



WEEK 1 - NO CASUAL FANS ALLOWED -

MESSAGE BY SHAWN JOHNSON

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer this question:

Have you ever been a raving fan of anyone or any sports team? If so, who or what team and what makes you such a fan?

SHARE

Welcome to our teaching Series called "Tailgating."

If you have ever been tailgating before a football game, you will recognize a few important differences between the casual fans and the sold-out fans. Sold-out fans love tailgating, the game isn't enough, these fans need extra hours prior to the game to chest bump, cheer, eat and talk about their team. The sold-out fans aren't afraid to let everyone else around them know whom they follow and no matter what the score may be, they aren't going anywhere. The casual fan, however, tends to blend into the crowd and from the outside you're not really sure what side they are cheering for because they rarely speak up or wear anything in public in which they would be recognized as sold out fans.

Jesus was surrounded by people. Some were hostile, indifferent, some were casual fans and some sold-out fans, but no matter who you were – when you came into contact with Jesus, you were forced to make a decision. Jesus gave lots of attention to those who laid it all on the line. Jesus showed up in big ways for those who weren't afraid to admit that they were at the end of their rope. They made it public that they needed Jesus and didn't care who knew.

Those who risked everything seemed to gain everything and those who tried to play it safe seemed to miss out on what Jesus was offering. Throughout this series we are going to take a look at the kind of life God wants to give us if we are willing to be sold-out fans for Jesus Christ.

Read:
Jeremiah 29:11

How do you feel after reading this verse? Does this sound like a good promise to you?

Let's continue reading:
Jeremiah 29:12-14

What things does God ask us to do?

What does it look like to call on God? Come to God? To seek God with all your heart?

We have all had times when we have felt half-hearted about God and not taking our faith seriously. Why do you think we find ourselves feeling this way sometimes?

GROW

One of the best stories in the bible about a casual fan of Jesus is the story of Nicodemus. Nicodemus was well known in his city as a leader and one of the Jewish Supreme Court members. He was a religious scholar and highly respected for his wisdom and stature in society. Nicodemus was amazed by Jesus, something drew him to Jesus. Nicodemus was a fan, but was fearful to let anyone know. Nicodemus went to Jesus at night and wanted to learn. He wanted to get closer to him, but had to weigh the cost of being found out.

Let's take a look at what it means to be a casual fan:

Let's read John 3:1-21

The Holman New Testament Commentary gives us more insight: Nicodemus demonstrates that religious training without spiritual insight is useless. Jesus wasted no time getting to the heart of the problem. He told the teacher he must be born again or from above (another), a word which appears again in verses 7 and 31. This popular expression can be applied to almost anything in our day. A football team gets a new coach, and sportscasters tell us it is born again. A company languishing in bankruptcy issues new stock and shows profit under a new CEO, and we read that it is born again. Buildings get a renovation, changing their appearance and function, and people say they have been born again.

The actual words describe a garment torn from top to bottom. Unless God changes our hearts his way, from the inside out, any discussion of the kingdom is useless. All devout Jews connected the Messiah with the kingdom; Jesus drove to the heart of the matter immediately.

Nicodemus had not mentioned the kingdom, but the Lord knew his true interest. As we noted in connection with chapter 1, the word translated again really means "from above." In other words, to belong to the heavenly kingdom, one must be born into it just as one is born into the earthly kingdom.

Why was it risky for Nicodemus to go to Jesus?

Nicodemus called Jesus, “Rabbi” which inferred that he wanted to learn from this teacher. What do you think he wanted to know?

Can you relate to Nicodemus? Are there times when you want more of Jesus, but also worry about what others might think?

MOVE

Jesus is looking for tailgaters, for those who are sold-out, jersey wearing followers. When we are willing to lay our dreams down at his feet and to make it public that we identify ourselves with Jesus, that is precisely when Jesus shows up in our lives in the biggest ways. It sometimes seems like it would be a contradiction. If we truly trust God and do life his way, it seems like we might lose everything, but really the opposite is true...we gain everything.

Let's once again read John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

To believe is not just mental assent, but to rely on, adhere to, to trust with all your heart. Why is belief so important?

Is there an area of your life that you worry would be affected if you became a sold-out follower of Christ? If so, why?

How can the people in this circle help support you in your journey to know Jesus Christ better?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles that we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

Colossians 3:3

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.