

## Fans or Followers?



- Theme:** Are you a fan of Jesus, or a follower? Proper 19 (24) 16th Sunday after Pentecost Yr B
- Object:** Some items a person might wear or display to show that they are fans of a particular person, group, or sports team.
- Scripture:** Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." Mark 8:34 (NIV)

Have you ever been a member of a fan club? Some of you may not even know what a fan club is. A fan club is a group of enthusiastic supporters of a well-known person, music group, or a sports team. If you are a fan of a particular sports team, you might wear a t-shirt with the team name and a picture of their mascot on it. If you are a fan of a singer or a musical group, you might have their posters decorating the walls in your room.

One thing I have noticed about fan clubs is that the number of members in the club usually depends on how popular or successful the person or team is. If a sports team wins a lot of games, they will probably have a lot of fans. But if they start to lose, the fans usually fall away. (A few years ago the fans of one sports team went to the games with a brown paper bag over their head to hide their identity!) If a singer or music group has a lot of big hits, they will have a lot of fans, but if the hits stop coming, the fans will go away.

When Jesus was on earth, he had a lot of fans. As he traveled around performing miracles like feeding 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread or healing a blind man, there were huge crowds of fans everywhere he went. But do you know what? Jesus wasn't interested in having fans, he wanted followers. One day he said to a crowd of people, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."

To be a follower of Jesus means much more than being a member of his fan club. It means more than wearing an "I Love Jesus" t-shirt, a WWJD\* bracelet, or a necklace with a cross on it. It means to follow the teachings of Jesus every day. It means to reach out to the poor, to feed the hungry, to be a friend of the friendless, to love the unlovely. In other words, it means to show the love that Jesus showed to everyone we meet. That is what separates a fan from a follower.

Do you want to be a follower, or are you satisfied with just being a fan?

Father, help us to be more than fans — help us to be true believers and followers of Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

\*WWJD - What Would Jesus Do?

**CROSS RELAY:** Divide the children into teams. Each team will have a homemade cross made by the teacher. It could be made of PVC pipe, empty paper towel rolls taped together, or light weight wood. The children will run a relay race between two teams with each team player running to the finish line with a cross on their back. If the cross falls off, they must stop, put it back on their back and continue the relay from the spot where the cross was dropped.

**BLIND FOLDED FOLLOWING:** Choose one child to be the leader. The other children will follow the leader around an obstacle course while wearing a blindfold. The chosen leader will give the other children directions on how to maneuver through the obstacle course.

**FOLLOW JESUS PANTOMIME:** Divide the children into teams and take turns pantomiming an action of following Jesus. The children will choose activities from our lesson today such as feeding the hungry, helping the sick, encouraging the ones who are sad or struggling, being a friend to the friendless, and giving to the poor.

**FOOTPRINT BIBLE VERSE:** Give the children a sheet of white paper to trace their foot. They will then cut it out and lay that foot cut out onto a piece of construction paper and cut around the foot a little larger than the original tracing so that it can be glued to the construction paper tracing. Today's Bible verse should be written on the foot and hung by a ribbon around the room.

**PAINTED HEARTS:** Provide the children with water color paints, brushes, and a sheet of white paper with a large tracing of a heart. Have the children paint rainbow-colored strips across the heart and then cut out and glue a cross on the painted heart. On the cross, encourage children to write FOLLOWING JESUS in bright colored markers and decorate the edges of the cross. (The teacher may choose to draw the cross and have older children tear the cross out along the traced lines to give it the appearance of "the old rugged cross.")

**FOLLOWING JESUS BOARD:** On a large piece of poster board, have each of the children place a cut out of their foot and color it nicely to tape to the large poster board. Each child could draw a picture of themselves, draw a frame around it, and place it on the board. The foot prints on this FOLLOWING JESUS poster board should have ideas for really following Jesus as our lesson states or the ideas from the FOLLOW JESUS PANTOMIME game above.

**FOOT PRINTS FOR FOLLOWING:** Give each child two matching foot prints. On one print, they will write I WILL FOLLOW JESUS and decorate it. On the other foot print, they will write 7 ways to FOLLOW JESUS each day through that week. Encourage children to take these home and display them at their dinner table or on the refrigerator. Their family might want to FOLLOW JESUS too and they could work together to encourage the poor or feed the hungry, etc.

**Theme:** Take up your cross and follow Jesus. Proper 19/Ordinary 24, Year B

**Object:** Use a variety of crosses (Bookmark, gold necklace, key chain, wall hanging, etc.)

**Scripture:** Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Mark 8:34 (NIV)

I have something to show you. (Hold up one of the crosses.) You know what this is, don't you? Of course you do, it is a cross. I have several crosses to show you. Here is a cross on a chain that you can wear around your neck. Here is a bookmark made in the shape of a cross, and this is a beautiful cross that is made to be hung on a wall.

Every day we see crosses all around us. People wear them as jewelry, they hang them on the wall, and they use them as key chains. When you pass by a church, it is not unusual to see a cross on the steeple. We even see many people who wear the cross as a tattoo on their body. What comes to your mind when you see a cross? What does the cross mean to you? Is it just a piece of jewelry or a work of art?

One day, as Jesus and his disciples were walking along a road, Jesus asked them, "Who do people say that I am?"

The disciples answered, "Some say John the Baptist or one of the prophets."

"And you - who do you say that I am?" Jesus replied.

Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Messiah."

Peter had given the right answer. You would think that would be the end of Jesus' lesson, but it wasn't. "Keep it quiet and don't breathe a word of it to anyone," Jesus said, "because it is necessary for me to suffer many terrible things. I will be arrested, tried, and killed, but after three days I will rise again."

Peter didn't like that! He took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that.

Jesus reprimanded Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are looking at things from a human point of view, not from God's."

Then Jesus called the the crowd of people who had gathered around to come and join him and his disciples. "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."

So, what does it mean to us? It means that we have a Savior, Jesus Christ, who was willing to give up everything so that we could have everlasting life. It also means that those of us who want to be his followers must also be willing to take up our cross, give up everything, and follow him.

The cross - it is so much more than a piece of jewelry, a work of art, or a decoration on a steeple. It is a reminder of our Savior's great love for us and our call to follow him!

Heavenly Father, thank you that you loved us so much that you sent your Son to die on a cross. As his disciples, help us to take our cross and follow him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**HUNTING RELAY:** Send the class out on a HUNT with a list of things to HUNT for - including bookmarks, gold necklaces, key chains, wall hangings, crosses, etc. Begin the lesson after all the items have been laid out on the class table and let children hold up the items as talked about in the lesson.

**CROSS RELAY:** Divide the class into 2 teams. (This is a little complicated but listen closely...) Each team will send one player to the line to pick up a cross, run back to the team and the team will follow that player with the cross to a designated place in the playing area and then back to the team line. The player will quickly run the cross to the beginning line, drop it in the box or basket, and run back to the team. Then the next player will do the same and will also run back to the team with the cross and the team will follow that player to the designated area and back... until all the team has an opportunity to run the Cross Relay!

**PAINTED HAND PRINTS:** Spread some paint on each child's one hand and let them place their painted hand print on a poster board and all the hands need to be in a formation of a cross when the prints are completed. When I did this activity, I did these cross-formation-hand-prints on our class room wall for decoration. The kids loved it and enjoyed it for years! So it was a big CROSS on the wall but with the childrens' hand prints!

**CROSS BOOK MARKERS:** Give children construction paper cut in the shape of a cross, as well as other supplies to decorate the cross such as stickers, markers or glitter, etc. For older children, it's unique to let them "tear" out the shape of a cross from construction paper, rather than an even cut.

**CROSS NECKLACES:** Children can do a cross type activity of choice (either cut or torn paper), decorated and hole punched to add a plastic string or yarn to hang around the child's neck.

**CROSS WALL HANGING:** Give children poster board and craft sticks, glue and markers, etc to decorate a large wall hanging with today's BIBLE VERSE on the 'hanging' or "Take up your cross and follow Jesus" words.

**BIBLE VERSE BORDER ART:** Give each child a large cross cut out of a full sheet of construction paper. Tell children to write as small as they can and write today's Bible verse around the border of the cross as many times as they can! See which child can write the verse the most times. Then use ric-rac or star stickers, glitter, etc to decorate the cross. Now have all the children try to say their Bible verse together as a class!!

**FOLLOW JESUS:** The teacher can cut out many crosses and number them from 1 - ? (at least 15 but more is even better). Let children FOLLOW the CROSSES in the numerical order until they get to the highest number that the teacher tells them, for the number of crosses that the teacher has prepared in various parts of the area. The teacher should have a Bible opened by the final cross and have the children read today's Bible verse out of the Bible, and also John 3;16.