

Greetings to all the Saints at Manatee Life,

SCRIPTURE:

Romans 12:11 (GNT) – Larger reading: Romans 12:9-21

“Work hard and do not be lazy. Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion.”

STORY:

Chester Rowell relates the old story of the man who was running as quickly as possible after a crowd of people. While trying to catch up with them, he was asked the reason for his hurry. His answer was: “I’ve got to catch up with them. I’m their leader.”

OBSERVATION:

Watching the Rays baseball team win the 2nd game in their playoff series with Houston I began to run an analogy between John Wesley’s statement, “Catch on fire with enthusiasm and people will come for miles to watch you burn,” and followers of a baseball team. I had been playing around with the concept of “catching on fire with enthusiasm” for some time now. I was wondering what that really looked like thus the parallel that I am drawing today between that fired up enthusiasm and a fan, a follower and a fired up enthusiast. But, first a little disclaimer: I know that all analogies breakdown if they are pushed too far so, please take that in mind as you read this list.

FAN:

1. They follow a team to a point, but are barely aware of the win/lose record or who the team plays next.
2. They might buy a ticket once and awhile, but usually watches the team on TV if they don’t have a family event or some other invitation.
3. They will not lose sleep because of a game. They can turn off a game and go to bed, as I have on a number of occasions, and read about the results in the newspaper or on the Internet the next morning.
4. They might buy a team T-shirt – if they are on sale and they have extra cash that isn’t needed to go out to eat.

FOLLOWER:

1. This person follows the team to the point that they know the win/lose record and most of the stats of the major players on the team.
2. They will attend many of the games played at home.
3. They will stay to the end of the game, most of the time, but can be found getting up and leaving (to beat the traffic) or turning off the TV if they have know that they are going to have a rough day at work the next day.
4. They can usually be found wearing a team’s T-shirt, but only on game days. And, will fly a car flag during the season, but usually only on game days.

FIRED UP ENTHUSIAST:

1. Someone who is fired up knows the stats for every player who has ever played for their team in the history of the franchise.

2. They attend every game – at home and away. Nothing ever will stop them from being in the stands to cheer their team on – rain or shine or relatives from out of town. And this also includes attending every game of Spring Training – all nine innings and long after the “star” players have been pulled. Plus, they will cheer so loud and long that they will become hoarse.
3. They are in the stands for batting practice and will be one of the last people to leave the stadium after the game is finished.
4. Not only do they wear the team’s T-shirt, but also a baseball cap and the jersey of their favorite player day-in-and-day-out all year long. They fly the car flag, house flag, buy a vanity auto tag and plaster their bumper with various team stickers. Their home will be decorated with posters, pennants and probably will have a room dedicated to their favorite team in that it will be painted the team’s colors with furniture to match.
5. Plus, they are always talking about their team with friends and strangers, as they try to recruit others to be believers - not just a fan or a follower, but a fired up believer - of their team even to the point of purchasing a T-shirt for others to wear or taking them to a home game even if it means buying the ticket for them.

The decision we make on a daily basis is: are we just a fan, a follower or someone who is fired up? The “proof is in the pudding” as they say. John Wesley desired everyone to be fired up! As he observed those in his beloved Church of England there were far too many who were more “fans of the church and/or Christ” than anything else. I don’t know about the church people in your community, but in mine I sense that there are very few fired up enthusiasts. Oh, we have several churches that are growing rapidly, but I’m guessing that it has more to do with the preacher and/or style of music than a fired up relationship with Jesus Christ. But, that is just my guess and only time will tell if these churches can sustain their growth. As far back as I can remember there has always been a church here or a church there that could place on their sign out front, “Yes, we are THAT church!” but in time the fire seems to always go out as the ambers die.

QUOTE:

“It only takes a spark to get a fire going, And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing; That's how it is with God's Love, Once you've experienced it, Your spread the love to everyone You want to pass it on.” - Lyrics from “Pass It On”

PRAYER:

Words are too easy to repeat. What we say, gracious Father, all too often are simply that ... words. Our hearts want to believe them, but our actions and attitude get in the way of making them real. We are sorry. Please forgive us and build within us a spark that will start a mighty fire in our community. In the name of the fire starter, Jesus Christ. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
Jmartin450@tampabay.rr.com
386-795-5323

We are the fortified city of Jericho this week. Read the story in Joshua 5:13-6:21

In-person worship begins October 25th