

The Narrow Road

Life Paths--part 3

Matthew 7:13-20 September 21, 2014

DAY 1: The broad road

1. If you've been following Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, over and over again He lays out one of two choices. We've studied two kinds of righteousness, two different kinds of devotion, two treasures, two masters and two different ambitions.

2. This week He lays out two different roads and two different teachers.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it."

¹⁴ *"But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

3. Use Matt. 7:13-14 to fill in the chart below:

	Jesus' Way	The world's way
Gate		
Road		
Where it leads		
How many take it?		

4. Our secular world, and even many in the religious world don't like the idea of only two roads. Many like to believe that they are on a mystical third road. Here are some examples:

___ "If you're good deeds outweighs your bad deeds, you'll make it into heaven."

___ "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere."

___ "All roads head up the mountain anyway. It really doesn't matter which road you're on."

5. Let's unpack a few of Jesus' terms. Let's pick out a few examples of the "broad road."

a. "There is no absolute truth except the truth that there is no absolute truth."

b. "Just do what comes 'naturally.' Don't worry about morals."

c. "I believe in tolerance. No one should condemn you for your choices."

d. "The only sin is to be intolerant."

6. Why do you think so many people take the "broad road?"

7. What's your biggest take away from today's devotional?

DAY 2: The narrow road and narrow gate

Matt. 7:13 Enter by the narrow gate....¹⁴ ... small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

1. Why do you think the road that leads to real life is "narrow?"

2. I have been on some **narrow** roads:
 - a. Driving in the Rocky Mountains, high above steep cliffs, narrowed by guard rails.
 - b. Running up to the top of Mt. Baldy along a very narrow precipice.
 - c. Biking along a bike path with heavy auto traffic.

3. The image is suggestive of some important spiritual realities!
 - a. We need boundaries.
 - b. We need rules.
 - c. We need structure.
 - d. We need limits.
 - e. We need divine intervention and teaching.Otherwise, we can crash our "car" (our lives, families, others, finances, etc.)

4. Which of the items in question #3 do you relate to yourself? Where or how have you seen the need for boundaries, guard rails, etc.?

5. Jesus tells us to enter by the small/narrow gate? What does this suggest to you? What do you think the picture is meant to convey?

6. One thing that is implied is that we can't enter with "baggage," like secret sins, holding on to our way, clutching expectations of God or others, etc.

7. Is there anything you're holding on to, that needs to be dropped at the narrow gate?

8. Pray. Ask God to pry your hands open if need be. Give Him everything you can!

DAY 3: Two destinations

*Matthew 7:13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that **leads to destruction**, and many enter through it."*

¹⁴ *"But small is the gate and narrow the road that **leads to life**, and only a few find it."*

1. Let's compare the destinations of each road.

2. The small gate and narrow road lead to "**life**." What do you think Jesus means by this? Let's look at some parallel verses to give some insight. In each of the three verses below, underline every word that illustrates the "life" that Jesus want to give us. What are the pieces? What is important?

John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

Deuteronomy 30:16 For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

3. The other destination is "**destruction**" (Matt. 7:13). What do you think He means by that?

4. Let's look at some other verses that illustrate the "destruction" Jesus is talking about. Below, underline every word and idea that illustrates "destruction."

Deuteronomy 30:17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,

¹⁸ *I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.*

¹⁹ *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live*

²⁰ *and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

5. Jesus is saying that each roads lead to a certain destination. There is no ambiguity. After someone spends their whole life on the wide road, and some kind of destruction hits, no one can ever say, "Why did this happen to me?"

6. Destruction is not limited to this world. Hell is the place of everlasting destruction, where God removes Himself and all His influence. There won't be a speck of love, joy, happiness, goodness, or anything else that He calls "life," there.

7. To which destination are you headed? On which road are you traveling?

DAY 4: Two teachers

1. What gets us on the wrong road? Our sin nature. But there is something else that "aids and abets" that tragic choice...

Matthew 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves."

2. The world falsely believes there is no objective truth, no absolutes. "False" teachers teach false truth.

Jeremiah 23:16 This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.

¹⁷They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The LORD says: You will have peace.' And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.'"

3. What is the message of these false prophets?

4. If you are blind to your sin, and blind to the danger of coming judgment, wouldn't you want to know that?!

5. How does Jesus' warning about false prophets compare with the kinds of foolish beliefs people hold? Look back at DAY 1, questions #4 and #5.

6. To what does Jesus compare the false teachers in Matt. 7:15?

7. Why does He call them "ferocious wolves?"

8. The horrible irony of the false prophets is that they lead people to the broad road, assure them that the broad road is the place of security and peace, and then people discover the destruction at the end of the road!

9. Are you committed to God's truth no matter how difficult it is to hear or apply?

DAY 5: By their fruits you shall know them

Matthew 7:16 "By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"

¹⁷ Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."

1. You may not be able to quickly identify a false prophet if he's wearing sheep's clothing! (Mt. 7:15)

2. You can tell false prophets from true prophets by the kind of fruit they produce. (7:16)

3. Jesus asks a rhetorical question in Matt. 7:16. The law of trees is simple. Peach trees produce peaches. Apple trees produce apples. What **doesn't** happen is peach trees producing apples!

4. List everything Jesus says about bad trees in Matt. 7:16-19.

5. List everything Jesus says about good trees.

6. What does Jesus mean by fruit? Match one item in each column:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| a. A man's character-- | 1. His actions line up with God's word. |
| b. A man's conduct-- | 2. His actions line up with God's word |
| c. A man's teaching-- | 3. <i>Who he is</i> has the marks of Jesus |

7. Let's match up the narrow road with the dangers of false teaching/prophets. A follower of Christ does everything he can to stay on the narrow road.

- He knows he needs guidelines and guardrails.
 - He guards against the propensity inside him to return to the wide road of destruction.
 - He searches God's word to make sure that the teaching he's hearing lines up with God's word.
 - He keeps one eye on the end of the narrow road, where the destination is real life!
8. Finish this week by thanking God for His work in your life.