



## **NOT A FAN**

### **“More Than Rules”**

*Matthew 23*

December 4, 2011 A.M. Service

**What is a Fan?** An Enthusiastic Admirer

**What is A Follower?** One Who Is Completely Committed

**What Are You Choosing Today?**

- ✓ **Choosing the Outside Over the Inside**
- ✓ **Choosing Appearance Over the Authenticity**
- ✓ **Choosing Rules Over Relationship**
- ✓ **Choosing Laws Over Love**
- ✓ **Choosing Guilt Over Grace**
- ✓ **Choosing Pride Over Humility**

**How Do I Become A Follower & Not a Fan?**

It's Understanding Believing With Your Head and Heart the ABC's of becoming a Christian

Then Following Him in a Relationship With Him for the Rest of our Lives!

- ✓ There is No Forgiveness Without Repentance
- ✓ There is No Salvation Without Surrender
- ✓ There is No Life Without Death
- ✓ There is No Believing Without Committing

**Our Response:**

1. Have you given your heart and life to Jesus Christ – Are You a Fan or are you a Follower? You can become a follower by accepting this free gift of God if you will by faith believe and surrender your heart and life to Him! It's as simple as ABC. **Admit** to God you are a sinner, **Ask** for His forgiveness, **Believe** Jesus is God's Son, **Confess** Him as Savior & **Commit** Your Life to Him as Lord for the rest of your life & being His fully devoted follower!
2. Have you asked Christ into you heart, but never made it public? Have you been baptized – identified with Christ & His church through Baptism? If not, you can make that decision today & be obedient & follow through & become a part of the Bethsalem Family. Step out and tell everyone, I am signing up for Duty!
3. Do you need a church home? – a proper foundation – without one a Christian is a soldier with no army to fight with him or to help him fight. Don't just attend – step over the line today and join this church family!
4. Encourage you to get into a Small Group either Sunday Mornings at 9:45 a.m. or Wednesday Nights @ 6:30 p.m. and pursue deeper and further this series of Not a Fan
5. Difficult and Challenging Questions Today: Are you like the Sadducees? Is your faith something you were born into or were you truly born again? Has your faith always been more about honoring your heritage than surrendering your heart? On the other side, are you like the Pharisees? Are you fan whose most important thing is to make sure to follow all the rules, keep up the appearance, but that is really not a true reflection of who you are? Are you a Follower of Christ? Not are you perfect, but authentic? Be honest today – and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see who you really are.
6. Looking at those things we choose – Look at each of them? Are there some areas that you do well in and others that you tend to miss? Identify those and ask the Lord to change your heart to better reflect His!

**NOT A FAN**  
“More Than Rules”  
*Matthew 23*

December 4, 2011 AM Service

**ILLUS: The Target & Matt Emmons**

What is your target today – Is it religion (rules and rituals) or is it a living, breathing relationship with Jesus?

Before you answer too quickly, let's take a look at the difference today. Look at [Matthew 23](#). We see Jesus' conversation with those who most would have quickly identified as followers – the religious leaders of the day. They knew much about the Bible, theology, and keeping the law. They would have received high marks on religious rule keeping – they were focused on the outside, but little to no focus on the inside. The problem was that what was on the outside didn't match up with what was on the inside. Jesus preaches one of his last sermons here to warn them and those that were listening and those who might be confused following the rules with following Him. He doesn't hold anything back but instead brings a scathing rebuke to these fans that we need to hear today for ourselves to be certain that we aren't just about keeping rules, but that we have that true love relationship with Him.

Sanhedrin – religious ruling body of 72 men made up of Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees served as the roles of Chief Priests and Elders. If you were a Sadducee, you were born into that position. There were other requirements, but you had to be a part of your heritage. But if you were a Pharisee, it didn't depend on what family you were born into, but instead your hard work. It required an incredible amount of study and theological training. What's interesting is that many fans fit into one of these 2 camps.

Some fans are like the Sadducees – their faith was something they were born into – something that they never choose. You learned all about Jesus, but you never fell in love with Jesus. Your faith has always been more about honoring your heritage than surrendering your heart.

Others fans are like the Pharisees – your faith would be measured by your hard work, but your moral behavior and compliance with the law. The

only problem is that even though you say and do all the right things, it isn't a true reflection of who you really are – and that's not enough for Jesus – He wants all of you!

**ILLUS: Andre Agassi**

**So the questions comes down today What Are You Choosing Today? Is the focus on the inside our outside, is it about the rules or the relationship.** That is the question that we must face and answer today. We would never want to say we are like the father portrayed in the small group clip this morning – but in fact some of us are. It is all about the appearance, keeping the rules, trying to do the right thing, but for the wrong reason. The question is – do you have a personal intimate relationship with the living Savior?

### ✓ **Choosing the Outside Over the Inside**

Jesus' problem with the religious leaders was that they were hypocrites – he calls them that eight times here. It comes from the Greek ancient classical theater and was an actor who played many different characters, and for each one he would use a different mask. You never saw the actors, face only a bunch of different masks. That is what the Pharisees did, their focus was only on the outside, and rarely concerned with the inside. Jesus' problem with them was what they were teaching wasn't a reflection of who they really were.

In today's culture it can be almost impossible to identify because so many deliver Oscar winning performances as they play the role of a follower even though they are truly only a fan. [See Matthew 23: 1-3](#)

It leads us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> choice – and closely related to the 1<sup>st</sup>

### ✓ **Choosing Appearance Over the Authenticity**

Many of us are all about keeping up the appearance, coming to church every now and then, dropping a Christian line or two, posting I love God on my Facebook, say all the right church words and phrases when around other church people – but the question is that really who you are on the inside. Remember, Jesus isn't after our perfection, but instead our authenticity. He isn't seeking out those who have it all together on the

outside, but instead those who don't have it all together but are real and genuine and know that they need Jesus and without Him they are nothing.

**ILLUS: People who are new to Jesus and those who have learned to talk all the Jesus' lingo** – stories are so genuine and real, don't know any better but to share their story – they don't hide or try to make it sound a better, or not quite so honest so someone would really know who they are – they have learned to wear the masks – new Christians' and lost folks haven't. They are willing to let it all show – and that is a beautiful thing – they aren't pretending to be something they are not! **Email just this week!**

Jesus illustrates the difference between appearance and authenticity

[Matthew 23:27-28](#)

On the outside there is a determination to keep up the appearance, but on the inside their faith has grown cold and is dying.

**ILLUS: Hepatitis C drug commercial** - shows a person's face "If Hep C attacked your face instead of your liver, you'd do something about it." If you could see what's on the inside instead of what you're showing everybody on the outside, I wonder if you'd do something about it. This is what Jesus was trying to do. He's trying to get people to see what's on the inside the matters the most – that the inside would then reflect on the outside – not the other way around.

That leads us to third choice, when we get this backwards.

### ✓ **Choosing Rules Over Relationship**

[Matthew 23:13](#) The religious were making it hard to come to Jesus.

They were teaching that God's favor and salvation was something that had to be earned, not by just keeping God's law, but by keeping a bunch of other ridiculous laws that they had added. Little laws like on the Sabbath day – couldn't take a bath, couldn't clean up something if it spilled, not permitted to move a chair from one place to another – bordered on the absurd.

**ILLUS: Woman at the Well** [John 8](#). We read about Jesus teaching in the courtyard one morning. His teaching is interrupted by an angry mob that bursts onto the scene, but the mob is made up of the religious leaders of His day. Being pushed along on the crest of the mob is this woman, and perhaps she is dressed in nothing but a bed sheet as she is shoved to the dirt on the ground in front of Jesus. One of the religious

leaders gives the accusation to Jesus and says, “We found this woman in bed with a man that was not her husband. The Law says we stone her. What do you say?” This was a pushy move by these religious leaders. They use the rules to try to trap Jesus. Rules can do that to us; turn us into an angry mob of sorts. We might not form together and parade a sinner around town, but we’ll huddle in whispering circles and drop someone’s name to everyone we talk to.

Please understand: **God’s Word provides both guidance & commandments.** And those commandments, those laws, they are here to protect us. And, if we’re honest, none of us can follow those laws perfectly. Every one of us has fallen short, some of us in more public settings, and others in more private ones. But when we overemphasize following the rules, we can get people thinking we’ve got it all figured out. We can get people thinking they shouldn’t share their struggles with us, because we’re perfect.

**When we truly learn to follow Jesus, we find that obedience to God comes from the inside out. Submission to what God wants for our lives flows naturally out of that relationship. It’s not to say that what we do or don’t do doesn’t matter, but what we do or don’t do must come from who we are as followers of Jesus.**

**ILLUS: Rules when you get married and what we are willing to do**

#### ✓ **Choosing Laws Over Love**

**Matthew 23:16-17** They may have been keeping the letter of the law, but they were missing the spirit of it. They were technically obeying the commands of Scripture, but they were missing the point of those commands. Like fans today, they were give time and attention to the rituals, but neglect to show God’s love to people around them which is the point of the rule in the 1<sup>st</sup> place. When laws become more important than love and rules take precedent over relationships, it’s a good sign that we have become fans who are aiming at the wrong target.

**ILLUS: IBM Guy – John**

**Following rules doesn’t make us Christians** The woman is looking down—humiliated, guilty, ashamed. She’s been caught breaking the rules, and this may be the day that breaking a rule costs her everything. Jesus kneels down and He begins to write something in the dirt. We

don't know what He was writing. Some commentators speculate that perhaps He was writing the sins of the accusers in the dirt. Meanwhile, the religious leaders wait for an answer. They know they've caught Jesus by surprise, & they're ready to hear Him submit to the letter of the law. They're waiting for him to shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, those are the rules." Finally, Jesus looks up at these spiritual leaders & He says, "If any one of you is without sin, he can cast the first stone." And one by one these bullies drop their stones (I think they know that Jesus knows.) and they walk away and Jesus is left alone with this woman. And perhaps with a little bit of a smile, He looks up at her & He says, "Is there anyone left to condemn you?" Maybe she thought, "There is still one. There is still one who could condemn me." And then Jesus says with tenderness, "Neither do I condemn you. You go now & leave your life of sin."

#### ✓ **Choosing Guilt Over Grace**

[Matthew 23:4](#) Fans who follow the rules instead of following Jesus find that they are weighed down with guilt. The keyword for fear and guilt is **do** and trying to make our own way to earn God's favor. When instead the key word from grace is **done**. It's about what Jesus did, not what I can or cannot do. **Fans are all about the do, followers celebrate and rejoice in the freedom of done.**

And the grace of Jesus, that same grace that saved a woman from being stoned, calls to those who have been hauling around a long list of rules and rituals and obligations – Jesus calls to those who tired of pretending to be more than they are. He calls to those who have had the guilt and fear of religions wear them down and he says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Maybe you grew up in a home where you were taught all about Jesus. You went to church on the weekend and church camp in the summer. And you learned to fear Jesus...so you kept as many rules as you could hoping you wouldn't go to hell. And when you would sin you would feel guilt wondering if you would be good enough. And you were taught to observe different religious traditions and rule keeping. But someone how you never really fell in love with Jesus. You became a fan. Because when you come into a situation in which rules take precedence over

love and grace, it's hard to fall in love. In the end, the grace and the love of God frees us and inspires us to live for him. **Augustine said, "Who can be good, if not made so by loving? . . . Love God and do as you please."** He could say that because he knew that when you love God, you will want to please God. But your priority, your emphasis, your focus has to be on loving God. It has to be about a relationship with Jesus, otherwise it won't work.

**ILLUS: Teacher giving test**

✓ **Choosing Pride Over Humility**

The last one and perhaps the hardest to admit because we would be prideful that we are not prideful when in fact that is pride or we disguise it in "fake humility". Many of us were taught to be proud of who you are, be proud of your heritage, you better make us proud, etc. Nothing wrong with having a healthy self-esteem and we should because of who we are in Christ – we are His creations – made in His image. However, we can carry that too far – the religious leaders were so full of themselves that they had no room for Jesus! They looked down their noses at others and quite frankly so do we. Some of us go a step further, well it's fine if they come, but don't expect me to be friends with them – I am above them, better them. We don't say it, but many of us think it and our actions show it.

**Quote: from Gandhi: "I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."**

What if he had run into some followers of Christ – would things have been different for him?

**ILLUS: Not a Fan Clip**