bring his lemonade stand to a middle school baseball game, he ups his price to two dollars a glass, and pretty soon he's got a lot of invitations to bring his lemonade stand to all kinds of events. He's getting really busy, taking his lemonade stand all over town. Sure, he's making a really nice profit. But now things are a lot busier, a lot more professional. It's taking up more time than he expected. He's got to make special orders on lemons, he's having to keep track of all his expenses on a spreadsheet, and what started as a little hobby has become a time consuming commitment.

And in that moment, he had to make a choice. Is this going to become a kind of career? Is he going to hire a few employees to share the load? What will he choose? Some of you out there are thinking, "Maybe I should go into the lemonade stand business." Others are thinking, "I wish that was my kid. My son doesn't even know what a spreadsheet is."

Whatever you're thinking, you understand that moment. There's a moment when we all have to make a decision. Is this a hobby or is this a career? Is this for fun or for something more? Am I trying this out or am I investing in it? These kinds of moments aren't unique to the business world. I think a much more common experience lies in the realm of relationships.
Play DTR clip (sermonette 1 VIDEO_TS).

Over the next several weeks, I want all of us to examine our relationships with Jesus. Now I get the fact that for some of you this is kind of a first date, and you're not exactly sure what to make of any of this. Well, you can just kind of sit and listen. Maybe you're not ready for that talk yet. But I think most of us in this room need to have a DTR talk with Jesus. We need to define the relationship, find out where we stand with Jesus.

(Read Luke 9: 22-27) To look at Christ's invitation, we'll be using a verse that clearly lays out what it means to be a follower of Christ. It's Luke 9:23, and it

reads, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

I think many of you welcome this DTR talk, because you are ready to move to a different level of commitment. You’re ready to move past the casual and past the convenient into something more devoted, something more committed. So you’re ready for this talk. Some of you are not, because you kind of like the set-up you have with Jesus. I mean, He is a nice guy and you like church—it gives you something to do on the weekend—and it’s awfully nice that we can sip some lattes in the coffee bar while we’re here. You kind of like what you have going, and this idea of being more committed, this idea of taking it to a different level? You get a little anxious. Maybe you even go into the “fight or flight” response. But what we want to do is define the relationship. Where do you stand with Jesus Christ?

And here’s how I’d like to ask that question: Are you a fan or a follower of Jesus? Now, some of you are wondering why I’d ask a question like that. We’re all followers of Jesus, right? That’s why we’re here. Don’t jump to your answer too quickly. Hear me out.

The word fan is defined as “an enthusiastic admirer.” We’re all fans of different things, right? Many of us are sports fans. We watch the games. We cheer on the team. Some of us own the jerseys of our favorite players. We understand the concept of being a fan of sports.

And my concern is that our church has the potential to very easily become a stadium full of fans of Jesus. And Jesus never cared about having fans. If you define a fan as an enthusiastic admirer, then fans were not important to Him. See, I think we have a tendency to come together once a week and be fans of Jesus. We sit down in our seats and we open up our programs. We applaud at certain times and we leave somehow thinking that, as the fans, it was all done for us. We get in the car and we evaluate the sermon, and we kind of give the service and song selection a thumbs up or thumbs down. And we come back and do it again the next week.

And I get the fact that some of you are really big fans. I mean, you’re really into all of this. You know all the songs and you don’t need the page number for the Bible. You know where to turn. You’re pretty fast, and you kind of look around to see how much faster you are than everyone else, keeping your Sword Drill abilities in shape. You’re big fans of Jesus. And being fans feels pretty good. We can feel pretty good about ourselves because we’re these great admirers of Christ, but He never cared about having fans.

So if we’ll be honest with ourselves, if we’ll really search our hearts and begin to define our relationship with Jesus, there are three questions for you to answer. The first is this:

1) Why Are You Here?

If you read through the Gospels, Jesus, at different points in His ministry, would draw a line in the sand and He would separate the fans from the followers.

One such instance is in John chapter 6. Jesus is in the height of His ministry and we read that large crowds were following Jesus. He was very popular. He was working the miracles. He was providing food from just five loaves of bread and a few fish, and a lot of people were in the crowd following Jesus. But Jesus, in verse 2, realizes why they were coming. In verse 2 it just says they were coming “because of the miracles.” The main reason the crowds were showing up was because of the spectacle. They didn’t care as much about the teaching, about the life changing lesson. They were there for the show.

So, why are you here? What is your because? Is it because you like the free food? Is it because you think the seats are comfortable, or you really like the music? Is it because you like the chit chat and your kids can make friends easier than at school? Is that why you’re here? I mean, that’s great for a while, but at some point let’s define the relationship. Why are you here? In that passage Jesus challenges the fans to a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him, and in verse 66 here is what we read: “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”

A lot of them went home because Jesus says, “Let’s define what we’ve got here,” and what He offered isn’t what they wanted. And it may be time for some people just to go home, because you’ve come for a while and you understand things and yet you’re coming in more for the miracles, more for the show, more for what Jesus can do for you. And He wants there to be a point where you define the relationship. Why are you here? Because why? For Jesus, his because is that He wants to have a deep relationship with you.

The second question we need to ask ourselves is:

2) Are You All In?

Being a follower of Jesus requires complete commitment. A follower of Jesus will do whatever it takes to follow Jesus. They’re absolutely loyal, completely committed.

On the whole, we don’t do too well with absolute commitment, do we? I think that we prefer selective commitment. Simply put, we customize Christianity.

Oftentimes, we look at our relationship with Jesus and say, “I’m going to follow Jesus, but I’m going to kind of pick and choose the areas in which I will follow Him.” So you say, “Well, I’ll follow Jesus, but don’t ask me to forgive the person that hurt me. I’m not going to let go of that resentment. I’m not going to let go of that bitterness. I deserve that.” And, “I’ll follow Jesus, but don’t talk to me about my money. I work hard for that money.” “I’ll follow Jesus but don’t tell me to abstain from these sexual desires. I can’t help the fact that I have these desires.

Don't ask me to abstain. I'm a follower of Jesus, but that won't stop me from getting what I want." So it's this customized Christianity that says, "Well, I follow Jesus, but only in the areas that are comfortable, only in the areas that I agree with. I'm a Christian but I'm not all in."

Well, then you're not a Christian. You're just a fan. There is not an option of selective commitment. It's not a possibility. There is no bargaining, no bartering, no finagling. When you decide to become a follower of Christ, you've got to go all in. And fans, they don't like the idea of going all in. They're not wild about having to make sacrifices, or about having to deny themselves of something they desire or crave.

But if you've answered why you're here, then it will be pretty easy to figure out if you're all in. If you weren't here for the right reasons, chances are you won't be willing to go all in.

So, in defining our relationship to Jesus, we've asked: 1) Why Are You Here?
2) Are You All In?

And thirdly,

3) Have You Made It Your Own?

Many of us started going to church because of a parent. Mom made you. Dad said you had to. There wasn't an option. Or maybe you started coming because of a boyfriend or girlfriend, or a spouse. You came because they like it when you come. You came because it appeases them.

For those of us who grew up in the church, or who attend church in order to appease a significant other or relative, it can be really easy to become a fan. It's like riding the car with someone who listens to a type of music you're impartial to. They drive you to school or work everyday, and every morning it's Aerosmith. I don't really care that much about Aerosmith. I don't hate them, I don't really like them, but it's fine to listen to. But eventually, a few songs grow on you a little bit. You can't help but hum along to "I Don't Wanna Miss A Thing." So you might say you became a fan of Aerosmith.

That can happen to us in church. We keep coming to appease someone else, and pretty soon we get into the flow of things. We know most of the songs, and we even recognize the stories or the teachings, and we're kind of fans of Jesus. But that can be the most dangerous situation to be in. If your faith isn't your own, if you aren't pursuing a relationship with Jesus, and you keep coming week after week and begin to create a "faith" that was someone else's in the first place, you're just numbing yourself to the real thing. You'll become numb to real faith, comfortable with a few songs and a few favorite verses, none of which requires any sacrifice or personal change.

You have to make your faith your own. Jesus isn't looking for a relationship between you, your mom, and Him. He's not looking for a relationship between you, your wife, and Him. He's looking for a relationship with you. That may be one of the reasons Jesus said these words in Luke 14:26, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple." This is not about your mom or dad or spouse. This is about you and Jesus. So begin to search your heart these next few weeks as we ask, "Are you a follower of Jesus, or are you a just a fan?"