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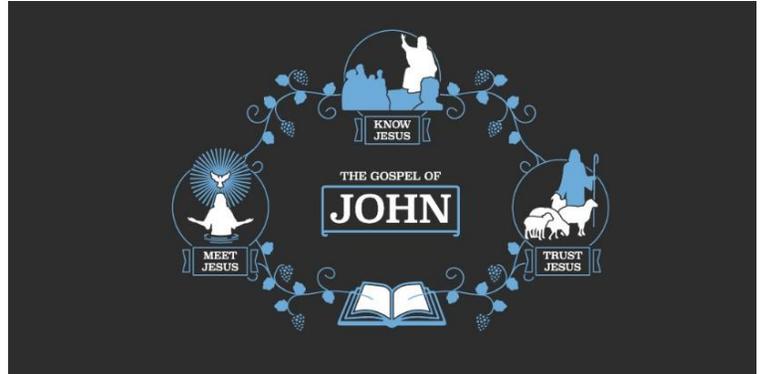
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Which One Are You?

The Gospel of John

John 4:43–54

Tim Badal | October 24, 2021



This morning, we find ourselves in John 4, so if you haven't grabbed your Bible yet, please turn there. We're going to start in verse 43 which comes on the heels of Jesus' ministry in Samaria. We know that was a big culture shock because the Samaritans were vilified and hated by the Jewish people. What an amazing story we heard about a woman who was in a very shameful life, who has struggled with all manner of sin. She met Jesus. Encountered Jesus. Believed Jesus. Experienced new life in Jesus. Experienced what it means to have the Living Water from a well that will never run dry. Then she went and told the people in her town about what she's experienced, and many Samaritans believed in Jesus.

Now what we have is this interlude in verses 43-45, telling us Jesus went from Samaria and to Galilee where people welcomed Him. Now I want to stop here and have us explore what John is showing us. First, he wants to show us there is no distinction when it comes to being welcomed to the life that Jesus offers. We're seeing that Jesus welcomes anyone, even Samaritans. They understand the gospel. They believe the gospel, even though the Jews hated them. Now we get to Galilee and see that Jesus is going to encounter many different people. In fact, throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus encounters lots of people from a lot of different places; different genders, different positions in life. But there's a distinction that determines where you stand with Jesus. There are three groups of people Jesus encounters.

First, the enemies of Jesus. We haven't seen this in the Gospel of John yet, but we will. As John continues to progress in this storyline, we're going to see the enemies begin to reveal themselves. Now we know they are the religious establishment; the ones who have allowed faith, trust and the religion of Judaism to run amuck. Jesus encountered this already when He entered into the temple in Jerusalem and began to knock over tables because they had made a mockery and a profit where there should have been worship of God. The Pharisees struggled with Jesus, debated with Him and did everything in their power to trip Him up. Later in the Gospel of John, they even conspire to kill Jesus.

Now I'm going to imagine that the vast number of you are not in this category of Jesus' enemies. I assume you're not antagonistic toward the claims of Christ or Christianity.

On the other side of the spectrum is another group of people that I would like to call the followers of Jesus Christ. In this group, there are disciples and the Samaritans who have placed their faith, hope and love in Jesus Christ as the Savior of their souls. These people have denied themselves. They're going to take up their cross and follow Jesus. They're not going to do it perfectly. We're going to learn from the disciples themselves that they're going to fail a lot, even the great apostle Peter is going to deny Jesus. So, it's not that followers of Jesus are perfect and have it all figured out, but what you'll see in this book is that they are persistent. When they get knocked down by the grace, mercy and love of God, they get back up and commit to follow Jesus anew.

So we've seen the enemies of Jesus and the followers of Jesus. Now what we encounter in the beginning of this passage is a totally different group. These are what John calls "the crowd." This crowd is going to be with Jesus to the very end, meaning they are going to make their presence known. In fact, we'll see later in this book the triumphal entry of Jesus, when He enters Jerusalem the week before He's put to death. A parade breaks out and they begin to proclaim, "Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!" The problem is this crowd doesn't stop yelling, but they change what they are yelling about. We're

going to learn this crowd is going to turn on Jesus very quickly. On Friday, when asked what should be done with this Jesus Who says He is God, this crowd is going to yell, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

You see, the problem with this third group is they are fair-weather fans. I was out in the parking lot earlier and someone said they had never heard that term before. For sports fans, fair-weather fans are a problem. For Cubs fans especially, those who have agonized through many, many years of losing seasons. You see, a fair-weather fan is different. He is one who shows up at the opportune time. Notice this definition: "A person who is supportive and enthusiastic about a sport only when that team is performing well."

Last night, we learned which two teams will be in the World Series—the Atlanta Braves and the Houston Astros. We're going to have a whole lot of new Astros and Braves fans, because all these people are going to jump on the proverbial band wagon and start rooting for these teams for a short season. Now let's look at some characteristics of these folks known as fair-weather fans or bandwagoners. They only support a currently successful team or organization. Listen to this description: "They are basically a stupid shell of a passionate fan." I love that! If you're a real fan, it makes your blood boil. You almost dislike these fair-weather fans more than the opposing team. At least they're passionate; at least they've been there. Real fans respect other real fans. But how do you know?

One of the best ways to know is by asking, "Who do you like on the team?" A fair-weather fan won't know. "What do you think of the manager?" "I don't know." They know nothing about the team they are rooting for because they showed up at the last hour when the team was doing well.

It has been said there are two things that each of us can lose: Ten pounds and fair-weather fans or friends. Even worse than having a fair-weather fan or friend who only likes you when things are good, the greater tragedy would be one who would be a follower of Jesus, but in reality is only a fair-weather fan in faith.

Are you a fair-weather fan?

Do you only hang around with Jesus when things are good? Do you only like Jesus when things are all together positive and going well for you?

Now here's where my burden is and it's been brewing for some time. I think and am saddened to say that much of the evangelical world are not really followers of Christ. We would say we are. Fair-weather fans say, "We're big fans; big supporters." The book of James says the mouth boasts all manner of things and we will boast that we love Jesus. That we'll die for Jesus. That all we want to do is live for Jesus. The mouth boasts those things. But in the last week, how much time did you dedicate to prayer? Outside of the times you were required to because your pastor or small group leader told you to? When was the last time you were in the Word, just you and God? When was the last time you served Him out of joy, not out of duty because someone told you to, but out of joy? "I'm here to serve others because I'm called to serve Jesus." When was the last time you gave? When was the last time you shared your faith because you were so overwhelmed by the goodness and grace of God that you just had to tell someone about Him?

You see, many of us will say we are followers of Jesus Christ, but the evidence seems to go against us. So we find ourselves around Jesus; we like being around Jesus, but only if it works within our plan or situation. If it's advantageous to us. Now the Bible says there will be many who will be in this category and that's what scares me. There will be many because Jesus said in Matthew 7 that many on that day will say, "Lord, Lord, did I not do this? Did I not do that?" They will boast about a litany of things they were part of, things they were present for, maybe things they saw. But Jesus will say to every fair-weather fan, "Depart from Me; I never knew you" (Matthew 7:21-23).

You might think this is nothing big, that it's okay and we can be casual. But I want you to know there are eternal implications to this. John calls this group "the crowd." They never really, truly believed. They never took their faith seriously after seeing the signs and wonders, putting it into action. Many sadly, when they stood before the Lord, found out that being a fair-weather fan of Jesus is not good enough. This passage will show us the characteristics of a fair-weather group of people.

I'm so thankful that John shows us an individual who moves, I think, from a fair-weather position to being a fervent follower of Jesus. Let's walk through how this goes about it. I don't want to scare you in an unnecessary way; I don't want to take away true and real assurance of faith, but I want each of us to ask ourselves, "Which one am I?" Now don't think, "I hope my kids are listening. I hope the person down the aisle is listening." I want you to ask yourself, "Which one am I based on the defining marks listed in this passage of Scripture?"

Let's read John 4:43-54:

⁴³After the two days he departed for Galilee. ⁴⁴(For Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honor in his own hometown.) ⁴⁵So when he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, having seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the feast. For they too had gone to the feast.

⁴⁶So he came again to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. And at Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill. ⁴⁷When this man heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸So Jesus said to him, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe." ⁴⁹The official said to him, "Sir, come down before my child dies." ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, "Go; your son will live." The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way. ⁵¹As he was going down, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. ⁵²So he asked them the hour when he began to get better, and they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." ⁵³The father knew that was the hour when Jesus had said to him, "Your son will live." And he himself believed, and all his household. ⁵⁴This was now the second sign that Jesus did when he had come from Judea to Galilee.

This Scripture tells us that Jesus leaves Samaria, where He has met with bona fide followers of Jesus Christ. Not a single miracle has been done, just the testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These people are saved, excited and ready to walk in allegiance with Jesus Christ. It says that Jesus then enters into Galilee. Now these people should have gotten it. If anyone was not going to get it, it would have been the Samaritans; but they get it. The Jews in Galilee are only about welcoming Jesus, which is great to see but the reason why they are welcoming Him, the text tells us, is because they had seen all that Jesus had done during the Passover.

Now Jesus has already talked about these individuals in John 2:23-25 where He said, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them..." Time out. When Jesus met believing Samaritans, He stayed for two days, no doubt to teach and develop them in the faith they had. Why would it say here that Jesus would not "entrust himself..."? "...[B]ecause he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man." He knows their belief is no more than demonic belief, just like the demons believe as James 2:19 says: "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!" Demons don't truly believe. So these people aren't believing; they like Jesus, they want to be near Him, but they don't believe. So Jesus does not entrust himself to them. So they welcome Him only because of all the signs and wonders He performed.

Then the text tells us there's a man who comes. We're told this man is an official. Other translations call him a noble man. Literally, he's a king's man. So he probably worked for Herod, perhaps as part of the security detail or a provincial leader or governor. Whatever he was, he was a man of great affluence and authority. Now this man comes and is part of the group that I would call fair-weather fans. We're going to learn more about these fair-weather fans in a little bit.

This guy comes because he has a problem as we see in verse 46. His son is sick. To help describe this a bit more, his son is a little boy. One British commentator that I read called him a "wee little lad." One guy put in his sermon that this is not a kid you would tackle, but a kid you would hold. That helps us understand. So we've got this little kid, probably a toddler, this child you could hold in your hand. I have three sons, but I do not hold them in my hands. Just yesterday, one of them tried to jump on me in a Lazy Boy and we broke the chair. You think you've got problems in your house? Pray for Amanda.

So this is not a big kid; this is a wee little lad. The text tells us this little boy, if something doesn't change, is going to die. Now I want you to understand this is a big problem. We could run right by that and not think much about it. If you've been a parent with a sick child, especially one who is not getting any better no matter what you do, you recognize the helpless feeling you have as a parent. Especially when you're at the hospital and they don't have any answers.

Do you seek Christ only in times of desperation?

What we see here is the first characteristic of a fair-weather fan is that they seek Jesus only in times of desperation. Now shouldn't we seek Jesus in our times of desperation? Yes. But here's the problem. For fair-weather fans, Jesus is the last resort, not the first option. In your times of crisis, is Jesus the first person you go to or only after you've exhausted every other option? You've gone to your bank, to other people. You've tried through human wisdom to figure things out and unravel the ball of string that's tangled up. You've tried to do it on your own, then out of desperation, you say, "We've tried everything else; we might as well try Jesus." That's what fair-weather people do in times of crisis.

So this man comes to Jesus. He's tried everything they could, then he hears that this Miracle-worker, this Magician, whatever He is, is able to do some things. This man thinks, "Just maybe, if I can get His attention, if I can tell Him my story, maybe He will come to Capernaum, lay hands on my son and maybe that might fix everything." So he makes this journey.

Now, Capernaum is on the north of the Sea of Galilee and Cana is 16 miles south which is the distance between us and St. Charles. No doubt you've never walked that and neither have I. Google Maps tells us it would take eight hours and 31 minutes to walk from Cana to

Capernaum. You ask, "Why would it take so long to walk 16 miles?" Probably because of the terrain there. Now this guy is a rich man, a man of means, so he probably has a horse or maybe a chariot that would cut the time down to about three hours. Again, based on the terrain in that area.

So this guy goes a long way, traverses a great distance, doing so to meet up with Jesus, talk to Him and explain the situation about his son. Now what has brought this man to Jesus? Is it because he's a follower of Jesus? No. Is it because a friend invited him to go meet the Messiah? No. Is it because he read an Old Testament prophecy that points to Jesus being the one and only Messiah, the Savior of the world? No. The reason he is there is the same reason others are there. They are seeking Jesus from a distance. Notice the text tells us the reason all these people have come to see Jesus is because they have heard about or seen the things He has done. They were spectators to the ministry of Jesus. That is in stark contrast to the Samaritans in verse 39 who believed the testimony of the woman, then the testimony of Jesus, without a single miracle being done. There's a contrast that John wants to show us which is that being a fair-weather fan means you merely need to be a spectator.

This afternoon, if I get done in a timely fashion, many of you will go home and start watching football over lunch. It's a great thing to watch football. It's a lot of fun. But let's be honest; when we watch football, we're not experiencing the fullness of it. On Monday morning, you will not be sitting in an ice bath because you watched TV. Those on the field have experienced the highs and lows firsthand. They were there. Within all of who they are, they experienced it. For us, we will have just turned off the TV and go on our merry way. That's the difference between being a spectator and being fully engaged.

Do you seek Christ from a distance?

You see, these individuals liked watching Jesus but had no intention of walking with Him. How many of our churches today are filled with spectators instead of people who have been saved by the grace of almighty God? How many of us are busier watching Jesus do things in the lives of other people than actually walking with Jesus and experiencing Him in the fullness of the Spirit? This is why this is so important. This is serious, because it is so subtle. These people were thinking, "Hey, we're here. We're following where Jesus is going." But they are merely watching what Jesus does and when the show finishes, they leave.

Now Jesus is going to experience this in even in a broader way at the end of John 5 when He turns a few loaves and fishes into a multitude of loaves and fishes to feed at least 5,000 people. They will return the next day saying, "What are You going to do for us now? We're here; we're bored. We won't have a television for another 2,000 years, so we need something to be done." Jesus says, "You came to have your bellies filled, but let Me tell you that you need to eat My flesh and drink My blood." They're like, "Uh, no. I don't want to walk with You, Jesus." The text is going to tell us in John 5 that all of them leave Him.

As fair-weather fans, as Jesus calls us to something more than just spectating, we want nothing to do with it, so we get up and leave. You see, we can't walk with Jesus from a distance.

Do you seek Christ but are distracted by other things?

The third characteristic we see is that we're distracted by things. Jesus rebukes the man and the people. The "him" in verse 48 is plural, meaning He rebuked them, but it was pointed toward this one man who is a fair-weather fan. He's come; he's heard about Jesus; He's experienced Jesus from a distance; now he's demanding that Jesus do something. But Jesus rebukes him, saying, "*Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.*"

Now, how awesome is that? Don't we as Christians in the 21st century say, "If only I had walked with Jesus... If only I'd seen Jesus turn the water into wine... If only I'd seen Him raise Lazarus from the dead, then I'd really believe." How many of us have ever thought that? "If I'd seen Jesus walk on water, my faith would be way more powerful and strong than it really is." Jesus says, "Listen, when you see those things, if they are not coupled with following Me, they are just distractions." They are like a magic show. It's like going to see Siegfried & Roy in a Las Vegas casino. It's just a show. These people were so enamored by the show that they missed out on the Savior.

We see this man moving from being a fair-weather fan when he says, "Jesus, listen, I've got nothing else. In my desperation, I need You to do something." I want you to notice that thus point on, Jesus leaves the fair-weather fans, the crowd, moves on and focuses in on this one man. He tells him, "I want you to go home. Your son is going to live."

As we move from being fair-weather fans, we come into to this new category of being fervent followers.

Are you a fervent follower?

As fervent followers, we see a few things and ask, "Okay, am I a fair-weather fan? Are these things true of me?" Do you seek Jesus as a last resort in desperation? Do you follow Jesus from a distance, as a mere spectator? Are you more distracted by the stuff around Him than seeing Jesus Himself? Then you've got some repenting to do. You need to turn... Maybe you can deceive yourself and others, but on the day of judgment, you will not deceive the Lord and Savior of the world. This man is in such a place of despair, begs Jesus to come and heal his son. He has no other options. In it, we see what a true, fervent follower of Jesus looks like.

This involves turning to Jesus.

Notice first of all, being a follower of Jesus means turning to Him. This man goes to Jesus and says, "Listen, I've got nothing else." Now there have been some small steps of faith that we cannot overlook. Before this man meets Jesus, the Holy Spirit is already worked on him, because he's done what every human being needs to do if they want to be followers of Jesus.

Let's go back to Capernaum and focus in on the official's house. There's weeping and wailing. There's deep sorrow. The little boy is dying, probably with a fever. Nothing is fixing it. The mom looks at the dad and says, "You've got to do something! Our boy is going to die!" The dad gets up, probably from kneeling at his son's bed, and says, "The only person we have left to turn to is this Jesus." Then he gets on his horse and makes this three-hour journey.

Men you know the last thing you want to do is leave where the action is, because in and of ourselves, we think we can fix things. As a man, there's nothing more despairing than knowing there is a trial going on in your family, but then to be separated by distance. I wouldn't have fully understood this except for a couple months ago when my mother died. Many of you know my mom passed away suddenly; but many of you don't know that when I learned of it, I was nine hours away with my family on a trip. Trying to make that nine-hour journey back, I learned in the car that my mom was no longer alive. I experienced the angst of being far away from home, feeling totally out of control, helpless.

This man gets up and starts making the journey to Jesus. Listen to me friends, believing means coming to the end of yourself and putting all your eggs into Jesus' basket. "I've got nothing else. I'm going to make a journey that will lead me to Jesus. I don't know what He will do. I don't know what He will say. I don't even know what Jesus looks like. All I know is that it's been said that He has powers and abilities to address my greatest need. I'm going to do whatever it takes to get as close to Jesus as soon as possible."

Let me tell you from this pulpit, if you have never done that, you are not a saved follower of Jesus Christ. You might be a fan; you might like what He's doing, but until you've come to the end of yourself and made the deliberate decision, "I am getting close to Jesus no matter what" you're nothing but safe.

So this man turns to Jesus, gets there and is persistent. "Jesus, I am not going to stop until I get to you. I'm not going to stop until You hear from me. Jesus, I'm not going to stop until I get an answer from You." Then Jesus says, "Go home!" "Wait a minute, I've just gotten here. All I've told You is that my son is going to die. I haven't told You what he's going to die from. I haven't told you where we live. I haven't told you who I am. I haven't told you how long he's been sick. I haven't told you any of that." But Jesus says, "I want you to go home. Your son will live." And the man says, "Okay."

You've got to be kidding me. Now remember what this man knows as a spectator of Jesus. We've got to imagine that up to this point, all of Jesus' miracles were in person, meaning He would actually touch someone and that's what this man wanted to Jesus to do. "Come, touch my son and heal him." Jesus says, "Listen, I don't even need to leave this place. I've got long-distance capabilities. I'll heal him from afar. I'm going to transcend time and space. I'm going to heal him from here."

Notice the text says, "Go; your son will live." Then notice verse 50: "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him..." This man takes the testimony of Jesus.

Let's stop here.

This involves believing Jesus.

You and I can never be followers of Jesus unless we believe in Him. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This man believed. How do we know he believed? How do we know he believed more than these others who saw? Notice what it says next. This is vitally important. You might think, "Yeah, I believe in Jesus." Remember, the book of James says the demons believe and they shudder. So what do we have going on here? Belief is more than just a cognitive action of the mind. It's more than an emotional reaction of the heart. Notice what John shows us: "The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way." That faith went from his head to his feet. He said, "Alright. Jesus said it, that settles it, I'm going to get back on my horse and travel three hours back home

So he believes and makes this journey. In fact we learn that the journey was probably longer because it was the next day when he ran into one of his servants who gave him news about his son.

You see, fans will boast that they believe. Followers of Jesus Christ will show it in their actions. That's why James 2:18 says, "Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." He isn't saying that works save you. He's saying that a faith that works is one that is active in obedience. So let me ask, you say you're not a fair-weather fan, but how are you doing at obeying the Word of God? Jesus is speaking through His Word. How do you do at following it?

Now listen, I'm not perfect at it; nor am I thinking that any of you are perfect at it. But is it our great desire to wake up every morning and follow the Word of God? This is what this man does. He goes on his way and makes this journey. But notice the white space between the black lettering there. There's something that isn't recorded here. He goes on his way. That involves an overnight. It involves time and space. Nowhere in the text does it say that this man doubted at any time. No where in the text does it say he fretted or was filled with

anxiety. Nowhere does it say he was given to depression. He was on a journey. He didn't know if his son was alive or not. This Jesus Whom he has never met before, as soon as he explains his son is going to die, says, "I want you to go home; your son will live." Based on the testimony of this Man he's never seen before, or heard of before, or talked to before, based on it from a distance away, he gets on his horse and travels back home with no doubt. Why? Because he was resting in Jesus.

This involves resting in Jesus.

You ask me, "How do you know? Why are you so worried that there are so many fair-weather fans in the church?" Because I see a whole lot of people who are way more unsettled than those who truly believe in the testimony of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I see a bunch of people who tell me they are followers of Jesus Christ, but they're being tossed to and fro by the circumstances of life. "Woe is me. I'm anxious. I'm depressed. I'm this; I'm that." They are filled with all manner of worries and doubts. I listen to them and think, "Do you not believe in the God Who says we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:37)? Where's that faith? Where's that resolute sense?"

This man leaves the young boy full of whatever is killing him, meets Jesus, then with confidence heads back home because he believes in the faithfulness of the One Who sent him.

Even in the most difficult crises of life, are you able to believe the Word of God? *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Me"* (John 14:1). I'm going to speculate here that Jesus might have had this nobleman in mind when He spoke these words later to His disciples. His heart was no longer troubled because he believed in God, yet we have churches filled with people who confess they are followers of Jesus, but who are running scared because of the things of this world. Do not let your heart be troubled. Believe in God. Believe in this Jesus Who can heal, Who can address your situation. Now why do I think this miracle is for us? Because Jesus shows His power in an expanse of space and time. That's the same way Jesus does things now. "But Jesus, You're in heaven." That's okay. If Jesus can do work from Cana to Capernaum, He can do it from heaven to Hinckley. Amen?

This man turns to Jesus; he believes in Jesus, then he rests in Jesus.

This involves telling others about Jesus.

On his journey, this man meets one of his servants. Notice he doesn't ask if his son is okay. The only question he asks is, "When did it happen?" The servant replied, "In the seventh hour." The nobleman remembers that's exactly the moment when Jesus said it would happen. He goes home, tells his family that he experienced something awesome, having seen the power of God through the hands of Jesus. He explodes, wanting to tell anybody.

We explode when we see a good movie or have a meal at a good restaurant. We're excited to talk about some good customer service we received or some new technology we have. This man is sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ because he is so overwhelmed by what Christ has done and he wants everyone and anyone to hear about it. The text says his entire household believed.

You want to know if you're really doing well as a follower of Jesus Christ? How big of a compelling, compulsion do you have that if you don't tell people about Jesus, you'll explode? This man gets home and tells his family he wants them to know about Jesus. And they believe.

So let me ask, without looking at anyone else, which of these best describes you? Are you a fair-weather fan when it comes to Jesus? Or are you a fervent follower of His? Only you can answer that between you and the Lord. I encourage you, before you leave this place, to know for sure.

Jesus shows us in His ministry that His primary interest is not taking care of the crowd. In a similar way, it's the elders' desire here, even as this church grows, that it doesn't matter to us if it's just a crowd. What we long for, what we are burdened for, is that this place would be filled with people who are all in when it comes to following Jesus Christ. That's why we tell you the hard things. That's why we address these things as we do. It may be a rebuke to you, and I hope it is, because I'd rather you hear a rebuke from a finite, flawed man than hear it from the infinite God Who has the power to send you to hell.

Which one are you? A fair-weather fan of Jesus or a faithful follower? If you can be humble enough to say, "I was a fair-weather fan, you like this man can be on the road that leads to heaven."