

Define the Relationship

Your One and Only

Frankton – 1/18/15

Scripture: Luke 14.25-30 hating father and mother, counting the cost

Proposition: Is Jesus one of many or your one and only?

We've been talking the last few weeks about the difference between being a [SLIDE] fan and being a follower. As quickly and simply as I can, here's the difference, and this comes from Kyle Idleman's book, *Not a Fan*. A fan is an enthusiastic admirer. It's the guy who goes to the football game with no shirt on and a painted chest. He stands and cheers for his team. But he's never in the game. He sacrifices nothing to be a fan of his team. On the other hand, a follower makes sacrifices. He gets in the game. Even when the losses pile up, the follower keeps following: doing what the leader did. That's a follower. We talked about Nicodemus coming at night so as not to lose his reputation, yet he became a follower as was one of the men who buried Jesus. We talked last week about Simon the Pharisee, who was a fan, and Jesus follower the immoral woman. So let's get continue talking about fans and followers of Jesus.

In the fourteenth chapter of Luke, Jesus has another conversation which he makes into a DTR (Define the Relationship) moment. This time, it isn't with someone in the shadows of night like with Nicodemus, or sitting around the dinner table like with Simon the Pharisee. This time Jesus speaks to an entire crowd. By this point in Jesus' life, word has spread about this incredible teacher who has made the lame walk, the blind see, and who has turned funeral procession into family reunions. People were coming from all over and filling hillsides. I imagine the scenes really did have some of the same type of atmosphere as that of a stadium full of raving Colts fans.

For a while, Jesus seemed okay with the large crowds. He was fine with people coming out to be inspired by his teaching. He didn't seem to mind the fact that they were coming to see some miracles. No doubt many of them showed up carrying whatever the first century equivalent of buttered popcorn was ready for the entertainment to begin. Jesus welcomed people who were curious and wanting to find out more about this unconventional rabbi. But the time comes when he wants to talk about the relationship. He draws a line in the sand and wants to know where these people stand. Ultimately what concerned Jesus the most wasn't the size of the crowd, it was their level of commitment. Have they come just for a miracle and healing show? Do they just want to hear a motivational speaker? We are about to find out because this crowd is going to be separated into two groups: fans and followers. He turned and spoke to the crowd: [SLIDE] *If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison - [SLIDE] your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters....* [25]

That doesn't sound very seeker sensitive at all. You would think that verse would read something like this: A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, "What a great crowd! I want everyone to go invite one friend and come back tonight for a carnival. We'll have live music. All the loaves and fishes you can eat. We'll even have a 'water into wine' booth. I may even get in the dunk tank. And whoever invites the most friends gets one free miracle. Let's pack this hillside." That's what you might think he would say. Instead he tells the people that if they want to follow him, they must hate their families, even their own lives. Where did that come

Define the Relationship

from? I'm sure that about this time some of the fans began to pack up and head home. It was fun while it lasted, but this isn't what they signed up for.

So the big question now becomes: Does following Jesus really mean you have to hate your Grandma? Obviously hating your family would contradict the other teachings of Jesus. So why the strong language. Maybe Jesus uses such dramatic language here, because in that particular culture if you were to become a follower of Jesus without your family's blessing, you would have been thought of as hating your family. A decision to follow Jesus would have been interpreted as turning your back on your family and walking away from them.

Jesus is honest with the crowd about what it may cost to follow him. He lets them know that following him may mean offending your parents or grandparents. It may mean being cut out of the will or even cut off from the family. I have a pastor friend of mine who told me about a person who said that when their grandparent dies they plan on becoming a Christian, but they are waiting because they don't want to offend her. In this scripture, Jesus is talking to those people. He's saying, "If you are not willing to choose me over your family, then you are not ready to follow; maybe it's time you go on home."

The word [SLIDE] "hate" is defined as "to feel hostility or animosity toward" or "to detest." Clearly Jesus doesn't want us to "hate" our family in that sense. It would violate everything else the Bible teaches on the subject. Jesus himself said one of the two greatest commandments was to "love your neighbor as yourself." Our families are the closest neighbors we have.

Actually the NLT says we are to: [SLIDE] *hate everyone else by comparison.* [26] The Contemporary English version says to "love me more." I like those two translations together. The idea here isn't that there is some kind of race for your affections where Jesus comes in first place and your family and friends come in second. What Jesus is describing here is more accurately understood by picturing a race for first place in your life and Jesus is the only one on the track. Jesus isn't saying "I want to be first place in your life." He's saying, "By comparison, I don't even want there to be a second place." When we compare our relationship with him to our relationship with anyone else, there should be no competition. Fans try and make Jesus one of many. Some fans even make Jesus the first of many. But when Jesus defines the relationship, he makes it clear: [SLIDE] **Jesus** wants to be your one and only.

So is Jesus one of many or is he your one and only? Let's go back to a DTR (Define The Relationship) talk you have had with your significant other. Now imagine while you are defining the relationship and determining the level of commitment, you make it clear where you stand. You say to your significant other, "I'm all in." Then you follow it with this, "I am giving you my heart and want nothing more than to spend the rest of my life with you." Your significant other replies, "I love you too. I am willing to be with you for the rest of my life. I just have one condition: I still want to be able to see other people."

This is essentially what a fan says to Jesus. A fan says, "I love you. I want to be with you, but it's not exclusive." It would be like having your wife's picture on your phone, but having your girlfriend's picture as well. That's going to be a problem. It's not enough for her to be first, she will insist on being the only. Jesus makes it clear that he will not share your affection. Following him requires your whole heart. So let's ask just a couple of questions to help reveal if Jesus is one

Define the Relationship

of many or your one and only. These are not rhetorical questions. Take time to answer them. Grab a pen and write down your thoughts on your bulletin insert. So here we go.

Questions number 1: **[SLIDE] For** what do you sacrifice your money? The Bible says: *Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.* [MT 6.21] What you spend your time and money on often reveals the true desire of your heart and show who or what you are truly following. The reason Jesus talked more about money and the things money can buy than any other subject is because they can easily become his chief competition. We end up following money and the things money can buy instead of following Jesus. Many of us sacrifice our time and money on stuff because we think that how we find satisfaction. For many, satisfaction comes with a price tag. If you just had enough money you could order satisfaction off the internet or buy it off the shelf. But Jesus didn't come to earth to be our satisfaction. He described himself as living water that quenches our thirst forever. [JN 4]. Money becomes a substitute for Jesus because it promises to do for us what Jesus wants to do for us.

It's interesting to me how differently we look at money and finances. A fan will ask, "What's the most I can spend when buying a house." But when it comes to giving, they'll ask, "Does God want me to tithe my net income or my gross income." In other words they say, "What's the most I can spend when buying a house and what's the least I can give to God." How you spend your money tells a story about what matters the most to you.

Questions number 2: **[SLIDE] When** you are hurt, where do you go for comfort? Maybe it's to a parent or a spouse. Maybe it's to the refrigerator – isn't that why they call it comfort food? Do you bury yourself in your work? All these things have the potential to compete with Jesus for our devotion and affection. There is certainly nothing wrong with finding comfort from family and friends; that's a part of God's design. But the question is, "Do they take the place of Jesus?" I have found that when someone goes through a truly difficult time or a painful circumstance, who or what they are following is often revealed

Questions number 3: **[SLIDE] What** disappoints or frustrates you the most? It may be something as significant as a job loss or something as insignificant as the loss of a ball game. When we find those things have the power to determine who we are and what kind of day we have, it very well may be evidence that something is more important than it should be. Of course, some level of disappointment and frustration is natural. But if you find that you are excessively disappointed or overly frustrated it's an indication of what might be competing for affection that is to be Christ's alone.

Questions number 4: **[SLIDE] What** is it that really gets you excited? Like the things that disappoint us, the things that get us excited can also be things that compete with Jesus for our affection. Could it be sports, music, work, your appearance? All these things are fine and good, but they have the potential to become a type of mistress that is robbing God of your whole heart.

Following Jesus is like being married – you're married to only one person. Another way to look at it is this: fans don't want to put Jesus on the throne of their hearts. Instead, they keep a couch on their hearts and, at most, give Jesus one of the couch cushions. He's asked to share the space with others. But Jesus makes it clear to this crowd, he's not interested in sharing your heart. Let me say it another way: Jesus won't share you with another lover. This sounds a bit crude or

Define the Relationship

overstated but it's very biblical. In Ezekiel, the prophet describes what it is like for God when we share our affection, attention, and allegiance with anyone or anything else. The prophet says it's like we are having an affair. In chapter 16, here is what God says to his people who have been worshipping false gods: **[SLIDE] You give gifts to all your lovers...** [33]

So back to our text in Luke 14. Jesus defines the relationship by making it clear that if we follow him, we follow him alone. He won't share us – not with money, not with a career, not even with your family. Maybe you read this passage and it seems that God is being a little possessive and jealous. Understand this: when Jesus explains that he will not share your affections, he isn't just saying how he wants to be loved by you; he is telling you how he loves you.

Imagine it this way. Suppose that you walked into a restaurant and you see me sitting at a table having a romantic, candle-lit dinner with a woman other than my beautiful wife. You come up and confront me, "Who is this woman and what are you two doing?" I respond, "Don't worry about it. I am on a date with this beautiful lady, but my wife knows that she always comes first." You walk away angry and disgusted. You decide that someone needs to tell my wife about this and that someone needs to be you. So you call her and break the news to her. When I come home from my date, what do you think her response will be? Do you think that when she meets me at the door she'll say, "Hi honey? Did you have a nice time on your date?" Then she comes up and plants a big kiss on my cheek and says, "I don't mind you seeing other people as long as I am most important to you."

Think that would happen? NO! As soon as I walked in the door from my date (assuming I wouldn't be shot on the porch) I would fear for my life. Why? Because she loves me. Her refusal to share my affection doesn't indict her as insecure or possessive, instead it proves her to be devoted and loving. In the same way, Jesus makes it clear: if you follow him, Jesus is to be your one and only. You're so committed to him that by comparison, you hate everyone else. Jesus makes no apologies for his strong words. He wants people to be clear about what they are signing on for.