

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PATH Matthew 7:13-14

<sup>13</sup> "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and <sup>[b]</sup>difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.—Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)

**"Before you can impact the life of another for Christ, you must have been impacted by Christ in a personal and life-changing way"** You can't be a world changer if your world hasn't been changed by Him to start with. Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" actually teaches us how we may impact our world and the lives of those around us for Christ. We have been adding these important keys to impacting your world from Jesus's sermon. Let's review where we've been and add another one in our study as we proceed through Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." We are now up to 15 important keys to impacting your world...

### **15 Important Keys to Impacting Your World: (From the Sermon on the Mount)**

1. To impact your world for Christ you must **KNOW CHRIST PERSONALLY** = Matthew 5:1-12, "The Beatitudes"
2. To impact your world for Christ you must **REFLECT CHRIST** to the **WORLD** (others) = Matthew 5:13-16, "Salt and Light"
3. To impact your world for Christ you must **LEARN** to **LIVE** by the **WORD** of God daily = Matthew 5:17-21, "Fulfilling and Living by the Word"
4. To impact your world for Christ you must **RIGHTLY RELATE** to **OTHERS** = Matthew 5:22ff
5. To impact your world for Christ you must **GUARD YOUR HEART** = Matthew 5:27-30
6. To impact your world for Christ you must **BUILD STRONG CHRIST- CENTERED MARRIAGES** and **HOMES** = Matthew 5:31-32
7. To impact your world for Christ you must **LIVE A LIFE OF INTEGRITY** = Matthew 5:33-48
8. To impact your world for Christ you must **PRACTICE RADICAL GENEROSITY** = Matthew 6:1-4

9. To impact your world for Christ you must **BECOME A MAN OR WOMAN OF DEEP AND FERVENT PRAYER** = *Matthew 6:5-15*
10. To impact your world for Christ you must **GIVE YOURSELF AT TIMES TO THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF FASTING** = *Matthew 6:16-18*
11. To impact your world for Christ you must **NOT LET THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD HAVE TOO GREAT AN IMPACT ON US** = *Matthew 6:19-24*
12. To impact your world for Christ you must **GIVE TESTIMONY OF A FAITH BASED, WORRY FREE LIFE** = *Matthew 6:25-34*
13. To impact your world for Christ you must **AVOID A JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT TOWARD OTHERS** = *Matthew 7:1-6*
14. To impact your world for Christ you must **ASK, SEEK AND KNOCK FOR THE POWER AND ABILITY THROUGH CHRIST TO IMPACT YOUR WORLD** = *Matthew 7:7-12*
- ➡ 15. To impact your world for Christ you must **CHOOSE THE RIGHT PATH FOR YOUR LIFE** = *Matthew 7:13-14*

Isn't that essentially what we have been saying all along in this study... *"Before you can impact the life of another for Christ, you must have been impacted by Christ in a personal and life-changing way"* How can we effectively impact the lives of others around us in this fallen world? Well, you can't if you, yourself haven't chosen the right path. This study is about that path and Jesus invitation to that path.

We have acknowledged throughout this study that trying to impact our fallen world is overwhelming. The short of it is we can't... at least not on our own, not in the flesh, not without the Lord. As we have seen in previous weeks, what Jesus is calling us to is beyond us, outside of us and our ability. But through Him we can. And that involves exactly what Jesus is calling us to as be being to close out his sermon in *Matthew 7:13-14* as he tells us how, and it involves what path we are one...

*You are either on the path that goes with the flow or against the flow. If you are going against the flow it will impact others. Why? If you are going with the flow it likely won't have any impact on others. Why?*

A poem written by Sara Stowell nicely sets the stage for these verses.

### Forks in the Road by Sara Stowell

*There will always be forks in the road, decisions that have to be made.  
You will always have to bear the load, of each debt that has to be paid.*

- What is the poet comparing decisions and choices we have to make to? Why? How are our decisions/choices like a "fork in the road"? A *"fork in the road"*... *choices and decisions are like choosing a path we will travel down and often they lead in two different directions and to two different destinations/results*
- What do you feel is the meaning of the second line of the poem, "You will always have to bear the load, of each debt that has to be paid"? What is the poet saying about the choice and decisions we make in this life? Do you feel she is correct or

incorrect? Explain. *I think the poet is saying that decisions and choice we make have consequences... always. And I agree. Every choice/decision we make has an acquired result... consequence... outcome, one way or another.*

***Every fork has a destination, with consequences to each choice.  
Be wary of earthly temptation, for it may have the loudest voice.***

- What do you think the poet is saying with the line that reads, “Be wary of earthly temptation, for it may have the loudest voice”? *Perhaps that the sometimes we are tempted to take the easiest way out. The easiest and loudest voice pulling us toward a direction or choice is not always the best. I think this is a warning that we need to be careful, deliberate, discerning, wise in our choices.*

***Other paths will intersect your own, other lives will feel its effect.  
The aftermath may remain unknown, with results you may not expect.***

- What do you feel the poet may be telling us about the impact our choices can have, and how does this fit in with our study and with Jesus’ own words in Matthew 7:13-14?
- When the poets says “the aftermath may remain unknown” what do you think she is saying? Explain this in the positive as well as in the negative.

***Be careful not to be led astray, from the righteous course you once strode.  
Only through faith can you find your way, when you reach the forks in the road.***

- What are these words warning us of? What are some things that can cause us to be lead astray in the choices we make?
- What do you think she is getting at when she says, “only through faith can you find your way” and how is this consistent with Jesus words in Matthew 7:13-14?

---

This closing section of the Sermon on the Mount is a gospel application. Here are:

- (1) **Two gates**
- (2) **Two ways**
- (3) **Two destinations**
- (4) **Two groups of people**
- (5) **Two kinds of trees**
- (6) **Two kinds of fruit**
- (7) **Two groups of judgment**
- (8) **Two kinds of builders**
- (9) **Two kinds of foundations**

***What do you think Jesus is doing here with these two kinds of things?*** Jesus is drawing the line as clearly as possible between the way that leads to destruction and the way that leads to life... the kind of life that will be able to impact other and the world for Christ as opposed to those that

won't and that will rather be impacted by the world and just go along with the world... thereby finding ruin.

In our passage in Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus discusses how difficult it is to get into Christ's kingdom—it is a narrow road, there are false prophets along the way, and many are prone to self-deception about their faith.

### **How can we enter the kingdom of heaven?**

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught about the character of those in his kingdom, as seen in his list of Beatitudes.

- They are the poor in spirit, those who mourn over sin, they are the meek who submit to the Lord's leadership, they hunger for righteousness, and so on. Ultimately, this leads them to be persecuted (Matt 5:3-10).
- They practice a higher standard of righteousness than so called spiritual leaders like the Pharisees and scribes (Matt 5:20).
- While hypocritical leaders are consumed with the outward appearances of religion, true kingdom citizens focus on the inward reality.
- Their disciplines are done to be honored by God and not by people.
- They continually confess and rid themselves of sin and seek to help others do the same (Matt 7:1-6).

Here at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ gives his conclusion—the application of the sermon. He calls all listening to choose which path they will take, which kingdom they will be a part of. No one is born into God's kingdom, at least not by natural means. It matters not if one's parents were Christians, if they were baptized or dedicated as infants, no one enters until they have made a decision to enter.

Christ's command to enter does not deny the fact that salvation is by grace alone; it simply affirms the reality that those who choose God have been given grace to be saved. As the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *"For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so that no one can boast."* Even our faith—our ability to choose God—is a gift from him.

Few who have truly heard the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14, have not felt the weight of them and the decision with which they press... Which kingdom will we be a part of? There are two rival gates with two different pathways, leading to two rival kingdoms—one is the kingdom of this world and one is the kingdom of heaven.

As Christ calls us to choose one of the pathways, he gives us characteristics of each, so we can make an informed and wise decision. This is very similar to the description of two paths in Psalm 1. The Psalmist describes the pathway of the wicked which leads to destruction and the pathway of the righteous which leads to life. The righteous delight in God's Word and meditate on it all day long. They become like trees which prosper in the various seasons of life. In the beginning of the worship hymnal of Israel, the Psalmist calls worshipers to choose. True worshipers follow the pathway of the righteous and so do true disciples of Christ.

Dr. John MacArthur's comments on these two paths are helpful... he says, "There have always been but two systems of religion in the world. One is God's system of divine accomplishment, and the other is man's system of human achievement. One is the religion of God's grace, the other the religion of men's works. One is the religion of faith, the other the religion of the flesh. One is the religion of the sincere heart and the internal, the other the religion of hypocrisy and the external. Within man's system are thousands of religious forms and names, but they are all built on the achievements of man and the inspiration of Satan. Christianity, on the other hand, is the religion of divine accomplishment, and it stands alone."<sup>1</sup>

In this study, we will consider these two opposing pathways, so we can make a wise decision or wisely discern which we are on.

**Big Question: What are characteristics of the two opposing pathways?**

## THE WIDE PATHWAY

<sup>13</sup> "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it." -Matthew 7:13

*Observation Question:* Now think about this... what are characteristics of the wide pathway?

### Characteristics of the Wide Path:

1. ***The wide path is the road all begin on*** - Though Christ's parabolic saying seems to picture a person at a crossroads—making a decision between two options—it seems best to picture the person standing in front of only one gate, as the narrow gate needs to be found. All begin on the wide pathway. The rest of Scripture supports this: We are born spiritually dead and antagonistic to God (Eph 2:1, Rom 8:7). In order to be saved, we must repent and turn to God (Acts 2:38). ***Christ says that one must choose to enter the narrow gate. No decision needs to be made to enter the broad path. This is the pathway the entire world is on. We must choose to get off this path.***
2. ***The wide path is spacious and easy to follow*** - The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible says, "The broad and easy way can be followed without thought. There is plenty of space to walk in; there is plenty of space for the attractive things of the world to grow and allure; there is plenty of space for a person to wander about. It is difficult to wander off its path. The broad way is the way of the unthoughtful, the undisciplined, the lazy, the worldly, the ungodly, the materialistic, and the carnal."<sup>2</sup> This pathway is inclusive, as it includes the various views, religions, and lifestyles in this world. It is the pathway of self-achievement and works. ***\*Folks, some today have bought into the idea that there are many paths to God, and that one religion is pretty much as good as another, after all we are all trying to get to the same place... all paths lead to God. How would you answer this... helpfully!***
3. ***The wide pathway is popular*** - Christ says only few find the narrow path, and therefore, the broad way is popular and tempting. Since crowds are on it, it is very alluring. Those who don't follow it are looked down upon, considered strange, and often persecuted.
4. ***The wide pathway leads to destruction*** - Destruction does not mean those on this pathway cease to exist. They don't. All will live eternally either in damnation or blessing. Destruction refers to eternal ruin (cf. Matt 8:12, Rev 14:11, 20:10). However, this ruin doesn't just happen at the end of the pathway, it happens throughout. The world's views on marriage,

---

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1985). *Matthew* (p. 451). Chicago: Moody Press.

parenting, education, success, etc., all lead to constant ruin. God made this world based on spiritual principles. When these are denied, it causes hurt, pain, depression, and even death (Rom 8:6). The wide pathway leads to earthly and eternal ruin.

**Application Question:** Which aspects about the wide pathway stood out to you most and why?

### THE NARROW PATHWAY

<sup>14</sup> *“Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” -Matthew 7:14*

The narrow pathway refers both to the need for conversion and the continuing process of sanctification.

**Observation Question:** What are characteristics of the narrow pathway?

#### Characteristics of the Narrow Path:

1. ***The narrow path is hard to find*** - Unlike the broad way, the narrow way has to be found (v. 14). For some this is easier than others. Some are raised in Christian homes and are exposed to the gospel from a young age. Others live in places with no gospel witness. Creation witnesses to them of God’s existence and glory (Ps 19), but they lack any opportunity to hear biblical revelation. Others are exposed, as Christians live in their society, but they have either rejected it or not considered it. Whatever a person’s situation, the narrow way is not easy to find. Only few find it and even less accept it.
2. ***The narrow path is unpopular*** - In life, people typically take the path of least resistance. Therefore, people are naturally inclined to follow the broad path of the world. To find and follow the narrow path, one must turn away from the crowd—sometimes even leaving friends and family to do it (Luke 14:26). Sometimes it is a lonely pathway; though those who follow it are never truly alone because Christ is with them.
3. ***The narrow path must be entered by one’s deliberate and calculated choice*** - The great preacher Alexander Maclaren poetically declared that the side-posts of the gate to the kingdom were the first two beatitudes.<sup>3</sup> One side-post is poverty of spirit (Matt 5:3). One must come before God recognizing his spiritual bankruptcy and desperate need for God. He needs God in order to become righteous and acceptable to enter heaven. The second side-post is mourning over sin (Matt 5:4). Because this person is far from being right with God, he mourns his sin and desperate situation. It is this reality that causes the person to cry out to God for salvation. It causes him to choose to enter the kingdom of heaven’s gates. Romans 10:9-10 says because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and

---

<sup>2</sup> Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Matthew I.

<sup>3</sup> Hughes, R. K. (2001). *The sermon on the mount: the message of the kingdom* (p. 243). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

thus has salvation. To enter this narrow path, we must make a deliberate choice. We must, in faith, accept that we are sinners under God's wrath because he is holy, perfect, and just. We must cry out for God's mercy which is found in Christ. Christ bore the wrath for our sin so that we can have his righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Those who accept him shall be saved. Christ will walk with them along the narrow path of the kingdom and take them into eternity.

4. ***The narrow path is restricted because of biblical revelation*** - God's Word guides kingdom citizens. God's Word is the gate, as a person needs to hear and respond to the gospel to be saved. However, biblical revelation is also the pathway. It guides and, in some sense, restricts both the believer's actions and attitudes. God's Word keeps the believer from the broad path of the world. In John 8:31, Christ said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples."
5. ***The narrow path requires believers to leave many precious things*** - Since the path is narrow, one cannot bring everything with them.

**Some things we must leave behind:**

- (1) **We must constantly forsake our sins** - In Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul calls us "to put off the old man and put on the new" (paraphrase). We cannot live in lust, anger, pride, and other vices anymore. We must put on love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and other virtues.
- (2) **We must put off self** - As seen in the Lord's Prayer, we must cry out for God's will to be done, not only in our own lives but in the world (Matt 6:9-10). In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (paraphrase). We must give up selfish ambitions for kingdom ambitions.
- (3) **We must give up the crowd** - And many times that means, even, our friends and families. In Luke 14:26, Christ said that if anyone wants to follow him, he must hate his father, mother, brother, sister and even his own life to be his disciple. Christ declared that he didn't come to bring peace but a sword (Matt 10:34). The members of one's household would often become one's enemy. This is a sad reality, but following Christ often separates us from our loved ones.

To go down the narrow path, we must be willing to leave many precious things.

6. ***The narrow path is difficult*** - It is difficult for many reasons: We will always battle sin. We will fight against ungodly attitudes and actions. We must declare war against our body, as we pluck out our eye and cut off our arm (metaphorically) to be holy (Matt 5:29-30). Following Christ is a call to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:48). But this fight against sin is not only to conquer our own sin but to help others conquer sin as well. In Matthew 7:1-6, Christ calls for his disciples to help others to take the specks or splinters out of their eyes. This ministry is marked with a lot of pain and frustration, both at ourselves and others when failing in the battle with sin. Pain also comes as others become angry at us because of our ministry to them. As mentioned, the narrow pathway is also difficult because of the hate and persecution we will commonly experience. In the last beatitude, Christ said that kingdom citizens will be persecuted because of righteousness (Matt 5:10). They will be persecuted because of their moral beliefs. Those on the broad path hate any restrictions that hinder their comfort. To teach that adultery,



abortion, or homosexuality is a sin will cause an uproar in many societies around the world. But also, simply because one chooses to not participate in acceptable sins like sex before marriage, drunkenness, etc., many will mock believers. It is a difficult pathway. Paul said that “all who want to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tim 3:12). The broad road is easy, but the narrow way is very difficult.

7. ***The narrow path leads to life*** – Though difficult, this pathway leads to life. In fact, to enter it is to experience new life. In John 17:3, Christ said, “*this is eternal life—that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ.*” Kingdom citizens, though hated and mocked by the world, have a greater quality of life because of intimacy with God. There can be peace in the midst of a storm—joy in the midst of hardship. Christ said, “*I came that you may have life and life more abundantly*” (John 10:10 paraphrase). In fact, as we walk with Christ, we will find this difficult path easy to follow. Christ said, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.*” Matthew 11:28-30 Ultimately, those who follow this narrow path will spend eternity in the heavenly kingdom. They will rule with Christ on this earth (Matt 5:5).

***Application Question:*** Which aspects of the narrow path stood out to you most and why?

## GENERAL APPLICATIONS

***Application Question:*** What are some applications we can take from Christ’s call to pursue the narrow path?

### **3 Helpful Applications on Christ’s Call to the Narrow Path:**

1. ***Christ’s call to follow the narrow path reminds us of our need to teach people about the costs of following Christ when presenting the gospel*** - Christ was not like many modern evangelists and revivalists that boast in how simple and easy the gospel is. In Matthew 7:13-14, Christ essentially calls people to count the cost (cf. Lk 14:25-34). The narrow road is hard to find and difficult to follow. One can’t bring everything with them. He calls for people to consider this reality. However, with this hard road there is life. Yes, we must share that following Christ brings eternal life, but we also must share it is a costly road—it may even cost people their lives. Christ’s message reminds us to present the full gospel without sugar coating it. If the Lord has called them, they will respond (John 6:37).
2. ***Christ’s call to follow the narrow path reminds us of the importance of asking for a decision when presenting the gospel*** - Moses laid before Israel a blessing and a curse, as he challenged them to follow God (Deut 11:26-28). Joshua did the same as he called for Israel to choose who they would serve (Josh 24:14-15). Elijah asked Israel who they would follow—Baal or God (1 Kgs 18:21). We must not be scared to be prophetic. Yes, we must plant the seed of the gospel, but we must also ask people to decide. Peter said, “Repent and be baptized, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 paraphrase).
3. ***Christ’s call to follow the narrow path reminds us of the importance of application in our teaching and studying of the Bible*** - As mentioned, Matthew 7:13-14, marks the beginning of the conclusion and application of the Sermon on the Mount. Christ taught the character of the kingdom and its citizens and now calls for a commitment. In the same way, biblical teaching must not just disseminate knowledge. It must also challenge people to action. Paul taught Timothy to devote himself to exhortation and teaching (1 Tim 4:13). Exhortation, or



preaching, is the application and call to obedience part of the message. Similarly, as we study the Bible, we must not just aim to understand but to obey. James 1:22 says, “Be doers of the word and not hearers only” (paraphrase). We must study God’s Word to apply it to our lives and that of others. Christ’s call to enter the narrow gate gives us an example for both our teaching and study of the Bible.

***Application Question:*** What are some other applications that can be drawn from Matthew 7:13-14? What are some tips for finding applications when studying the Bible?

## CONCLUSION

There are only two pathways characterized this way:

### **The two pathways characterized:**

- (1) One leads to destruction, and the other leads to life.
- (2) One is readily found; the other must be sought for.
- (3) One is popular; the other is unpopular.
- (4) One is easy; the other is difficult.

Choose wisely, for our eternal destiny depends on this choice. Which will you choose?