

(1) Some Opening THOUGHTS

“The road that leads to heaven is risky, lonely, and costly in this world, and few are willing to pay the price. Following Jesus involves losing your life-and finding new life in him.”
(David Platt)

“You find that the things you let go of while following Jesus were the things that were going to destroy you in the end.”
(Francis Chan)

“Jesus says, ‘I want you to follow me so fully, so intensely, so enduringly that all other attachments in your life look weak by comparison.’” (Timothy Keller)

(3) Key POINTS

SUMMARY: In this week’s message, Jesus presents a contrast between two possible directions we might choose for our lives. One direction is attractive because it is “easy,” yet it ultimately leads to destruction. The other direction is hard but actually is the way that leads to life. According to Jesus, these two potential directions are the only options we’re presented with in life. He confronts us with our need to make a choice of which of these ways we will pursue.

MAIN POINTS:

- Two ways: *hard* and *easy* (there’s no middle way)
- Two gates: *narrow* and *broad* (there’s no other gate)
- Two crowds: *small* and *large* (there’s no neutral group)
- Two destinations: *life* and *destruction* (there’s no third option)

(2) Read the TEXT Together

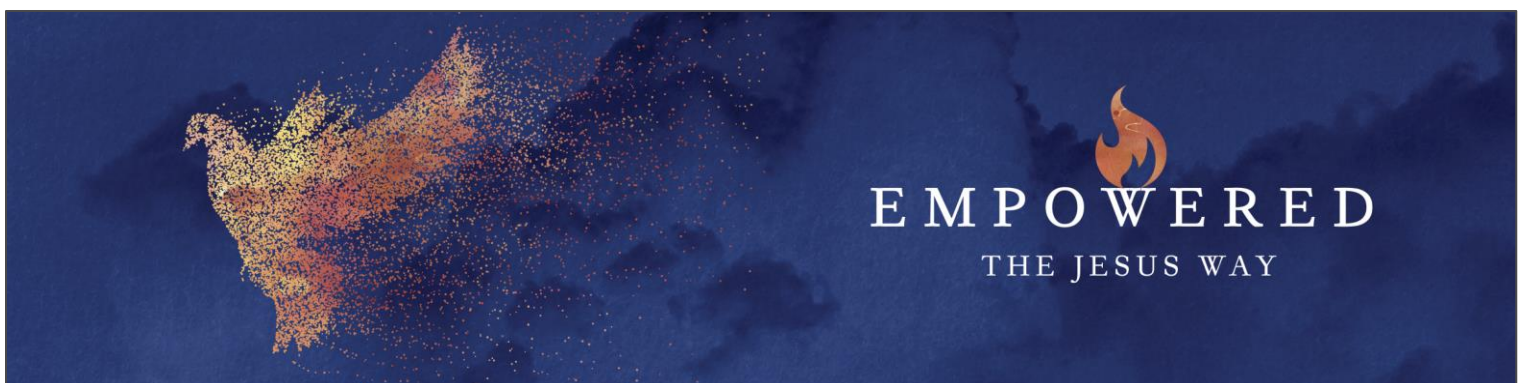
“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.”

(Matthew 7:13-14, NIV)

Other Key Passages Related to This Week’s Message:

- *Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.* (Luke 9:23, NIV)
- *Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.”* (Luke 13:23-24, NIV)
- *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* (John 10:10, NIV)
- *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6, NIV)
- *We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.* (Acts 14:22, NIV)

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(4) Looking to the WORD

- Spend a few moments contemplating Jesus' description of the two gates and two paths in Matthew 7:13-14.
 - ✓ What does he seem to be expressing in the language he uses to describe these gates and paths? What is his basic point about the differences between them?
 - ✓ What seems to be the difference between the "crowds" Jesus associates with each of these gates/paths?
 - ✓ What does Jesus have to say about the respective "destinations" to which these gates/paths lead?
 - What questions does this passage raise for you personally? As you look at what Jesus says in these verses, what would you like to have a chance to understand better?
 - Read the related verses printed on page one of this Discussion Guide. How do you see each of these verses connecting with the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14?
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(5) Looking at our WORLD

In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus essentially encourages us to consider carefully the path we pursue in life. In essence, it is a passage about choosing—and choosing wisely. Our society places lots of emphasis on choosing, as well. This shows up in how we behave as consumers. We make choices about the food brands we purchase and the clothing labels we wear. In this "consumer culture" we are encouraged to see ourselves as people who have been empowered to choose for ourselves. Meanwhile, where questions of personal identity and morality are concerned, North American society tends to champion the notion that a multiplicity of different options are all equally valid. Again, we are encouraged to choose for ourselves. These notions about "choice" can have a powerful influence upon our view of ourselves and our lives as people.

- There probably are several other significant ways that "choice" is championed in our culture. Can you think of any?
 - How does the teaching of Jesus compare with our society's notions about "choice"?
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(6) Looking at our LIVES

How would you respond to the following questions posed by Pastor Cory during the message he presented at our Connors Hill site this week?

- Of the two life trajectories described by Jesus in this passage, which more accurately describes where you find yourself currently? What evidence leads you to this conclusion?
 - As you encounter Jesus' description of the "easy" and "hard" options and where they lead, what sort of reactions does this elicit within you today? What do you suppose might be the reason that this passage generates this sort of response within you?
 - As you reflect on Jesus' invitation in this passage, what might it mean for your life today?
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(7) Looking AHEAD and PRAYING Together

Here some OnRamps for this week prepared by Pastor Chris from our Sherwood Park site:

- Ask yourself this tough question: Do I believe that following Jesus is really the only road to life?
- Re-read Jesus' sermon. And then read the story of his life through the Gospels.
- If you haven't already, place your hope in Jesus today.

Spend a few moments reflecting on these points and expressing your thoughts to the Lord in prayer.
