

# THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

## Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

### Part 40

#### "The Narrow Gate"

##### I. Introduction

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, we are working our way through the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' description of what we call "The Normal Christian Life"; what it means to be a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we come to these verses...

##### Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV

"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. Because\* narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

##### A. Two Gates and Two Paths

1. Here Jesus tells us that every human being has to choose 1 of 2 gates to enter and 1 of 2 ways to live this human life.

**"The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place now or in the hereafter."**

**Matthew Henry**

2. Take a careful look at this powerful picture of how one artist illustrates these 2 verses:



a. On the left, we see a narrow gate that takes us on a rocky, uphill path that leads to heaven.

b. On the right, we see a broad gate with a wide, paved highway; but it leads to hell.

c. On the right you see charming palm trees; on the left you see dead trees that have been made into crosses.

3. One way is wide. It looks easy, it is paved, level and smooth but it leads to hell; the other way is narrow, very rocky, and the journey is all uphill.

### **Broad or Narrow: Which would you choose?**

4. Jesus tells us here that *many* will choose the highway to hell; but only a *few* will choose the narrow gate and the narrow way that leads to heaven.

#### **A. How Many Will Be Saved?**

1. Over the years, I have found myself wondering about the size of the population of heaven and who would be there.

\*Back in the 90's, I felt like the Lord told me that I would be surprised at some of the people who would make it to heaven. That some people I had written off would actually end up in heaven. A moment later, I felt like He said I would be even more surprised by who would *not* be there! I am not happy to tell you that the older I get, the more I think I will be surprised at who is *not* there.

a. One of the great early Christian fathers, St. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, said this back in the 5<sup>th</sup> century...

**“I do not think that many priests are saved, but that those who perish are far more numerous.”**

**St. John Chrysostom**

2. So what do you think? Will many be saved? Will few be saved? How you answer the question will tell me a lot about your basic understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

a. If you have a liberal idea of Christianity, you probably believe that in the end, God is going to give people a pass just because they did their best or because they weren't *real* bad; so you probably imagine that just about everybody will make it.

b. But if you have a biblical view of what it means to be a Christian, you know that the population of heaven will be much smaller than that. Jesus said so!

**“Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark.”**

**Matthew Henry**

3. There will be *many* untold multitudes in heaven; but they will be *few* compared to how many will not be there. Jesus Himself says so in this parallel passage in Luke's Gospel:

**And someone said to Him, "Lord, will only a few be saved?"**

**And He said to them, "*Strive to enter by the narrow door*; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**

**Luke 13:24**

a. My translation: “Yes, few will be saved. So make sure that YOU “strive” to enter by the “narrow” door! Interesting that He uses this word...

b. **The term “strive” is from the Greek word “agonizoma”, from which we get the English words agony, or agonize. It literally means “to struggle”, or to compete for a prize. (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance)**

c. My translation: If someone tells you salvation is an easy thing, they are lying to you.

4. I think I can guess what some of you are thinking: “Hold on Pastor Ray! You always taught us that salvation is ‘Christ plus nothing’; you always tell us that we are saved by grace through faith, not by our works. But this sounds like works to me!”

a. My answer is: Yes! Salvation *is* Christ plus nothing. We can add nothing to the finished work of Christ on the Cross. We *are* saved by grace through faith, not of works. All true.

b. But if you think this wonderful message of grace and mercy means that the Christian life is easy, or that getting to heaven is a “piece of cake”, I would lovingly warn you that you may be on the highway to hell.

**“If you find it easy to be a Christian, you probably aren’t one.”**

**Matt Walsh, Columnist for the Blaze**

5. Let me be speak straight. Jesus speaks of 2 “gates” and 2 “ways” of life. He says the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction. On the other hand He says the gate is tight and the road is *narrow* that leads to life.

**“Narrow” in v. 14 comes from the verb *thlibō*, meaning to experience trouble or difficulty, while “broad” in v. 13 can have overtones of prosperous.<sup>1</sup>**

**Craig Blomberg’s commentary on Matthew**

a. I believe the “gate” refers to how we come into Christ and the “way” speaks of our walk with the Lord on earth. He says both are difficult, or “narrow”.

**“The outstanding characteristic of the Christian life is ‘narrowness’. It is a narrow life and a narrow way. It is narrow at the very beginning.**

**It is not a life which at first is fairly broad, and which becomes narrower and narrower as you go on. No! The gate itself, the very way of entering into this life, is a narrow one.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

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6. I don’t know how you are reacting to these 2 verses. But to me, they are an indictment of our modern American form of evangelism.

## **II. An Indictment of American Evangelism**

### **A. The Gate is Narrow Because Christ is the Only Way to God**

**I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.**

**Jesus in John 14:6**

1. But surveys show that many American Christians have caved into the culture on the issue of Christ as the only way to God.

**“A Barna survey reports that 2/3 of American Christians believe that many religions can lead to eternal life and 50 percent of all Christians believe some non-Christian religions can lead to life everlasting. With such a mindset, no one should be surprised at tepid attempts at evangelism. And when attempted, with poor results.”**

**James Emery White**

2. I continue to meet professing Christians who go along with the ideas of New Age guru Deepak Chopra:

**“Ultimately, Christianity needs to overcome its tendency to be exclusionary and refocus on being a religion of personal insight and spiritual growth. In**

**this way Jesus can be seen for the universal teacher he truly is—someone whose teachings of compassion, tolerance, and understanding can be embraced by all of us.”**

**Deepak Chopra**

3. How many church leaders are willing to sacrifice the “narrow gate” of Christ for the kind of Christianity that can be “embraced by all of us”?

### **B. The Gate is Narrow Because True Christianity is Never Popular**

**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 Christian way of life is not popular. It never has been popular, and it is not popular today. It is unusual, exceptional, strange, and different. On the other hand, crowding through the wide gate and travelling along the broad way is the thing that everybody else seems to be doing.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

1. I have come to a place where I am wary of anything that is “popular”. I am not cynical or skeptical. Genuine revivals *can* draw large crowds. But too many times today ministers, churches and ministries that seem popular have become so because they never speak about the narrow gate or the narrow way.

2. A big crowd doesn’t mean that the preaching is biblical any more than a small crowd proves the teaching is unbiblical. Jesus Himself was wary of popularity and big crowds.

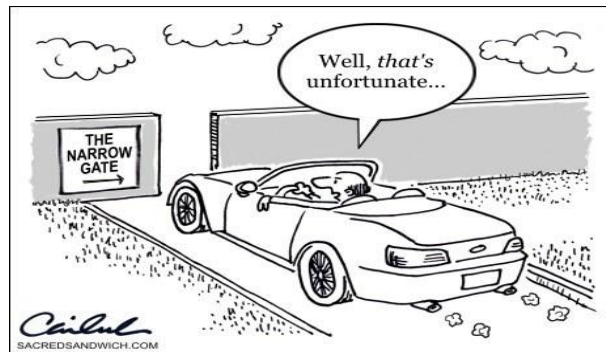
a. In John 6, He feeds the 5,000 and they all begin to follow Him. Instead of enjoying the popularity, He spends the rest of the chapter saying offensive things that whittle His congregation of 5,000 down to 12!

3. How many American churchgoers live just like the world?

**“Too often the impression is given that to be a Christian is after all very little different from being a non-Christian, that you must not think of Christianity as a narrow life, but as something most attractive and wonderful and exciting, and that you come in in crowds. It is not so according to our Lord.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

### **C. The Gate is Narrow: You Can't Bring Your Baggage**



1. Salvation is free; being His disciple will cost you everything.

#### **The Cost of Discipleship**

**"If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 27 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.**

**Luke 14:26-27 NLT**

**So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.**

**Luke 14:33 NLT**

2. I hear the objection in your mind: “If I tell people this, no one is going to choose Christ.” But I say, “What kind of converts can you get if you do not tell people this?”

3. Jesus never watered down what it would cost to follow Him:

**"But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it?"**

**Luke 14:28 NLT**

**"Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him?"**

**Luke 14:31 NLT**

**“This is always a man’s first step in becoming a Christian. He stops and realizes, that if his soul, his eternal destiny, is to be made safe, he must not only stand for a moment in the surge of that crowd, he must separate himself from it....**

**You cannot get a crowd through that turnstile all together, it only takes one person at a time.”**

**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

4. If you want to live any way you choose you’ll have a lot of company. But if you want to follow Him, you have to enter at a place so narrow you can’t bring your baggage.

5. Which gate will you choose? Which way will you walk? Broad and wide or strait and narrow? Choose wisely. Your eternity depends on it.

### **III. Conclusion**

#### **A. The Narrow Gate**

1. This message will disturb some people. It’s a serious sermon from Jesus.
2. But let me close with a testimony about what a comfort it has been to me.

**Altar Call and Prayer**