



Go Through the Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-14)

We approach life with God through one of two gates, traveling one of two roads, leading to one of two destinations. One is religious, traveling from the outside in. The other is relational, traveling from the inside out. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the two gates, the two roads, and the two destinations (Matthew 7:13-14).

The first gate is wide (Matthew 7:13). Jesus referenced *the Pharisee's outside-in righteousness*, using an analogy of wide city gates typical of the day. They had taken God's covenant community through a wide gate of rules, adding 1,500 of them to the 613 Old Testament laws. Paul said that they had created a righteousness of their own, not one that came from God (Romans 10:1-3).

The road is broad. Two thousand years ago, the main road traveling in and out of city walls spanned about 24 feet wide, an image familiar to Jesus' audience. The broad road most likely referred to *the sinful nature*. When we trust in our own man-made righteousness, we end up trusting in our own sinful nature for success. We fluctuate between legalism and license, based on our personal preferences, leaving us disconnected from intimacy with God. Paul said that those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Romans 8:5-8).

The destination is destruction. The wide gate and broad road lead to *death*. Jesus said that the Pharisees' outside-in righteousness actually closed the gates to the kingdom of heaven to others and even themselves (Matthew 23:13-14). The result is no life abundant and no life eternal.

Many are entering through it. The many are the *proud in heart*, both the legalistic and the licentious (Matthew 7:1-5, 6). Our natural state, by birth and by choice, travels through the wide gate, down the broad road, and to the destination of destruction (Genesis 8:21). Pride is the lock on the human heart.

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

Take the destruction test. Is your soul dying inside? Are you hiding from God in darkness? Are you in a hurry, becoming deaf to God? Have you become dense to God's wisdom? Do you have a divided inner being, attempting to control your own life apart from God? Are you characterized and known by deception? Are you detached from God and others? Are you imprisoned in the dungeon of withholding forgiveness? If you answered, "Yes," to any of the preceding questions, you might be traveling through the wide gate down the broad road toward destruction.

The second gate is narrow (Matthew 7:14). *Narrow* meant that only one gate led to life. In Palestine, a narrow gate is entered within one's being. Jesus described



inside-out righteousness, one that looks within to find His Spirit. *Christ is that gate* (John 10:7-9). Jesus told the Pharisees that the kingdom of God was within them, or in their midst (Luke 17:21). Describing the two gates to the Israelites who were entering the Promised Land, God said through Moses that the narrow gate was in their mouths and in their hearts (Deuteronomy 30:14). Referencing this passage, Paul told the Romans that the narrow gate within is where they would find Christ (Romans 10:4-13). He called this the mystery of the gospel—Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

The road is narrow. Two thousand years ago, there were narrow roads traveling in and out of city walls. These were the private entrances that spanned only 6 feet wide. Jesus was describing the personal relationship with His *Spirit*. Paul portrayed this as the road that led to life (Romans 8:9-11).

The destination is life. The Greek word for *life* is *zoe*, which means abundant and eternal life. Jesus said that we find both with God when we enter His narrow gate (John 10:10). Christ is our Destination of Life (John 14:6).

Few find it. They are the humble in heart (Matthew 5:3; 18:3). *The key to the narrow gate of Christ is humility*. He holds the key (Revelation 3:7) because He is humble in heart (Matthew 11:29). His half-brother James said that we should humbly receive the word of God planted in us that can save us (James 1:21).

Choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Two people read the Bible. One goes through the narrow gate, one through the wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ in order to build up others while the other hardens his heart to be puffed up with knowledge.

Two people go to church. One goes through the narrow gate, one through the wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ's mercy while the other hardens his heart hoping that others will see his religiosity.

Two people pray. One goes through the narrow gate, one through wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ's lordship while the other hardens his heart in an attempt to manipulate the Savior.

Two people give. One goes through the narrow gate, one through the wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ's generosity while the other hardens his heart desiring attention for his gift.

Choose life. Go through the narrow gate. It's a matter of the heart and the only way to experience life with God.

Street Smarts for The Restoration Road

Take the life test. Do you consistently humble your heart to the Restorer, discovering abundant and eternal life found only in Him? Does His light shine in your purpose for life? Do you listen to God daily through prayer and obedience? Do you read the Bible regularly in order to learn wisdom? Do you lean on God as you would a loving



Father, trusting Him, as you surrender control? Do you authentically lead others to Christ the Restorer? Do you love God and others with your actions? Do you freely let go of wrongs against you, forgiving others, just as in Christ God forgave you?

Conclusion

Choose life. Go through the narrow gate of Christ, not the wide gate of religion. Travel down the road led by the Spirit, not the road blinded by the sinful nature. Enjoy the destination of life abundant and life eternal with God over the destination of destruction. Pride is the lock on your heart. Humility is the key.