

# The Narrow Road

## The Narrow Road – Part 1

January 5, 2025

**Overview:** Jesus provides 2 stunning pictures of major contrasts: (1) two basic roads in life with multiple side roads, reflective of two basic approaches to life with (2) two predictable, ultimate outcomes.

*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. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”*

### **DAY 1: Description of the two roads**

1. Over the last fifty years we have been inundated with a litany of “all roads lead to wherever you want to go. All roads lead to heaven. It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you’re sincere. All roads lead to the top of the mountain.”
2. The assumptions of that view of life are enormous. (1) There is no significant difference in any of the roads. (2) Any road will get you to your desired destination.
3. The irony is that we don’t live that way. Consider what you do when you drive somewhere. You don’t just take any road. You are purposeful about the roads you take. If you are in a hurry, you check an app on your phone to find the fastest road. If you want a scenic drive, you take a very different road. If you are picking up a friend to take him or her to church you drive to a very specific road, and a specific address on that road. If you live in southern California and want to visit San Francisco, you don’t take I-10 East toward Texas.
4. Before GPS, this writer bought three huge books of maps for most of southern California. It’s annoying being lost, but in southern California there are places where it is dangerous to be lost.

### **Road #1: the broad road; the wide gate**

5. This is the “easy” road, the popular, the road where “everybody’s doing it,” apparently a more desirable road, a fun road, etc.

### **Road #2: the narrow road; the small gate**

6. By inference of the number of people who take this road, this road is the “road less traveled,” less popular, more demanding, unappealing, no bells and whistles.

7. What strikes you about Jesus’ vision of two roads? Which road are you on?

## DAY 2: The nature of the two roads

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

1. Jesus' use of the gate and road metaphor is meant to be suggestive and illustrative of the two most basic approaches to life:

We either will live a God-centered life or a self-centered life.

2. By "self-centered" I do not mean that guy at work that is full of himself and thinks he's God's gift to women. Nor do I mean an internet "Karen" who throws a hissy fit on an airplane over some perceived slight, that delays the flight for everyone for a long time.

3. By self-centered, I mean literally, someone who puts self at the center of their life.

4. The wide road represents the "self-centered" life where my life, my desires, my purposes, my will, and my interests are central to me and centered around me. What I want is primary. What I think I need is top priority. Everything else is secondary.

5. What is a God-centered life? A God-centered life is the opposite of the self-centered life. The God-centered life is where my life is centered around God's redemptive purposes, His teaching, His will, His interests and desires. These things are not just central to me, but they also continue to center me around what is most important. It is finding our ultimate purpose and meaning in life in vital relationship with God personally, and through our life to others.

6. The decision to walk what looks like the harder road is unintuitive to human nature. To walk the narrow road is the quintessential paradox of life!

*Mark 8:34 Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?"*

7. What strikes you about the "self-centered" life?

8. Which road are you travelling on?

### DAY 3: Why “many” people choose the wide road

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. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a **few** find it.”

1. Human nature’s default settings: Left to ourselves, we will choose our interests as primary. We are like computer software malware that not only corrupts the laptop, but worse, we don’t even know it’s corrupted!

Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, **everyone**, to **his own way**...

Proverbs 12:15 The **way of fools seems** right to them, but the wise listen to advice.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the Lord is the **beginning of knowledge**, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Ephesians 4:22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self**, which is being **corrupted** by its **deceitful desires**; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to **put on the new self, created to be like God** in true righteousness and holiness.

2. Why do so many take the wide road? On the wide road:

- a. The danger is not apparent,
- b. The consequences are not immediate but far off in the future,
- c. The naïve and foolish belief that this danger could never happen to someone like me,
- d. It appears easy,
- e. “Everybody’s” going this way,
- f. It’s the popular road,
- g. It produces immediate gratification,
- h. It “makes sense” to me because my life is centered around me and my interests as top priority,
  - i. We think we know better—than Jesus Christ!

3. Which of the reasons listed above resonated which how you used to live?

4. What course corrections do you need to make?

## DAY 4: 2 predictable and certain outcomes

*Matt. 7:13 ...For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to **destruction**, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to **life**...*

1. The first predictable outcome is “destruction” – The Greek word can be translated *ruin* or *loss* (phys., spiritual or eternal); *damnable* (-nation), *destruction*, *die*, *perdition*, *perish*, *pernicious* or *waste*.
2. The bible depicts two types of destruction: destruction in this life and destruction forever.
  - a. Destruction in this life can be the destruction of a personal life through addiction, the destruction of a marriage through pornography or an insistence on control, the destruction of personal finances through gambling or too much debt, the destruction of a family through adultery, the destruction of your health through overeating, smoking, or drinking.
  - b. Ultimate destruction is hell, a life of misery forever.
3. Have you experienced a type of destruction in your life? How so?

“...that **leads** to destruction...”

*Matt. 7:13 ...broad is the road that **leads to** destruction...*

4. Now notice how Jesus describes this. It is the road that **leads to** this outcome. In other words, you may not see the consequences of taking this way for while, or even a long while.

5. No eighteen-year-old starts drinking alcohol and believes she will become an alcoholic. No eighteen-year-old starts smoking weed and believes he will become an addict. No eighteen-year-old starts viewing porn regularly and ever imagines it may cost him his marriage. No young bride ever imagines that she may slowly discourage her husband right out of her marriage. No young couple ever imagines that going in debt for furniture or cars they shouldn't get will financially enslave them and be the spark for innumerable marital conflicts over money. No young smoker ever imagines that he will end up with lung cancer. No one eats whatever he desires and imagines that years later he will keel over from a heart attack. And certainly, very few people ever imagine that they could end up in hell.

The danger is not immediately apparent.

6. The narrow road leads to “**life**.” We think of life as physical life, but to the bible, “life” is far more than mere physical life. “Life” is that elusive “it” for which we are continually chasing and searching for. Life is personal life, that which enlivens us, puts us in touch with God and His purposes us, which gives us real meaning, which enables us to create relational life in blessed relationships. It includes inner peace and inner joy, irrespective of life's ups and downs.

7. The night I became a genuine Christian, I began to experience this new life—that sense of internal peace, and internal joy. It seemed to me that I had **wasted** the first twenty years of my life. I had chased a mirage, a whole slew of mirages.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

## **DAY 5: Psalm 1, a case study**

1. Everybody walks on ONE of two roads.
2. Left to ourselves, we take the “easy” road, the popular, self-centered road, unintuitive to us because of our sin nature.
3. Psalm 1 gives us some details regarding Matt. 7:13-14, and a case study.

### **4. Walking the narrow road to life:**

*Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers,*

*<sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.*

- a. What characterizes the man on this road?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. What outcomes does the psalmist give us of walking the narrow road?

### **5. Walking the wide road to destruction:**

*Psalm 1:4 The wicked are not so but are like chaff which the wind drives away.*

*<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

*<sup>6</sup> for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

- a. What characterizes the man on the wide road?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What outcomes does the psalmist give us of walking the wide road?
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6. As we finish our week, it's time to take personal inventory.
    - a. Have you taken a side road away from the narrow road? Are you “off-roading”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - b. Who is a trusted friend you can confide in and ask for prayer and accountability?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - c. Are there some action steps you need to take to cut yourself off from further excursions on side roads?