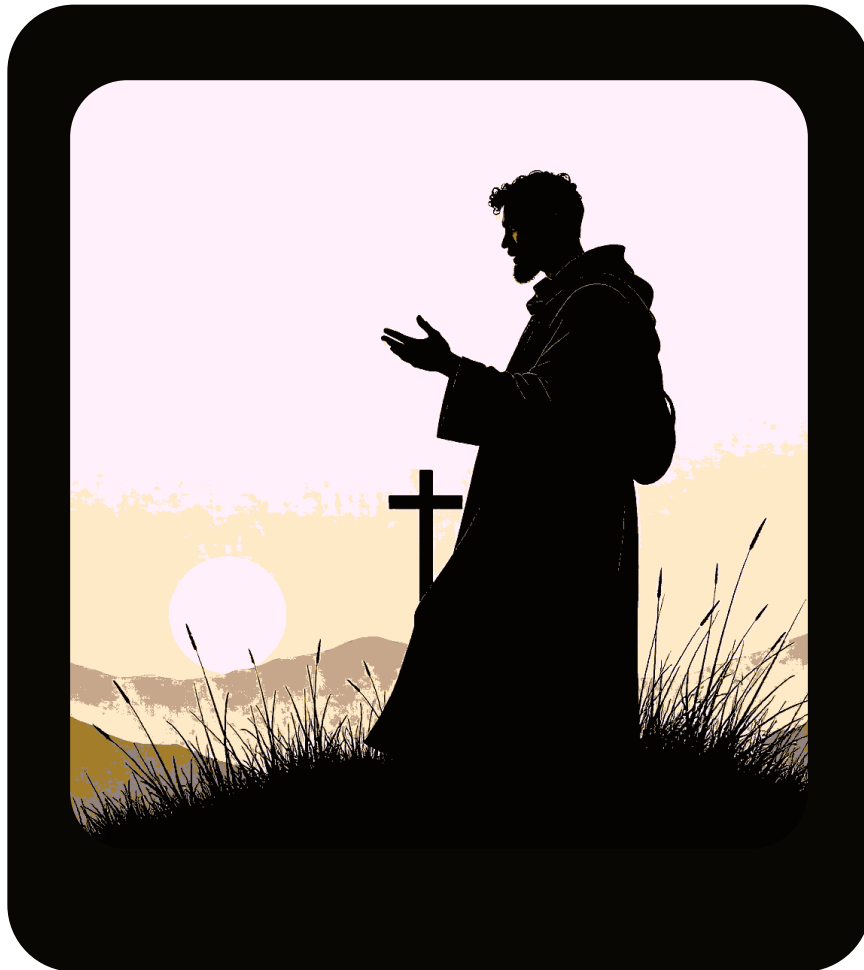


# **FINDING THE NARROW WAY**

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**THERE IS A PATH BEFORE EACH PERSON THAT SEEMS RIGHT,  
BUT IT ENDS IN DEATH.**

**(PROVERBS 14:12 NLT)**

**1. From the beginning God set the way of life before humans and warned us of the way of death.**

- (Genesis 2:16–17 ESV) And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
  - (Deuteronomy 30:19 ESV) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live.
  - (Jeremiah 21:8 ESV) And to this people you shall say: “Thus says the LORD: Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.”
- A. God narrowed the way of life he had set before Adam and Eve by commanding them to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- B. The serpent contradicted God and emphasized that God’s narrow view of life would limit Adam and Eve from an even better life.
- C. Adam and Eve chose what seemed right to them.
- (Genesis 3:3–4 ESV) ... but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” 4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.”
  - (Genesis 3:6a ESV) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes ...
- D. Because Adam chose death now everyone begins his or her existence on earth on the way of death.
- (Romans 5:12 ESV) Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.
  - (Ephesians 2:1 ESV) And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.
- E. To do nothing is to choose death.
- F. The weird part? This seems right.
- (Proverbs 14:12 NLT) There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death.

**2. Jesus commands us to enter by the gate that leads to life, 7:13-14.**

- (Matthew 7:13–14 ESV) Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14 For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

A. The command to enter by the narrow gate is a command to change the course of our lives.

Easy literally means spacious and broad; having ample space. Destruction here is so much damage as to be impossible to repair or make right again. Many means many.

B. Entering by the narrow gate is contrasted as being opposite to entering by the wide gate.

C. Those who enter by the wide gate are deceived and in reality have no change in status or direction.

D. Jesus’ command speaks to the urgency and importance of a decision that needs to be made.

E. The wide gate that opens to the easy way leads to destruction.

F. Many enter through the wide gate.

G. The way that leads to life is described as hard.

The word for hard is θλίβω [thlee·bo] which is to be narrowed or made narrow; to be constricted, tight; to compress; metaphorically to trouble, afflict, distress.

**3. The few who find the narrow gate do so because they seek God with all their heart and all their soul.**

- (Deuteronomy 4:29 ESV) But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.
  - (Jeremiah 29:13 ESV) You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.
- A. The person who is unwilling to fully turn from his way of death (repent) and fully turn to God’s way of life (confess) will never find the narrow way.
- B. Striving to enter through the narrow door is the fight within between our way and God’s way.
- (Luke 13:23–24 ESV) And someone said to him, “Lord, will those who are saved be few?” And he said to them, 24 “Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
- C. The many lose the battle to believe God above all others including themselves.

## **EXCURSUS: FOUR QUESTIONS ...**

Into what are we entering when we enter by the narrow gate? What makes the narrow gate narrow? Why is the hard way hard? Why does Jesus call them “workers of lawlessness”?

### **INTO WHAT ARE WE ENTERING?**

Enter what? Enter where? What is Jesus commanding us to do?

- I. **Jesus is speaking of entering into the kingdom of heaven.**
  - (Matthew 7:21 ESV) Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
- II. **We find the phrase “the kingdom of heaven” thirty-two times in Matthew in the ESV.**
  - (Matthew 4:17 ESV) From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

### **WHAT MAKES THE NARROW GATE NARROW?**

The word for narrow is στενός [stenos] and means narrow, as in not wide, limited or cramped space; constricted.

- III. **God’s word is what makes the narrow way narrow.**

God’s word constricts the entrance to life. The person who believes what God says to be true is the person who is able to squeeze through the narrow passageway that leads to God’s way that leads to life. Our ways and thoughts cannot pass through; our opinions and human rationalizations are left behind.

- IV. **God’s word establishes the parameters for life.**

Parameters are factors or limits which affect the way that something can be done or made; fixed quantities, variables, or characteristics that define or constrain a system; a process, or a piece of information that serves as a limit, boundary, or defining element within a particular context.

- V. **The gospel is the ultimate parameter that establishes the person’s basis for entrance.**

- (1 Corinthians 15:3b–4 ESV) ... that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

## **WHAT MAKES THE HARD WAY HARD?**

- VI. **The hard way is difficult because people cannot get their baggage through the gate—especially their baggage regarding the gospel.**

- A. The hard way is hard because it leaves no room for mere religion—what seems right to humans.
- B. Pride and self-righteousness are scraped away.
- C. Opinions and demanding attitudes do not survive the narrowness of the gate.
- D. It is extremely difficult for most people to live in the minority—they take comfort in numbers.

### **WHY DOES JESUS CALL THEM “WORKERS OF LAWLESSNESS?”**

- (Matthew 7:23 ESV) And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

- VII. **They revise God’s measurements as to the narrowness of the gate and believe they can determine who does and who does not enter the kingdom of God based on their own calculations.**

**Lawless ...** ἀνομία [anomia] – the condition of without law; because of being ignorant of it; because of violating it; contempt and violation of it.

- A. Participants on the wide road establish their own parameters as to who enters the kingdom of heaven.
- B. The false teachers of the wide road make the gate wide so that people are able to easily pass through the gate with all their opinions, human philosophies, traditions and religious beliefs intact.

## **END EXCURSUS**

### **4. Beware of false prophets, 7:15-20.**

- (Matthew 7:15–20 ESV) **Beware of false prophets**, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 **You will recognize them by their fruits.** Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 **So, every healthy tree bears good fruit**, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. 18 **A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit**, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 **Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.**
- A. First we must believe the urgent warning and accept the reality that false teachers are a threat to finding the narrow way that leads to life.

B. These people disguise themselves as those who teach the sound doctrine of the narrow way.

- (2 Corinthians 11:13–15 ESV) For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

C. We recognize them by their fruit: Healthy trees bear good fruit but diseased trees bear bad fruit.

D. We are able to recognize the person as false or true **by what they teach**.

Most clearly connected to the context here would be the person's teaching on the narrow gate—Do they preach a clear, bold, narrow gospel? Do they hold fast to and defend a clear, bold, narrow gospel? Or do they distort the gospel?

- (Galatians 1:6–7 ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
- (Galatians 2:5 ESV) To them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

E. We are able to recognize the person as false or true **by their character**.

Do we see the effect of righteousness in their lives? The fruit of the Spirit? The wisdom of God?

- (Isaiah 32:17 ESV) And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
- (Galatians 5:22–23a ESV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
- (James 3:13–18 ESV) Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. 15 This is not the wisdom that comes down from

above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

**CONCLUSION:** Many who say they are on their way to heaven are instead on their way to outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

- (Matthew 7:21–23 ESV) Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" 23 And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."

**PROFILING THE PERSON WHO THINKS HE IS GOING TO HEAVEN BUT ACCORDING TO JESUS HE IS NOT ...**

He professes Jesus to be Lord but does not do the will of his Father in heaven ... exposing his unbelief by his defiant, irreverent and hypocritical character.

He demonstrates his arrogance in believing that the service he performs in Jesus' name compensates for his utter disregard and disrespect for God's word.

So it should be no surprise that Jesus declares him to be a worker of lawlessness and a worker of evil.

- (Luke 13:27 ESV) But he will say, "I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!"

This person is so deceived to believe that he could disobey Jesus' command to enter by the narrow gate and yet still enter the kingdom of heaven and personally know and serve Jesus. **Wow!**

**Bottom Line:** Don't let this be your spiritual profile. Obey Jesus and enter by the narrow gate.

**Next Week Preview ...** This person believes that he can listen to Jesus and build his spiritual house with the words Jesus says ... without actually having to do his words. **Wow again!**