

# F.O.L.L.O.W.E.R.S.

## VS

# Fans

### (Relationships)

LIFE LESSON

When it comes to Jesus' disciples, many think they worked together like good friends, or were always looking out for each other like teammates. But the truth is, prior to the Holy Spirit, they were constantly arguing about who was the greatest amongst them. Meaning, these guys weren't known for their *relational* skills, or for being the kind of guys who regularly cultivated *friendships* or *relationships*. However, that's exactly what Jesus wanted them to do, and even stated to them that their treatment of each other would ultimately serve as proof of their *relationship* with Him...

📖 **John 13:35 (NLT)** *"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*

➡ **When it comes to overall relationship skills, who would you say is the person most responsible (good or bad) for teaching you how to be loving?**

The world is filled with fans looking for proof that followers exist, so we need to realize that our loving *relationships* is a huge part of what causes fans or critics to become followers. Which means, one of the most important things we should consider, is what it looks like to lovingly confront each other to help our *relationship* get stronger. For example, when someone claims to be a follower, but constantly complains about things or people, as a true friend, we should lovingly confront them. The reason being, the toxicity of complaining will negatively impact their relationship with **GOD**, and it will cause others to shy away from them, or worse, criticize their faith in **GOD**. For example, look at what Paul wrote...

📖 **Philippians 2:14-15 (NLT)** *Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.*

➡ **In your opinion, how does complaining make a follower of Jesus seem less "shiny" or less like a "bright light" in a dark, crooked, and perverse world?**

Complaining is just one example of the jackwagony that followers regularly engage in without thinking about it. And when these sinful behaviors are allowed to naturally grow in us, a confrontation will be required to remove them. But those people who are willing to confront us on our sinful behaviors, or for being a jackwagaon, are the people we can truly call our closest friends. For instance, in the

book of Proverbs, there are many short sayings, or teachings, that speak to this type of *relationship*. Here are a few of the most popular ones..

📖 **Proverbs 27:6 (NLT)** *Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.*

📖 **Proverbs 27:17 (NLT)** *As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.*

- ➡ **Has a good friend “gently wounded” you about something you’ve done, or about a sinful behavior in your life? If so, can you talk about what was said, and how things turned out?**
- ➡ **In your opinion, do true friends ghost each other when feelings get hurt?**
- ➡ **How do you sharpen your friendships with others?**

Those who are truly committed to a *relationship* with us, won’t ghost us when we’ve been a jackwagon and hurt them. Instead they’ll confront us, even if it means being forceful spiritually or emotionally. Meaning, a true friend won’t physically try to force us into anything, but instead, they’ll appeal to us in a spiritual or emotional sense. And with friends like that, our *relationships* will grow and flourish as followers, which is exactly what **GOD** wants, because that’s when we can start to help one another in some powerful ways. For instance, look what Paul wrote to the church in Colossi about how followers were to help one another, and then look at what the author of the book of Hebrews said about the same thing...

📖 **Colossians 3:16–17 (NLT)** *Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*

📖 **Hebrews 3:12–14 (NLT)** *Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. You must warn each other every day, while it is still “today,” so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God. For if we are faithful to the end, trusting God just as firmly as when we first believed, we will share in all that belongs to Christ.*

- ➡ **As a representative of GOD, what are we to do first?**
- ➡ **What are we to do after we’ve filled our hearts and lives with the message of Christ?**
- ➡ **How often should we be working on our relationships with others?**


It should be clear that we as followers of Jesus, must be working on our *relationships* with other followers regularly, if not daily. And our work is to teach and counsel each other, or maybe confront a fellow follower who is deceived by something and sinning. But beyond this commitment to our *relationships* with other followers, Jesus obviously wants us to be committed to our *relationships* with those outside the church, even if we consider them our enemies...

📖 **Matthew 5:43–45 (NLT)** *“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you*

*will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike."*

➡ ***In your opinion, why do you think Jesus wants us to talk to GOD about our enemies?***

Praying regularly for our enemies, or for our government leaders, or for those crazy people who don't go to church, sounds like an odd thing for Jesus to ask to us to do, but when we do, it changes us. Or in other words, as we pray, the Holy Spirit empowers us to not just stay committed to our *relationships* with other followers, He helps us to stay committed to our *relationships* with those difficult people as well. For instance, look at what Peter said...

 **2 Peter 1:3-8 (NLT)** *By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence. And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

➡ ***To move from brotherly affection to the point where we have love for everyone, what were we supposed to do beforehand?***

➡ ***In your opinion, will our failure to do these things impact our ability to stay committed to our relationships with others? Why or why not?***

Here's a short summary of what we've learned today. Our *relationships* with other followers is a huge part of what causes fans or critics to become followers. Next we learned that those truly committed to a *relationship* with us will confront us spiritually or emotionally when we need it, and forcefully if necessary. And lastly, we learned we must be strong in our *relationship* with **GOD**, then be ready to teach and counsel others. To help us stay focused on this, I'd like to suggest that we all meditate on what Paul said to the churches in Galatia...

## **MEDIATION PASSAGE FOR THE WEEK**

*Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

***Galatians 6:1-2 (NLT)***

# F.O.L.L.O.W.E.R.S vs FANS

**LESSON GOAL:** Kids will understand that being a follower is all about our relationships with God and others

## **MEMORY VERSE:**

If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples." | **JOHN 13:35 NIRV**

## **RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

We're almost done going through the F-O-L-L-O-W-E-R-S acrostic where we've been talking about all of the characteristics or requirements of being a follower of Jesus Christ. We started with faith - it all starts with faith. Then we talked about learning and leading - learning helps us grow closer to God and to understand his commands, and leading is how we show others what it means to follow. We talked about order - both organization or structure, and orders or commands that we must follow. Work came next and we talked about how we have to work at denying our tendency to sin. Last week we talked about having empathy and sympathy toward others, which leads us to this week when we're talking about relationships. Relationships are where we bring all of those other characteristics and commands together in how we relate to Jesus and other people.

Being a follower of Jesus requires us to have a loving relationship with Jesus. Our faith and desire to learn about and follow his orders are what prompt us to keep doing the work to love other. And the way Jesus loves us, shows us how he wants us to love others.

Jesus came to us a human, so he has empathy for all of the things we experience as humans – all of our emotions and struggles. Even the temptation to sin. He worked hard to teach others about God and build relationships with his disciples. He loved others so much that he corrected them over and over, continually teaching and leading them. He spent his whole life showing us what it looks like to love others until it came time for him to sacrifice his own human body so that we could be forgiven and have access to God.

Let's look at some of the instructions the Bible has for us when it comes to loving others.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS**

First, we have to remember that when those around us know we love Jesus, they're looking at us as his representatives. We need to demonstrate love for each other.

If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples." | **JOHN 13:35 NIRV**

One of the ways we show that we love others is in the way we speak to and about others and about our own lives. Are we grumpy and complaining? Or are we speaking with love and trying to get along with others?

God is working in you. He wants your plans and your acts to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing. Then you will be pure and without blame. You will be children of God without fault among sinful and evil people. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky. | **PHILIPPIANS 2:13-15 NIRV**

No matter how hard we try, we will all end up having hurting or being hurt by others. We might want to just turn away and never talk to that person again, or we might want to hurt them back or fight, but as followers of Jesus, we need to be the ones to gently let someone else know that they hurt us, and to graciously listen and accept when someone lets us know. When we're brave enough to lovingly talk with a friend after a disagreement and try to work things out, we both learn and grow and our relationship can get stronger.

Wounds from a friend can be trusted. But an enemy kisses you many times. |

**PROVERBS 27:6 NIRV**

Brothers and sisters, make sure that none of you has a sinful heart. Do not let an unbelieving heart turn you away from the living God. But build one another up every day. Do it as long as there is still time. Then none of you will become stubborn. You won't be fooled by sin's tricks. We belong to Christ if we hold tightly to the faith we had at first. But we must hold it tightly until the end. |

**HEBREWS 3:12-14 NIRV**

## **DISCUSSION | REVIEW**

- Read Proverbs 27:6 again. In your own words, describe what you think this means? (Talk it through if kids are struggling to understand)
- What's the first thing you want to do when you have an argument with a friend or sibling?
  - Have you ever tried gently telling them why you're hurt or angry? Or listening and apologizing if you hurt them?
  - What is one way you can remind yourself to do this the next time you have a disagreement?
- What is one thing you learned today that you can share with a friend?