

# Responses to Jesus:

Fool,

Fan, or

Follower?

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Fool, Fan or Follower?

(Written by Denny Brogan)

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## Introduction

Probably the most important question in all of life is: “What is our response to Jesus?” The Bible tells us that the people in Jesus’ day were “divided” because of Jesus (John 7:43). In other words, they had differing responses to Him, His miracles and His teachings. Some people responded to Jesus as “fools”; i.e. they made poor/wrong judgments about Him out of unbelief, unwillingness, etc. Other people responded to Jesus as “fans”; i.e. they admired Jesus and liked to be associated with Him and/or to be around Him, but they didn’t make personal commitments to Him as Lord. And others responded to Him as “followers”, i.e. people who loved Jesus and pursued Him, His teachings, and His will; people who sought to live out His ways in a loving response to Him for what He has done and for who He is; and people who were committed to Him as Lord of their lives.

In this Bible study series, we’ll look at a few people who had some of these different responses to Jesus. In so doing, we will be challenged to think about “What is our response to Jesus?” — a fool, a fan or a follower?

## **Responses to Jesus**

### Some Unbelieving Fools

#### John 10:22-39

**Introduction:** The first people that we are going to look at are the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day. These men were generally hostile toward Jesus and they actually wanted to kill Him. In this study, we'll be taking a closer look at these men, with hopes of understanding more about why they responded to Jesus the way that they did.

#### **Warm up question:**

- Think about something that you recently heard or read about that you found/find hard to believe, and tell why.

#### **Read John 10:22-39**

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. The Jewish leaders asked Jesus to tell them if He really is the Christ. Was their inquiry sincere?
2. Why did the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus?
3. Did Jesus deny or affirm their accusation?
4. What does Jesus make clear is the real reason why they do not listen to Him and accept His claim to be God's Son?

5. Why didn't the Jewish leaders believe Jesus to be God's Son, and therefore follow Him?

Three main reasons:

1) Read John 6:41-42

What is the reason for unbelief found in this passage?

2) Read John 7:41-42, 52

What is the reason for unbelief found in this passage?

3) Read John 5:16-18

What is the reason for unbelief found in this passage?

## **Summary:**

The Jewish leaders were “fools”. They not only didn't believe Jesus (and therefore wouldn't listen to Him or follow Him), but they also wanted to kill Him. And eventually they did!

Not all “fools”, however, are hostile to Jesus. But many do not follow Him because of unbelief—which can exist for many different reasons.

6. What are some of the reasons that keep people today from believing and fully following Jesus?

## **Application questions:**

- Are you a “fool” as well because of your unbelief in what Jesus said or did—even if you aren't hostile toward Him?
- What issues of unbelief keep you from believing and fully following Jesus?
- What might help you to believe?

## Responses to Jesus

The Sad Fool  
Mark 10:17-27

**Introduction:** In this study we meet someone whose view of Jesus seems positive, and who sincerely wants to do what was right. This is why, as we will see, his response to Jesus is so surprising—and sad.

### Warm up question:

- What is something that you have that you find very difficult (maybe even impossible) to lend or give to someone else? Why?

### Read Mark 10:17-27

### Discussion questions:

1. In this encounter with Jesus, a man (Matt 19:22 tells us that he was a young man) comes running up to Jesus, falls on his knees and asks Him a question: “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? (v.17). Why do you think he asks this question?

Why do you think it was so important to him?

2. Jesus first answers the man’s question with a question: “Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone.” (v.18)

Any idea why Jesus might have said this and what He was trying to communicate?

3. Jesus goes on to say: “You know the commandments” and goes on to list five of the Ten Commandments. (Read v.19) What do you think of the man’s response (v.20)?

4. Look at what Jesus says in response to this. (Read v.21)

Do you think that there really was only “one thing” that the man lacked?

Why does Jesus tell the man to “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, and follow me.”?

Why did Jesus have the right/the authority to ask these things of the man?

5. What was the man’s response? Why wasn’t he able to do what Jesus told him to do, and what does this say about what was most important to him?
  
6. What is vv.23-27 all about? What does Jesus say about the ‘pull’ that wealth has in peoples’ lives? What does He say about the power and ability of God?
  
7. What do you think are some other things that people or athletes desire so strongly that they are unwilling to give up to allow Jesus to have complete control of their lives?

### **Summary:**

This man was a “fool”. He had worked hard to be “righteous” and truly wanted to have eternal life, but he wanted even more to be in control of his life. He was unable to fully trust (and obey) Jesus and follow Him because there was something more important to him that he needed to give up control over—but couldn’t.

### **Application questions:**

- Are there things in your life that are so important that they keep you from giving Jesus complete control over your life? (e.g. athletics, money, career, relationships, etc.)
- Are these things more important to you than knowing that you will receive eternal life when you die? [Consider Jesus’ words: “*What good is it for you to gain the whole world (i.e. have whatever you want), and yet lose or forfeit your very self?*” (Luke 9:25); and the words of Jim Elliot (a missionary killed by the people he tried to share Jesus with) “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*”]

## Responses to Jesus

### Fans and “Fringe” Followers

John 6:1-35; 60-69

**Introduction:** Throughout Jesus’ public ministry, crowds of people regularly gathered around Him to see Him, listen to His teachings and to witness and experience His miracles. Most in the “crowd” remained mere spectators and/or recipients of what He had to offer them. However, some who met Jesus actually followed Him from place to place and identified themselves as His “disciples”. And out of this broader group of disciples, Jesus chose “the Twelve”. In this study, we will see all three of these groups of people responding to Jesus in different ways.

### Warm up discussion topic:

- Think about a time when you started something, but—because it demanded more than what you were able or willing to give—you stopped or gave up on it.

### Read John 6:1-35

### Discussion questions:

1. In vv.13-26, Jesus leaves the crowd and eventually crosses over to the other side of the lake (Sea of Galilee)—but not without another miracle!—and the crowd followed Him. Why?

How is this like some people today who want to be around Jesus only for what they might get from Him (and/or being associated with those who follow Him)?

2. What does Jesus tell them that they should work for/seek after (vv.27-33)?
3. When the people ask for this “bread” (v.34), where does Jesus say that it can be found?

What did Jesus mean when He said that He is “the bread of life”? What did Jesus say was needed in order for them (and us) to get this “bread”?

4. Read John 6:60-69

Why did many of His “disciples” (and probably many in the crowd as well) find Jesus’ claim that He was “the bread of life” a “hard teaching” and difficult to accept (v.60)?

What did they end up doing (v.66)? Given their response, why do you think they had been following Jesus up to this point?

Why did they stop following Him now?

5. What did “the Twelve” do? Why? What was the main difference between them and the other disciples who stopped following Jesus?

### **Summary:**

Both the “fans” and the “fringe followers” in this account became “fools” by distancing themselves from Jesus when following Him was no longer self-gratifying and/or easy. When Jesus calls us to follow Him, He calls us to follow Him for who He is—not for what we think He is or want Him to be. He also calls us to believe what He says and to do it—even if we don’t always understand and/or find it hard to do. And if we are to follow Him, He calls us to find in Him (“the bread of life”) all we need for spiritual life and sustenance.

### **Application questions:**

- Do you pursue Jesus as the only true source and giver of spiritual life and nutrition?
- If not, who is Jesus to you? Why do you associate with or stay connected to Him?
- What happens in your life when Jesus asks something of you that isn’t enjoyable or easy for you to do?



## Responses to Jesus

### Three Wannabe Followers

Luke 9:57-62

**Introduction:** As we saw in our last study, it was common for Jesus to have lots of people who moved around with Him in His travels and ministry. However, not all did so just because of the benefits they received from Him (like getting free bread to eat!). In this study we will look at 3 men who seemingly wanted to follow Jesus, but who were tested by Him as to their readiness to do so. Through these tests, we will see more clearly what it means and takes to truly follow Him.

### Warm up discussion topic:

- Talk about a time when you really wanted to do something but didn't because of what you discovered it would cost/require of you.

### Read Luke 9:57-62

### Discussion questions:

1. [Overview observation question] What are some of the similarities in these three situations?

2. The first wannabe follower (vv.57-58)

This man initiates his willingness to follow Jesus with a sweeping promise to follow Him “wherever” He goes. How does Jesus test this man’s readiness, and what does He imply about what it truly means to follow Him?

Where are some of the places that people find most difficult to follow Jesus? Why?

3. The second wannabe follower (vv.59-60)

This man is called by Jesus to follow Him. What do we see in the man’s response?

What seems strange—even uncaring—about Jesus’ response to the man’s request?

What was Jesus really implying/requiring in His call to the man to “Follow me”?

What are some of the things that hinder/keep people from completely following Jesus now?

4. The third wannabe follower (vv.61-62)

Like the first man, this man initiates and expresses to Jesus his willingness to follow Him. However, like the second man, there is a “but first” request—a reason for why he can’t or doesn’t want to follow Jesus at that time.

What is this reason, and why does it seem to be a reasonable request?

What do you think Jesus is implying and requiring of the man in what He says to him?

What are some things that Jesus may ask people to give up/leave behind in order to follow Him?

**Summary:** In these three situations, Jesus is testing the readiness of those who say that they want to follow Him. His desire—and the need of any wannabe follower of Him—is not that they give Him part of their lives or that they live part of their lives for Him, but rather that they count the cost and give all of their lives to Him. He deserves—and demands—no less.

**Application questions:**

- What would your life be like if you followed Jesus completely—no excuses, no restrictions, no “but firsts”—wherever, whenever, and whatever?
- What is keeping you from giving your life completely to Jesus and to following Him?

## Responses to Jesus

### A Committed (but not perfect) Follower (Luke 5:1-11)

**Introduction:** Throughout this Bible study series, we've been considering what is probably the most important question in life: "What is our response to Jesus?" We have seen that some people respond to Jesus as "fools"; i.e. they make poor/wrong judgments about Him out of unbelief, un-willingness, etc. We also have seen that some people respond to Jesus as "fans"; i.e. they admire Jesus and like (or at least are willing) to be associated with Him and/or to be around Him, but haven't made a personal commitment to Him as Lord. In this study, we will look at a person who was a true "follower" of Jesus; i.e. someone who loved Jesus and pursued Him, who sought to live out his life in a loving response to Jesus for what He has done and for who He is, and who had given his life to Jesus and was committed to Him as the Lord of His life. This committed (but not perfect) follower of Jesus was Peter.

### Warm up discussion topic:

- Think about a time that you let down someone/a group of people (like a teammate or your team). How did you feel? What kept you going and moving past your failure?

**Read Luke 5:1-11** [Note: Simon = Peter (see John 1:42)]

### Discussion questions:

1. Before this account, Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39), which probably caused Peter to appreciate and respect Jesus. This may have been why he was willing to stop cleaning his nets and let Jesus get into his boat to teach the crowds (even though he was tired from fishing all night and just wanted to finish his work and go home). It also may have been why he was willing to put out into deep water in the middle of the day and get his nets dirty again (even though as a skilled fisherman he knew that fishing was done at night in the shallow water, and therefore believed that they weren't going to catch anything!) At the end of this account, however, Peter's response to Jesus was to leave everything and follow Him (v.11)

What caused this change of response in Peter toward Jesus?

What might it mean for him to leave everything to follow Jesus for the next 3+ years?

Read Mark 10:28-30

2. Jesus acknowledged and commended Peter's response of "leaving everything" to follow Him. What does Jesus say will be the reward for all those who respond to Him in the same way?

Why do you think Jesus includes the phrase “and with them, persecutions”?

Read Mark 14:27-31, 66-72

3. What do we see happening in this passage in the life of this committed follower of Jesus? What was his heart’s desire? What did he end up doing instead? What does his response to his failure show?

Read John 21:1-19

4. What hope does this passage give to all who love Jesus and want to follow Him faithfully, but who know that they, too, will experience (or have experienced) failure at times in doing so?

Skim read Acts 2:14-5:42

5. What further hope do these accounts give for those who love Jesus and want to follow Him?

**Summary:** Peter was a follower of Jesus who gave up everything to follow Him (i.e. he “denied himself”, and said YES to following Jesus). His heart’s desire was to know and to do what Jesus wanted because of who He was and because he loved Him. He wasn’t, however, perfect, and he therefore didn’t follow Jesus perfectly. Despite this, he continued to seek Jesus’ forgiveness and help to live his life for Him (i.e. to “take up his cross” and say Yes “daily” to following Jesus). And as a result, he proved to be a committed (but not perfect) follower of Jesus for the rest of his life.

### **Application questions:**

- As a result of what you’ve learned from the Bible studies in this series, would you say you are a “fool”, a “fan” or a “follower” of Jesus?
- If you’d like to become a follower of Jesus, what would it mean for you to “deny yourself”, “leave everything” and follow Him?
- What hope and encouragement does Peter’s example of being a committed, but not perfect, follower of Jesus give to you in making a decision to follow Jesus?