

## Just How Narrow is the Road?

Franklin Church of Christ  
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PM Worship

### Introduction:

Just how narrow is the road? What thoughts come into your mind when you think about that question? I began to ask myself this question two Sundays ago. Lori and I were in line at the Genghis Grill, a Mongolian stir-fry restaurant in Cool Springs. In front of us was a young man who had the text of **Matthew 7:13-14** on the back of his t-shirt.

It's interesting how Jesus teaches a spiritual principle in this passage of scripture. We all know what a road is, and we all have stories to tell about our experiences on the road. I am reminded of the time when I was just learning to drive. Where I lived in the country, I had a choice of two roads to practice for my driver's test. AA highway was a narrow, hilly to the point of nauseating, country road, and 65 was an interstate highway with shoulders. I was intimidated by AA, but felt much more comfortable driving I65.

Let's discuss this question in the context of what the Bible has to say about the narrow road.

### Discussion:

- I. How do we find the narrow road that Jesus is talking about?
  - A. Understand the nature of the road. A road takes you from where you are to where you want to go. In spiritual terms, when we leave this Earth, we want to go to Heaven.
    1. Narrow = righteous (obedient) and broad = lawless (disobedient). Righteousness is contrasted with lawlessness in **I John 3:4, 7** and **Romans 6:16**. See also **Matthew 23:27-28** (NASB).
    2. Road = lifestyle. Our road begins and ends with this physical life (**2 Corinthians 5:10**).
    3. Therefore, to paraphrase **Matthew 7:13-14**, we might say "Lawless (sinful) is the lifestyle that leads to destruction, but righteous (doing what's right) is the lifestyle that leads to life."
  - B. Develop the characteristics of a righteous lifestyle.
    1. Obedience. Rule Number 1: Obey All Rules (Barney Fife quote from the Andy Griffith show). This will be our natural response if we love Jesus Christ (**John 14:21,15:10**).
      - a. According to **Matthew 7:21**, only those who do the will of the Father in Heaven will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Notice the first half of **vs. 21**. Jesus says it's not enough to call on my name (i.e., believe), but rather more is required. Remember what the Bible says in **James 2:19**? Even the demons believe.
      - b. **Hebrews 5:7-10** reinforces this same idea stating that Jesus is the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. When we read this passage together with **John 3:16**, we must conclude that believing in Christ equals obeying Christ.
      - c. Remember the parable of the sheep and the goats (**Matthew 25:31-46**)? It teaches us that those who put their faith into action will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who don't go away to eternal punishment.
      - d. Beware of the following ideas, which are taught by some today. Be careful how you view these ideas – don't be misled from the truth.
        - i. Legalistic righteousness will not get you to Heaven, and
        - ii. Jesus Christ + a work of any kind (fill in the blank) implies that salvation must be earned and that His sacrifice serves no purpose.

I'm not suggesting that righteousness "earns" Heaven. But, rather, that Christ's sacrifice atones for the confessed sins committed by Christians who are trying to live a righteous lifestyle, but fail (**I John 1:9**). Christ's sacrifice provides a spiritual "shoulder" on the narrow road. Just remember that we're talking about the righteousness that comes from God (**Romans 6:15-23**). The Bible says that Christ's sacrifice no longer atones for the sins committed by Christians whose lifestyles have reverted back to that of lawlessness (**Hebrews 10:26-31**).
    2. Endurance. Go the distance (quote from the voice in Field of Dreams).
      - a. Run the race with eyes fixed on Jesus (**Hebrews 12:1-3**).
      - b. Endure hardship as discipline from the Lord (**Hebrews 12:7-11**).
      - c. Forget the past and look forward to the future (**Philippians 3:12-14**).
      - d. Band together with brothers and sisters in Christ (**Philippians 3:17-21**).

II. Just how narrow is the road?

- A. According to Dictionary.com, the word narrow is defined as:
1. Of small or limited width, especially in comparison with length.
  2. Limited in area or scope; cramped.
  3. Lacking flexibility; rigid: *narrow opinions*.
  4. Barely sufficient; close: *a narrow margin of victory*.
  5. Painstakingly thorough or attentive; meticulous: *narrow scrutiny*.
- B. According to **Matthew 7:13-14**, the narrow road is defined by contrasting it with the broad road.
1. Many travel the road that leads to destruction.
  2. Few find the road that leads to life.
- C. Remember some of our definitions of the word narrow? How about limited in scope, lacking flexibility; rigid, painstakingly thorough or attentive, meticulous? With these in mind, notice Jesus' teachings just two chapters back in **Matthew 5**. He sets a higher standard for Christians.
1. Hatred compared to murder (**vs. 21-22**).
  2. Lusting in your heart compared to adultery (**vs. 27-28**).
  3. Divorce leads to adultery, which is forbidden with one exception (**vs. 31-32**).
  4. A simple yes or no commanded instead of swearing (**vs. 33-37**).
  5. Commanded to overcome evil with good instead of taking vengeance (**vs. 38-42**).
  6. Commanded to love and pray for your enemies, not just your neighbors (**vs. 43-47**).
  7. Be perfect (**vs. 48**).

III. Why do so few find the narrow road?

- A. What road? The world around us doesn't even recognize that there is a road, which must be traveled to get to Heaven. Hollywood wants us to believe that most people, if not all, will go to Heaven. Notice how Hollywood portrays the idea of going to Heaven.
1. Take for example the popular series, "Touched by an Angel." This is a wonderful show about God's love for us, and you can count on a good cry from just about every episode. For those characters who die on the show, an angel lovingly escorts them into Heaven. Unfortunately, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is never mentioned leading us to believe that all get to go to Heaven.
  2. Take another example from a recent episode of "Ghost Whisperer." I caught the very last scene when I was channel surfing the other night. There was a large group of approximately 250 people standing in a field. It appeared to be late evening, almost dark, and they all appeared just to be chattering and visiting with each other. Suddenly, there was some sort of cosmic disturbance. It was like a bright light shining through mist and fog. The entire group turned and watched with amazement at what was happening. When several in the group began to see familiar faces "on the other side," I realized this scene involved the idea of "going to Heaven." As the entire group approached and enter into this cosmic disturbance of light, mist, and fog, you could hear more and more voices acknowledging the presence of loved ones on the other side. There were 5-6 people at the rear of the group who were dressed in dark clothing. Suddenly, as they were making their way toward the light, they were sucked into the ground, just like liquid through a straw. I concluded that these people had gone to Hell. Only after the entire group had disappeared do you see the wreckage of a jet airplane scattered across the field. These people were passengers on an airplane that had crashed.
- B. Which road? Think about all the religions of the world that claim to worship the true God, and that claim to know the meaning of life and what is prepared for us in the after-life, and each with its own set of beliefs, values, and practices based on the teachings of a spiritual leader. Besides Christianity, some of the most popular religions of the world include Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. And let's not forget Scientology, that religion most of us were introduced to by Tom Cruise.

- C. Right road – wrong turn. Even those who profess to be Christians may not be on the narrow road. How many groups of Christians have gone their separate ways because of doctrinal disagreements?
1. The Bible teaches us that there is only one God and Father of all, one Lord, one Spirit, one hope, one faith, one baptism, and one body. (**Ephesians 4:4-6**). Furthermore, we learn in **Deuteronomy 5:6-10** that God is a jealous God and doesn't condone the worship of other gods.
  2. God calls Himself, "I AM" (**Exodus 3:14**), and He states that all have sinned and fall short of His glory (**Romans 3:23**). In other words, none of us deserve to be with Him in Heaven.
  3. **Galatians 1:6-12** and **II Peter 1:19-21** teach us that Jesus Christ revealed the one and only Gospel to the Apostles with the help of the Holy Spirit, and that God condemns those who preach any other gospel, even angels from Heaven.
  4. God wants us to be united as a body of Christ; we are not allowed to participate in divisions (**I Corinthians 1:10-15**). Furthermore, **Romans 16:17** teaches us to stay away from those who cause division. However, we understand from scripture that division is inevitable and exists so that those of whom God approves can be easily identified (**1 Corinthians 11:19**).
- D. Wrong road. Many simply choose the broad road over the narrow road. Remember how intimidated I was by AA? If given a choice, I preferred to travel I65. Why? Because I am more comfortable on that road. It is wider and less intimidating. It has multiple lanes so that I can pass slow drivers. It makes me happy. So it is with choosing the way of the world over God's way. Some just can't overcome the temptation to hang out with their old friends (**I Peter 4:3-5**).

### **Conclusion:**

Which road are you on today? Are you on the broad road that leads to destruction? Do you want to get onto the road that leads to life? It all begins with the good news of Jesus Christ. Do you believe Jesus is God's Son? Will you begin to live your life righteously? Will you stand before us today and confess your faith in Jesus? Will you be baptized for the forgiveness of your past sins? If so, then let us help you do that today.

Have you left the narrow road? If so, let me encourage you to consider the words found in **I John 1:9**. Jesus will forgive you of your sins and remove all unrighteousness once again from your life. Please let us help you in any way we can today.