

# Valleys

## The Narrow Road – part 5

February 2, 2025

We continue our series, The Narrow Road. It is a look at the kinds of experiences we can expect as we walk the Narrow Road through life.

### **DAY 1: Narrow Road review:**

Week 1: Christian's **beginning steps**. Metaphor: **Narrow road**

The Christian life begins by walking through the small gate onto the narrow road. It begins with repenting of walking the wide road and trusting what Jesus says about the narrow road brings forgiveness of sins and the beginning of new life. Jesus' calling to us is simple: "Follow Me."

Week 2: **Honeymoon Christianity**. Metaphor: **beach**.

At conversion we become a **new creation**. We are given a new heart. We explored seven ways that we experience this newness. The imagery we're using is the newness of a California beach, with the beauty of the ocean, the waves lapping onto the sand, cliffs, palm trees, sunsets.

Week 3: A **purposeful adventure**. Metaphor: **forest**.

We begin to live out God's divine purposes. The imagery we're using is hiking through a mountain forest. Along the way, we encounter certainties and uncertainties, blessings and challenges.

Week 4: **The long climb**. Metaphor: **mountain** climbing.

We give ourselves to life's most important purposes the climb is harder than we imagine. We come to realize there are headwinds that we encounter that we must push through in order to continue the climb the mountain.

Week 5: **Soldier On!** Metaphor: **Valleys** that shake us

The valley is the contrast is with mountaintop joy. Valleys are some of the hardest times of life.

### **Types of valleys we may travel:**

In this life there are different kinds of valleys. Valleys are those times in life that "you didn't see coming."

- Valley of Trouble – the valley of loss
- Valley of the Shadow of Death – the valley of heartache
- Valley of Judgment - the valley of refining
- Valley of Dry Bones –the valley of resurrection
- Valley of Decision – What will you do?

1. What strikes you from the five valleys listed above?

## DAY 2: The Valley of Trouble, the Valley of Achor

1. After Moses died, Joshua led God's people into the Promised Land. They faced formidable and evil tribes and nations. They were greatly outnumbered and "outgunned." It was imperative that the leaders and people rely on God. After a miraculous victory over Jericho, the Hebrews suffered a defeat. They went to God to ask "Why?"

2. After they defeated Jericho, all of the plunder and treasure captured was to be offered to the Lord. No one was to profit in any way by the victory. The purpose of this was to bring laser focus to the taking of the Promised Land. They were dependent on God, period.

3. But Achan stole from the valuables and treasure taken from Jericho, and hid it in his tent.

4. Achan thought he stole with no one looking. Well, no one was looking except God. In a miraculous display of God's sovereignty, through an astounding process of elimination with two million people, Achan was discovered!

*Joshua 7:1 But the Israelites were unfaithful in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Karmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.*

5. If the people could not be trusted with something as simple as "You shall not steal," what hope did they have to defeat a whole bunch of enemies?

*Joshua 7:24 Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, **to the Valley of Achor**.<sup>25</sup> Joshua said, "Why have you brought this **trouble** on us? The Lord will bring **trouble** on you today."*

6. They stoned Achan, and the place was forever named The Valley of Achor (trouble)

7. Like Achan, there are times when we bring trouble upon ourselves. But that does not need to be the final chapter in our story! Generations later, God promised the people that the Valley of Achor did not need to be a stain upon the nation.

*Hosea 2:15 There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make **the Valley of Achor** a **door of hope**.*

*Isaiah 65:10 Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and **the Valley of Achor** a **resting place** for herds, for my people who seek me.*

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

### DAY 3: The Valley of Death

1. One of the most difficult valleys of all is the Valley of Death.
2. The Valley of Death can obviously be the death of loved ones, but it also includes the death of relationships, the death of a dream, the death of a vision, the death of a career, the death of a marriage, etc.
3. King David committed adultery with Bathsheba. Bathsheba discovered she was pregnant. Uriah, her husband, was a devoted soldier in the army, away from Jerusalem. He would know he was not the father. And then everyone would know he was not the father.
4. In an effort cover the tawdry scene up, David called for Uriah to be sent home from the front lines. But in a commitment of loyalty to his fellow soldiers Uriah did not sleep with Bathsheba. Later, King David ordered his general to include Uriah on a suicide mission. David, like Achan, thought that no one knew. But God did. God told Nathan the prophet. Nathan confronted David and David came clean. The baby died.
5. David was publicly humiliated for what he had done, and now, in awful grief over the loss of his son. Psalm 51 is a magnificent expression of confession, grief, and repentance.
6. King David had greatly rebelled in adultery, in willfully trying to hide his sin, and then creating a “murder for hire” type episode to have Uriah killed.
7. This would be a humiliating, gut-wrenching, and grief-laden time for King David.
8. David was walking in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.  
*Psalm 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for You are with me.*
9. Ironically, and beyond all wonders, what David discovered is that God was still with Him. God had not “walked out the door.” The evil David was most tempted to follow was to walk away from God. What he discovered was that God would not walk away from him!
10. In the Valley of the Shadow Death, we are most tempted to give up on God, to blame Him for allowing tragedy to happen. And even when we blame God, God will not walk away from us.
11. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

## DAY 4: The Valley of Judgment; Valley of Vision

1. God will go to any lengths needed to keep us from the destruction we are headed toward on the wide road. When we will not respond to His word, His truth, but obstinately continue onward on the road to destruction, God uses more severe methods to wake us up.

*Isaiah 48:10 I have refined you but not like silver. I have tried you in the furnace of affliction.*

2. In Isaiah 22 God's people were obstinately committed to doing life their way, not God's way. They insisted on being in control. They foolishly believed they didn't really need God—"We know what to do." They did whatever made sense to them, no matter what God taught or warned. That is how the wide road to destruction is paved! What does God do?

3. Since the people refuse to return to God, He allows nations around them to war against them.

*Isaiah 22:1 A prophecy against the Valley of Vision: What troubles you now, that you have all gone up on the roofs, <sup>2</sup> you town so full of commotion, you city of tumult and revelry? Your slain were not killed by the sword, nor did they die in battle. <sup>3</sup> All your leaders have fled together; they have been captured without using the bow. All you who were caught were taken prisoner together, having fled while the enemy was still far away.*

*<sup>4</sup> Therefore I said, "Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people."*

4. God hates judgment, but he hates human destruction more than He hates judgment. There is a short-term awfulness about judgment but a long-term gloriousness after repentance.

*<sup>5</sup> The Lord, the Lord Almighty, has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the Valley of Vision, a day of battering down walls and of crying out to the mountains. <sup>6</sup> Elam takes up the quiver, with her charioteers and horses; Kir uncovers the shield. <sup>7</sup> Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the city gates.*

5. Their "choicest valleys" were supposed to be valleys of fruitfulness, of vegetation, pastureland for their sheep and grazing land for their cattle.

6. God shows that all the preparations the people did to mitigate against judgment failed.

*<sup>8</sup> The Lord stripped away the defenses of Judah, and you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest. <sup>9</sup> You saw that the walls of the City of David were broken through in many places; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. <sup>10</sup> You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. <sup>11</sup> You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, ...*

*...but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago. <sup>12</sup> The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth.*

*<sup>13</sup> But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! "Let us eat and drink," you say, "for tomorrow we die!"*

7. They were determined to walk the wide road to destruction even in the midst of their destruction, even at death's door!

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## The Valley of Decision

1. There are times in our Christian lives where we are faced with a choice. Will we continue on the Narrow Road that leads to life or will we walk away from the Narrow Road to walk the wide road to destruction? When are we tempted to do that?

- When pain occurs.
- When others seem to benefit by walking the wide road.

*Psalm 73:1 Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. <sup>2</sup> But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. <sup>3</sup> For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

*Joel 3:1 Multitudes, multitudes in **the valley of decision!** For the day of the Lord is near in **the valley of decision.** <sup>15</sup> The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.*

*<sup>16</sup> The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.*

2. There come times in life where we cannot sit on the fence. We cannot have it both ways. In our country we have witnessed the devastation of hurricane in North Carolina, and ravages of fire in Los Angeles. The people of Israel were standing at that point, after enduring the judgment of locust plagues that devastated their crops.

3. God will not let us stay on the wide road of destruction without engaging with us in a rescue effort! All “options are on the table.”

*Isaiah 26:9 My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. **When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.***

*<sup>10</sup> But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord.*

4. And God will not allow us to ride the fence of being religious in our practices and thinking but not much different than a lost culture in our commitment to self, living for self, lost.

5. It is a false narrative that believes there are three alternatives to life. (1) Let God be the Lord of my life. (2) I’m in charge of me. (3) I’m in charge of me, but what matters is that I’m basically a good person.

6. The prophet Elijah confronts the people of his day. “I’ll worship God as long as He gives me what I want, lets me have what I have, and acts how I think He should act. That has nothing to do with Christianity. It is practical atheism, or “religious atheism.”

*1 Kings 18:21 “How long will you go limping with **two** different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him. If Baal is God, follow him.”*

*Luke 16:10 No one can serve two masters.*

7. What strikes you from this devotional?