

- Many of us, if not all of us, are fans of somethings. Some are fans of sports teams and athletes. Others are fans of movies or tv shows. Others are fans of actors and actresses. What qualifies us as fans is the fact that we know a lot about those things. We know how our teams are doing. We know the statistics of our favorite athletes, and we probably know a lot of random facts about our favorite actors and actresses. As Christians, we probably know a lot about Jesus too. We know where He was born. We know what He did, and we know what He said while on this earth. The question we want to ask, though, this morning is if that is enough to glorify Him? Is Jesus glorified when we are simply fans of His? Is He glorified by fandom or is there a different level of devotion that truly glorifies Him?
- There are some questions that we must ask ourselves that go along with this thought. Is Jesus pleased and glorified if I am really nothing more just a fan of His? Is God pleased if I am a fan of His Son and nothing more? Is God pleased if I know a lot about Him or His Son? Is He glorified if I can quote a bunch of different portions of Scripture? Does He expect more out of me? Are the Father and the Son glorified by me knowing about Them or is it more about actually knowing Them? We hope to answer these questions this morning by taking a look at the story of Nicodemus through the book of John. We find Nicodemus mentioned in 3 different chapters of John, and we see a transformation taking place in the life of Nicodemus as we progress through the book. As we study about Nicodemus, let's focus on answering this question, "Was Nicodemus a fan or a follower of Jesus?" By answering this question about Nicodemus, I hope that we can then turn around and answer this same question about ourselves. I am convinced that the Scriptures are pretty clear that God isn't pleased with someone simply being a fan of His. No, God desires followers and those who are fully devoted to Him. Let's look at Nicodemus and see how this is the case.

The progression of Nicodemus from a fan to a follower of Jesus.

I. John 3:1-21, Nicodemus goes to see Jesus by night.

- A. Background of Nicodemus.
 1. Nicodemus was a religious man, a man of God.
 2. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. **(John 7:45)**
 3. He apparently had heard Jesus teach and had seen Jesus perform miracles. **(John 3:2)**
- B. At this point, we see Nicodemus being nothing more than a fan of Jesus.
 1. People who are fans of Jesus know a lot about Him.
 2. They might even be those people who we would think of as being religious.
 3. They have some Scripture memorized and they post things on social media about Jesus.
 4. They really fit the bill as enthusiastic admirers and these types of people do not please or glorify God.
- C. Nicodemus didn't even qualify as an enthusiastic admirer because he came by night. He was more of a secret admirer and that doesn't glorify God either.
 1. It's one thing for a Christian to hide their faith for fear of their life, but it is another thing entirely for a Christian to be a secret admirer simply because they stand to lose something in this life.
 2. Nicodemus had a lot to lose if he went public with His faith in Jesus. He would lose his status as a religious leader among the Jews. He would lose his seat in the Sanhedrin. Other members of the Sanhedrin believed in Jesus too, but wouldn't confess Him. **(John 12:42,43)**
 3. Nicodemus clearly fit the profile of a fan here in **John 3.**
- D. Jesus demands more of those who claim Him than fandom. He demands that they be born again.
 1. Simply being a fan of Jesus doesn't require much of the person. Little is invested and the risk is minimal.
 2. The true follower of Jesus does much more than just know a bunch of details about Jesus.
 3. Jesus says that the one who will be in the Kingdom of God must be born again **(vv.3-8)**. This requires a great change, and at this point, Nicodemus wasn't able to make that change at this time.
 4. Fans are content with admiring Jesus so long as it doesn't require any type of major change from them.

II. John 7:37-53, Nicodemus speaks up for Jesus before the chief priests and Pharisees.

- A. Around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stands before the people and proclaims that He is the source of living water. **(vv.37-39)**
 1. He was the source of eternal life and those who wanted that must come to Him.
 2. Some people begin to recognize Him as a Prophet. Others proclaimed that He was the Christ! Yet, there were still some that denied anything special about Him because He was from Galilee. **(v.41)**
- B. The chief priests and Pharisees were not too thrilled with Jesus' growing popularity and seek to stop Him.
 1. They wanted Jesus to be brought in so He could be questioned for the strong claims He had made. **(v.45)**
 2. They even begin to seem a little paranoid and begin questioning where nay among them were being "led astray." **(vv.47,48)**
 3. They go so far as to say that nay who are led away by Jesus were accursed. **(v.49)**
- C. At this point, Nicodemus speaks up for Jesus in front of the rest of the religious leaders.

1. He uses the Law to defend Jesus by stating that a man has a right to be heard and defend himself before he is condemned based upon some accusation.
 2. The fact that Nicodemus speaks up is a major step in the right direction. Remember, Nicodemus has a lot on the line right now. Speaking up for Jesus could mean the end of his career as a Pharisee.
 3. Nicodemus is quickly reprimanded by the other Pharisees by them asking if he was from Galilee in a very sarcastic and demeaning way. Nicodemus's sacrificing was beginning to take place, but he still doesn't seem completely bought in to being a follower of Jesus at this time.
- D. There comes a point where we must all come to the realization that we will have to do some difficult things in order to follow Jesus. We will have to make that decision as to if we will sacrifice for Jesus or just continue to be a fan of His.
1. We will have to make some tough decisions.
 2. We will have to put ourselves out there for Jesus.
 3. We will have to make sacrifices for Jesus.
 4. We will have to be more than just a person who goes to church.
 5. This isn't something that people just grasp right off the bat. Like many other things, we must be patient and grow in maturity to the point where it isn't anything for us to choose Jesus and do whatever is necessary for Him.

III. John 19:31-42, Nicodemus comes to prepare the body of Jesus with expensive spices.

- A. At this point, Jesus has already been murdered on the cross.
1. The Jews wanted the bodies off of the crosses so they wouldn't defile the Sabbath day. They broke the legs of the others, but Jesus was already dead.
 2. Joseph of Arimathea came to request that he be able to take the body of Jesus down from the cross, prepare it, and bury it. Seems as if Joseph was toeing that line between being a true follower of Jesus and a fan because he was said to be a secret disciple of Jesus.
 3. Nicodemus joins Joseph in preparing the Lord's body for burial. They didn't have the embalming process that we have today, so they prepared bodies by applying spices and oils to the body and wrapping it in cloth.
- B. It is at this point that we see Nicodemus finally show some real characteristics of a true follower of Jesus.
1. Nicodemus was taking a big risk by showing himself here with Jesus. More than likely there were Jews around making sure that no funny business was done. Remember, they were the ones who wanted the legs broken to make sure the bodies didn't defile the Sabbath. This very well could be nothing more than an excuse to make sure that Jesus was truly dead.
 2. Therefore, it is very possible that Nicodemus would be seen and recognized while taking care of Jesus's body.
 3. On top of that, Nicodemus didn't bring the cheap stuff to put on Jesus' body. He brought very expensive oils and spices, and he brought a lot of it. Some manuscripts differ slightly, but all agree it was no less than 75 lbs and could have even as much as 100. To buy that much aloe and myrrh today would run you between \$150,00 and \$200,000.
 4. This much aloe and myrrh would have been used to cover the entire body of Jesus. Nicodemus cared about this man. He believed in this man, and now he was willing to really sacrifice and put himself out there for this Man. Nicodemus had truly progressed from just being a fan to now being a real follower of Jesus Christ.
 5. According to some scholars and historians, there is a possibility that Nicodemus was later martyred in the name of Jesus. Obviously there is no way of knowing this for sure, but it would seem to make sense with what we last of Nicodemus in the Scriptures.
- C. We must get to the point where we are the real followers of Jesus that He describes in **Luke 9:23-26**.
1. Jesus said that the ones who wanted to follow after Him must deny themselves. They must be willing to give up everything for Jesus, even if that means their life if it comes right down to it. Nicodemus wasn't willing to do that when we see him in **ch.3&7**, but we see that change in him in **ch.19**.
 2. Followers must make those big sacrifices for the Lord. They must seek to truly be born again as Jesus talked about in **John 3**. They must seek after the Lord and His blessings and not the blessing of this physical world.
 3. Followers must never be ashamed of Jesus and only seek him out in the dark. Fans do that. Followers do not. Followers do not deny our Lord.
 4. Only in being true followers, only in true discipleship is God glorified in our lives.

Many people think that God is satisfied and glorified when they know a lot about Him or when they put on the look of a Christian. In reality, He is glorified when a person truly follows after Him and is willing to make those big changes in his or her life. There is no room in the kingdom for shallow fans of Jesus who are ok with being "Christian" as long as things are easy in their lives or as long as no big changes are necessary. May God help us to never be that type of person. May He help us to be fully devoted to Jesus Christ and seek to follow after His will for us all the days of our lives and glorify Him in all that we do.