

Richmond Hill Baptist Church  
September 25, 2011, **not a fan #2: the Open Invitation**

Prelude & Prayer Time

Call to Worship: *Lord Most High*

Welcome: Welcome to Richmond Hill. It is good to see you. We are super excited about the “not a fan” series and we are glad to have you with us. If you are a guest please fill out a Connect Card. Let’s greet one another.

Sing: *My Saviour My God, Stronger, Blessed Assurance*

Children’s Corner:

Announcements:

1. Ladies Bible Studies: *James, Magnificent Obsession, Lord is this Warfare*  
Retreat: Oct 21-22, Canmore, see table
2. Men’s Breakfast, Wed, 1886 Buffalo Café  
Study begins Wed, Sep 28, 21 Laws of Leadership by John Maxwell  
Retreat Oct 14-15, Rafter Six, Dan Gaynor
3. Long Range Plan is available at the information centre  
Questions talk to a member  
OST & Project Team Volunteers  
Voting on the LRP at the business meeting, Sunday night, 6:30 pm
4. Vision Statement

Offering & Offertory: *The Wonder of the Cross*

Sermon: **not a fan #2: the Open Invitation**

DVD: Week Two Sermon Bumper

Last week posed the question are you a fan or follower? Hopefully you have been using your follower’s journal this past week.

Today we are going to talk about **the Open Invitation**.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said: ***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23***

Today we are going to focus on this word: Anyone!

Is there anyone here today that would like a free \$20.00 bill? This is the real thing with the stripe and all.

I have a limited one time offer for you. I have a **\$20.00 Give Away for Anyone**. Is there anyone who would like to benefit from this one time \$20.00 give away?

**Anyone:** who is 20 years old who has climbed Mt Robson 20 times.

When making the invitation to potential followers Jesus invites anyone!

## 1. **Anyone is Welcome!**

There is no catch. No small print. No hidden fees. It's all laid out in this one simple verse.

***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23***

Anyone is welcome. And when Jesus said "Anyone," the crowds would have looked at his disciples and they would have known that he meant it. Anyone!

You see Jesus was a **rabbi**. A rabbi was a teacher of God's Word at the time this was the Old Testament. Rabbis had extensive knowledge of the Torah. The first five books of the Old Testament.

Rabbis had a group of students called a talmid; which is another name for disciple. This was a very exclusive group due to the intense entry level qualifications.

In fact most people could not make the cut and those who could not make the cut ended up learning a trade typically the one passed down in their family. They would work as shepherds, fisherman, stonemason, farmers, and so on.

The qualifications to be a disciple and be accepted by a Rabbi were extremely tough. If you want to go to Harvard you had better have a 4.0 GPA, or 32 on your ACT, or a 1600 on the SAT. The entrance level qualifications are tough.

To get into a talmid, the Rabbi would quiz on your knowledge of the Torah. He might ask you to recite an entire book or ask you how many times the name of the Lord was used in Leviticus chapter 11. Rabbis had to be thorough and discriminating simple because the quality of the student reflected the quality of the teacher.

Do you recall who Paul's teacher was? His teacher was Gamaliel; who was the best of the best. Which meant as student Paul was the best of the best. That is point that Paul is making in Acts 22:3.

As a rabbi, Jesus was radically different. He opened up his class to anyone including those who were ordinary and unschooled. His disciples included fisherman, political activists, and a **tax collector named Matthew**.

### **Matthew 9:9-13**

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.<sup>10</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples.*

Anyone is welcome!

## **2. Anyone means Everyone!**

But here's the struggle: though we would never say it, we don't always buy into the idea that church should be for just "anyone."

The fact is most of us like our churches just the way they are. We like church to be clean and sanitized and we not just talking about the washrooms - we're talking about the people. There are "those" people who make us uneasy when they walk into our churches.

(Take of tie and place it on the table in the shape of a heart!)

Jesus gets rid of the qualifications but the church has an endless list of unspoken and unwritten qualifications that have to do with dress, speech, and conduct. Jesus is more interested in your heart.

We often describe our churches as "my church" and we subtly forget whose church this is. It is Christ's church and he has an open invitation.

Everyone is welcome. Anyone is everyone and by eliminating the qualifications Jesus got rid of all the excuses.

## **3. No Qualifications Mean No Excuses!**

You see when Jesus invites anyone to follow him, He doesn't just break down the barriers that keep so many people from learning more about God. He also gets rid of all the excuses different people were hiding behind.

So now the tradesman had no excuse to not follow a rabbi.

Now the drop out student couldn't complain about being good enough to learn from a rabbi.

Now the mother of four couldn't say she never got a chance to be taught from a rabbi.

So what is your excuse? Too busy! Work is demanding! Trying to focus on your marriage! You kids need a lot of time and attention.

What excuse is keeping you from being a follower of Christ? Is it your past? Is it an addiction, a divorce, bankruptcy, death, or a health issue?

It easy to hide behind the tough stuff – I mean who can argue with someone who’s been through tragedy, heart ache, pain, and suffering. Just know that Jesus gets rid of all the excuses to follow him when he says: “Anyone!”

Anyone is welcome to have a relationship with Jesus. Anyone!  
Ex con? Anyone, Inmate? Murderer? Anyone! Anyone! Drug Addict? Anyone!  
Alcoholic ? Anyone! Sexual past? Anyone! Divorced? Anyone! Legalist?  
Anyone!

Now we have to be ready for what can happen when we embrace the invitation to “anyone.” If anyone can follow Christ then anyone can come to church. All of a sudden church looks different. It starts look like Matthew’s Party. A place filled with sinners who need Christ. Churches begin to adopt one criteria instead of litany of unspoken expectations. The new criteria becomes: No perfect people allowed!

Those who think they are perfect – probably are not very teachable.

We did not finish Matthew’s story. Here it is:

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.*

*<sup>10</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup> When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?” <sup>12</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>13</sup> But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”* **Matthew 9:9-13**

Jesus leaves the religious elite with a lesson. It’s the sick that need a doctor and more than sacrifice He desires mercy. He has not come to call the righteous but sinners.

Fans can’t handle the sick/unhealthy folks of this world. Fans prefer things shallow and comfortable. Followers listen the brokenness and respond in love.

Everyone is welcome. Anyone is everyone. No Qualifications Mean No Excuses!

#### **4. It’s Anyone, But it’s Everything!**

#### 4. It's Anyone, But it's Everything!

When Jesus makes his invitation, he welcomes anyone who would come after him. But he also makes it clear – that if you choose to follow you are choosing to give up everything.

Can I get a volunteer? I want you to do one thing. Follow me!

When a talmid/disciple was accepted in a rabbi's school; they would leave their homes, jobs, and family. Nothing would hold them back.

They would follow their rabbi wherever he went. If he went to the market they would go to the market. If he went to another town; they would go with him.

Those disciples, like Matthew, who chose to follow Jesus followed a rabbi who had no home, a rabbi who spent time with shameful people, a rabbi who healed people on the Sabbath, a rabbi who truly taught them the ways of God, a rabbi who would lead them to the cross.

The greatest teach who ever lived offers you the chance to become one of his students.

Everyone is welcome. Anyone is everyone. No Qualifications Mean No Excuses! It anyone; but it's everything!

DVD: Week Two Sermonette

In the DVD Kyle introduces the idea of a stain: couch, finger nail polish, one the 3 girls. Furniture, carpet, clothes all get stains. We work hard at trying to get rid of them.

I love the lyrics to the hymn: *Nothing but the Blood! What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23***

Response: I Will Follow

1. What stain is holding you back?
2. What is your excuse?
3. What is holding you back?
4. Will you follow Jesus?

Be like Matthew and throw a party and bring your friends to Jesus. The invitation is open to everyone. Find someone who needs Jesus.