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ARE YOU A FOLLOWER OF JESUS?

I know. I know. You've been asked this question before. Because it's so familiar, there is a tendency to dismiss it. Not because it makes you uncomfortable. Not because it's especially convicting. The question is dismissed mostly because it doesn't feel necessary. One of the most sobering passages of Scripture tells of a day when many who consider themselves to be followers of Jesus will be stunned to find out that He doesn't even recognize them. In the Gospel of Luke chapter 7, Jesus tells of a day where everyone who has ever lived will stand before God. On that day many who call themselves Christians and identify themselves as followers will stand confidently in front of Jesus only to hear him say, "I never knew you. Away from me." If you've just assumed you are a follower of Jesus, I pray that this video series produced by City on a Hill will either confirm that confidence or it will convict you to reevaluate your relationship with Jesus and bring you to a commitment to follow Him.



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WHAT IS NOT A FAN?

Well honestly, it's a number of things. On the most basic level, it's a 6-episode, video-driven small group bible study, centered around the calling of every Christian to truly follow Jesus Christ. But beyond that...It's an opportunity, a time where you can be open to what Christ would have to say about your thoughts, feelings, and the motivations of your heart. It's a challenge, a call to look at your relationship with Jesus with fresh eyes, and see whether it's really everything that it could be.

It's a journey, one that will deepen your relationship with Jesus while deepening your relationships with the members of your small group. And it's a movement, a gathering force of Christ followers who have truly given themselves over to following Jesus, who are leading lives of radical love and service in his name.

THE NOT A FAN SMALL GROUP STUDY CONSISTS OF THREE ELEMENTS.

1. FOLLOWER'S JOURNAL: a highly personal devotional guide, designed to challenge and grow participants on a daily basis over the course of the study.

2. NOT A FAN LEADER'S GUIDE: your resource for guiding small group discussions and serving the members of your group.

3. SIX VIDEO LESSONS: the lessons vary in length from 25 to 35 minutes and unfold a dramatic story coupled with insightful teaching, presented in a highly cinematic style. The format is a little difficult to describe - you just have to see it to appreciate it. So, I would encourage you to go ahead and check out a couple of episodes, experience it for yourself.

NOT A FAN COMPANION PRODUCTS

(sold separately at www.cityonahillstudio.com)

- **PASTOR'S RESOURCE KIT:** Designed specifically for pastors and comes with everything needed to run a church-wide Not a Fan program. The kit includes a video guide for implementing a church-wide program, six fully developed sermons, six video vignettes to accompany each sermon, and digital art files to use in creation of bulletins and other promotional materials.
- **ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THE FOLLOWER'S JOURNALS**

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR NOT A FAN STUDY GROUP.

GET FAMILIAR WITH ALL THE MATERIALS.

First, we recommend that you watch the leader's tutorial (found on DVD 1) and then if possible watch all the video lessons in advance. We have also included a synopsis of each week's video lesson in this guide for quick reference. Finally read through this guide and the Follower's Journal to get a feel for their flow and content.

ENCOURAGE THE USE OF THE FOLLOWER'S JOURNAL.

We believe that the Journal will vastly improve your group experience and is key to getting the most out of this study. While group time is important, the journal experience is more personal and will challenge each group member to go deeper. That's why we strongly encourage every group member to have their own Follower's Journal and be challenged to try the exercises suggested. This resource will have a dramatic impact on those who commit to working through it on a daily basis. However, much of whether or not this happens

hinges on you as the leader. If you encourage use of the journal, use it yourself, and discuss it weekly in your group, then most members will likely end up using it themselves. But if the journal is hardly mentioned and rarely discussed, and you don't prioritize it personally, then this important opportunity will be missed. We suggest you sample a couple of weeks of the Follower's Journal yourself before this study begins, and then you can provide the group with your own experience of its value.

PRAYER WILL BE IMPORTANT (OF COURSE!)

At the start of each week's lesson you will find a space for you to compose your own personal prayer for the group. At the end lesson, there is also a space for you to jot down concerns that prayer concerns for you and your group to keep in mind during the week.

BE CREATIVE WHEN IT COMES TO THE GROUP TIME.

What would help your group bond? What would help the group build trust and open up? What would help the group care for each other? Don't feel you have to follow the leader's guide legalistically. You may spend more time of one aspect than another. You may carry out the prayer time differently. One week you may have such a good discussion occur around the opening questions that you never get to the video. Maybe you take a week away from the study in the middle of it to go serve together at a homeless shelter. Follow Jesus rather than merely following this guide.

PRACTICE WITH THE DVD PLAYER.

Make sure everything is functional prior to the start of your group each week.



PROVIDE A WELCOME SETTING.

Be creative. Food always helps warm up a group. If you can have some snacks, or even better, a meal together, go for it. Soft lighting, candles, a fire, and background music can all promote a more comfortable, open, and thus effective, atmosphere for group discussion. Of course, you have to set up the chairs for the DVD viewing in a way so that everyone can see the TV. But for the discussion time, you will want to rearrange the chairs so that everyone can face one another. This creates an atmosphere where everyone feels part of the discussion. After the discussion, you might want to have coffee available so that those who want to talk personally will feel more comfortable, and will be more likely to do so. And be careful to let others help you clean up if they volunteer. It'll make them feel like they're a part of things, so if they ask to help, accept it!

SMALL GROUP MEETING FORMAT

We realize that small groups come in all shapes and sizes. They are hosted in a variety of venues and settings and have varying time constraints. As the leader, you will need to take these factors into account and structure your group time accordingly. So, we created the study materials so that you can customize your meetings to fit your particular needs.

If your group commits to the use of the Follower's Journal, you'll want to build time into your schedule each week to discuss it. We've discovered through our test groups some of the best small group time came from discussing their personal experiences with the journal. The following outlines what we think is the ideal format for your small group meetings:

RECOMMENDED FORMAT (90 MINUTES)

- Opening Prayer
- Discuss the previous week of the Follower's Journal (20-25 minutes)
- View the DVD (25-35 minutes)
- Discuss the new themes and issues introduced by the DVD (20-25 minutes)
- Prayer Time (10 minutes)

If you're limited to 60 minute window of time you may choose to simply watch the DVD Lesson and discuss it using the questions provided in the Leader's Guide. So, for more time-constrained groups we recommend the following format:

ALTERNATIVE FORMAT (60 MINUTES)

- Opening Prayer
- Opening question(s) (5 minutes)
- View the DVD (25-35 minutes)
- Discuss the new themes and issues introduced by the DVD (15-25 minutes)
- Prayer Time (5 minutes)

Note: *Even though your group won't be discussing the Journal using this format, we still recommend that you encourage each member to commit to the Journal for reasons previously mentioned. Remember, the Journal makes each lesson more personal.*



Finally, we also want to give you a head's up that, regardless of which schedule you choose, you may not get through all the questions each week. That's okay. The important thing is that your group is really engaging with the material, and wrestling with it on a personal level. If you find yourself running out of time on more than one occasion, you'll likely want to read through the questions ahead of your next meeting, and prioritize the ones you feel are most important. Resist the temptation to run over. Respect everyone's time, and you'll have a group eager to return for the next session.

SMALL GROUP LEADER'S ROLE

We want to let you know from the beginning...Not a Fan is a hard hitting study that will challenge each group member's commitment to be a follower of Jesus.

As the group leader, you have the opportunity to play an important part in sharing a message that has the power to transform lives. But please understand, your primary role is that of a friend and a servant. It is not the leader's job to judge someone else's status as fan or follower. Nor is it the leader's job to turn everyone in the group into followers. It is the leader's job to provide a safe place where participants can honestly explore their relationship with Jesus. It is the leader's job to model Jesus by being genuinely concerned about the thoughts, questions and struggles of the group members.

As the leader, you don't need any special training or leadership experience to host a Not a Fan group. You don't have to be a teacher - in fact, it's better if the leader doesn't teach. All you have to do is facilitate the conversation, keep the discussion moving and make sure the atmosphere is open, non-judgmental, and conversational. The videos, the Follower's Journal, and the Leader's Guide will do the teaching for you, while you trust the

Holy Spirit to be dramatically active in the lives of participants. In fact, perhaps the best way for you to lead a Not a Fan group is to let the study impact you personally. Take the journey yourself, be frank and honest with your group as you share the things that God is revealing to you along the way, and be as open to learning from the group as you are committed to serving them as their leader. I'm sure that if you approach the study with that kind of open heart and humble spirit, your group members won't be the only ones who are blessed.

TIPS FOR GUIDING DISCUSSION

Since one of your primary responsibilities is to keep the conversation going, we've included some really important tips for you to consider. Guiding the discussion is important to your group's success. Please, don't skip over this; make sure you really digest these concepts. And then go over these tips with other group members and ask them to give you their feedback after the discussion time.

PRAY: Ask God to give you wisdom, to give you a listening ear, and a peace that passes understanding. 2 Timothy 1:7 says that we should pray for a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline.

ASK QUESTIONS: This guide contains a number of possible questions that you could ask, but these questions don't have to be asked exactly as they're written. Feel free to rephrase the questions to make them your own. The more conversational you can be, the better. The real key is to not just ask one question right after another, but to follow up with what someone says. This makes the discussion more like a conversation than a lesson. So, here are some good follow-up questions to have in your back pocket: "Explain what you mean." Or you might ask, "Can

you give an example of what you're saying?" Or "When did you start thinking or feeling that way?" Or "How confident are you that that's true?" Or "How well does that work in your life?" Maybe you say, "Well that's interesting. What do the rest of you think?"

LISTEN: Keep in mind that the most important thing you need to do next is LISTEN! Really hear what people are saying. Don't worry so much about what you're going to say next. Instead, really listen, and then respond out of what you hear people say. You'll also want to be careful to talk enough but not talk too much. A little silence can be a good thing for a group; so don't try to fill every quiet moment. Do your best to listen to the Holy Spirit as well as the conversation. Be praying silently all through the DVD and the discussion time, asking for the sensitivity and wisdom to listen and then guide without controlling.

YOUR OPINION: Another important key is to be sure not to give your opinion about an issue unless it's already been fully discussed. Some people will see you as the leader, and once you speak they'll shut down. So, if someone asks for your opinion you might say, "I'll be glad to give it, but let's hear from everyone else first."

AFFIRM VS. ENDORSE: It's important that, as a leader, you affirm all the responses. You say, "Thank you Ben." Or "That's very interesting, Elizabeth." No matter what the participants say, don't criticize their remarks. What they just said may be antagonistic to you, it may be stupid, it may simply sound ridiculous, but don't directly criticize it. Instead, say something like, "Well that's interesting. What do the rest of you think?" Once, you as the leader directly disapprove of someone's comments, then some people will never

Speak up again. They're going to fear disapproval. And once exploration stops for them, then the journey does too. But on the other side of the coin, while it's important to affirm all responses, avoid the temptation to endorse them. Don't say things like, "Now that's a great comment" or "I couldn't agree with you more." Such endorsements tip your hand and leave others feeling like their comments are not acceptable. Also, resist the urge to be too instructional, trying to answer everyone's questions and solve everyone's problems. Once a know-it-all person speaks up, conversation tends to shut down. You can give your own opinion, but do it in a personal and humble way. Maybe you say, "Well my experience has been..." or "This is how I see it..."

WHEN SOMEONE TALKS TOO MUCH. What do you do if you have a difficult, or domineering, or excessively talkative person in your group? Here's a few ideas: First, if someone is talking on and on – interrupt nicely, and say, "I see what you mean, I hear what you're trying to say, but let's see how others feel about that." Or another thing you might want to do is if someone is regularly talking too much, you might say, "I'd like to give everyone else a chance to say one thing before anyone speaks a second time." Also, if someone continues to just dominate the group or the discussion time, step aside with him or her after the session and say something like, "I see you have a lot of ideas, and you're very willing to express them. That's awesome, but I need your help. Some of the others in the group – they're not as bold. So, would you help me draw them out? If you could keep your comments a little briefer, not speak up quite as much. I think they're going to begin to share. So, if you could help me with that, it would be great."

WHEN SOMEONE NEVER TALKS. What if you have a person in your group who never talks, and they're reluctant to share? You might say something like, "Does anyone who hasn't spoken up yet have a thought or an idea." If that doesn't work, and if the Spirit is prompting you, then maybe you say, "Hey, Kevin, I noticed you haven't said anything yet – you don't have to but I'd sure be interested in hearing what you think about this." We realize this may be a ton of information for you to digest (especially if you are a new leader), but don't worry. Above all, just love each person in the group because if you truly care about them, they're going to sense it, and then allow the Holy Spirit to do the rest.



WEEK 1: FAN OR FOLLOWER?



*Write a prayer below for your group.
What are you really asking God to do?*

INTRODUCTIONS:

If this is a new group or an existing group with new member(s) be sure to allow some time for everyone to introduce themselves (name tags are recommended in this case). Be sure to introduce yourself as well and explain to the group why you have chosen to lead this study.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- *What do you hope to get out of this study?*
- *What does the phrase “not a fan” mean to you?*
- *What does God want from you?*



WATCH LESSON 1: FAN OR FOLLOWER?

STORY CONTENT:

Just curious, how do you feel after watching the first episode?

After hearing some reflections, read this: This is a pretty tough first lesson in the series. No paddy-caking around. So we won't go light in our discussion, either. Oftentimes in Bible studies we ask theoretical questions, like "What do you think v. 3 means?" Or, "What is the most important thing a person should do?" There will be some hypothetical questions like that. But since fans typically like the theoretical questions because they keep the issues (and Jesus) at a comfortable distance, we will also ask questions of the personal, challenging kind. Like, "What is verse saying about your life?" Or "What is the most important thing for you to do next?" These are questions followers love, because answering helps them become better followers, and that is what true followers desire.

But let me add, no one has to answer any question. We don't want to force anything on anyone. Following Jesus is voluntary, so surely responding to the questions must be as well.

One other thing, this is a challenging study, but we also don't want this to be a place where we end up judging who is a follower and who is not. The quickest way to shut down the authenticity in this group is for us to start judging each other's lives. This study is not about making others to be better followers but about each of us individually challenging ourselves. So let's avoid any hint of judgment. Agreed? OK, good. Now before we ask some pointed questions, let's explore the story we've just watched.

Kyle is at a football game having a good time when he receives news of a friend's heart attack. At the hospital, he and the family receive word from the doctor that Eric Nelson has suffered irreversible brain damage. Everyone is shaken. If you have been in a situation like that, what was it like for everything to be normal one moment, then drastically different the next?

Kyle visits the grieving family and friends: Eric's wife Anna; and briefly, Eric's daughter Natalie and son Tony; his father Bill, and couple of Eric's friends, Darren and Gary. How do you see the various characters reacting to death? How are these reactions like or different from what you have observed in similar situations?

GOING DEEPER:

LET'S TURN TO LUKE 9:18-25.

Would someone be willing to read?



Oftentimes in these studies, the leader's guide asks the questions, but what questions come to your mind about this passage?

What stands out to you from this section of Scripture?

Notice the progression in the passage:

First, in vv. 18-21, Jesus is recognized as the Christ or Messiah of God. In another Gospel, Peter's confession includes the title, "Son of God."

Next, in v. 22, Jesus reveals that even though He is the Christ, or actually because He is the Christ, He will suffer, die, and then rise again. If He is the anointed of God, why must He die?

Finally, in vv. 23-25, He tells his followers that they must die as well, die to themselves. But if they do, they too will be raised, their lives will be saved. Jesus adds, “If anyone tries to save his life, he will lose it.” Why is this so? How does trying to save one’s life lead to losing one’s life?

PERSONAL CHALLENGE:

When have you been most alive? Can you describe it?

Were you dead to yourself at the time or alive to yourself?

Think of a time when you were alive, and it was all about you – basically satisfying your own desires. (*Give them a moment to come up with one.*) And a time when you were alive and it wasn’t about you, but about others. (*Give them a moment to come up with one.*)

Compare or contrast the two – how are they alike.
How are they different? Which do you prefer?

Now some tougher questions. So, **“Define the relationship.”**

How would you define what happens between you and Jesus? What terms would you use? Fan, follower, something else?

How do you feel about your answer?

To define the relationship implies you can have a real relationship with Jesus. How does a person have a relationship with Jesus, someone he can’t see or touch? What is that like? How does it work for you?

What has following Jesus cost you?

Do you feel like Jesus has tested your relationship with him?
If so, how? In what area(s)?

If he were to test your relationship to Him these days, what might be a likely area? Something at work, home, in relationships, with money? What?

Are there any areas of your life that are off-limits to Jesus?

If so, why? What is your reason for keeping him out? What has been the effect of keeping Him out?

If you suddenly died, and family and friends were asked for one thing about you, what do you believe they would say?

How do you feel about that? When you do actually die (at some, hopefully distant, point) what would you like people to say then?

What kind of life, what kind of changes or decisions, would it take in your life for people to actually make those kinds of comments about you at the time of your death?

That was a heavy lesson and some tough questions.
Thanks for hanging in there.

Hand out the Follower's Journals. Ask someone to read the introduction – "***About this little book.***"

In order to get buy in from the group, you might say something like, "The leader's notes assert that use of the journal by the group members can really enhance our study. But I would like us to decide together what priority we will put on it.

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