

WEEKLY SERMON

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Are you a real supporter or just a fan?

I was reading Luke 14: 25-35, on the cost of being a disciple and my thoughts turned to just how committed are we to our Christian faith?

I remember back in the mid-1950s I, along with my 7 or 8 year old friends would walk the two miles from home to Gigg Lane and back to watch The Shakers (Bury FC).

We'd dress in our club colours, carry our football rattles and pay an extra two pence to go into the boy's stand. We were true, if young, supporters in every sense of the word.

At the age of 15 I left home to join the army and moved to my barracks in Dorset then onto Germany. I was a fan of The Shakers and from a distance I'd look out for the scores and the odd review in the papers; but that was it. I certainly wasn't contributing directly (especially the 2p entrance fee) in any way.

I believe the same happened with my faith, wavering between fan and supporter. In the reading the crowds following Jesus were split as such ... and Jesus uses this teaching to tell them in no uncertain terms that they need to be much more than just fans.

Looking at my own Christian journey I know I drifted in and out of my faith; times when my Bible sat gathering dust and my worship was pitifully infrequent.

Then when I finally returned to faith it was more as a fan than supporter. I would attend worship, sing my favourite hymns with gusto and enjoy a brew to finish the service.

With Sunday over, Monday to Saturday went pretty much back to normal; OK I'd revised some Christian principles, but still had a long way to go.

In my early 40s God grabbed me and I finally became a supporter. However, I have to beware of losing my 'saltiness' (my commitment) and that is a challenge to all us Christians. We need to learn to encourage the fan base onto better things and spot those who are slipping from supporting to being a fan.

The good news is we have a gracious God who loves us but wants us to be better. We have a saviour who walked among us and knows the pressures we face and died so that we may live. Now, I'm an all-out, if a flawed, supporter of that.

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