

Upside-Down Kingdom: The Narrow Way

Growth Group Discussion

Matthew 7:13-14

Opening Question (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Share about a decision point in your past where you faced two or more options, and the decision resulted in a significant impact on the trajectory of your life.

Read Matthew 7:13-14, and then discuss the following.

1. As visiting Pastor Henry Fuhrman mentioned on Sunday, the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount consists of Jesus calling us to consider how we respond to his teaching. In today's passage, Jesus frames the response as consisting of two "gates," or two "ways."
 - What do you think that those two "gates" or "ways" represent, in Jesus' teaching?
 - Some interpreters think that Jesus is contrasting the narrow way—which consists of keeping God's laws—with the wide way, which consists of living however one sees fit. In light of Jesus' previous words in the Sermon on the Mount, what do you make of this interpretation?
 - Pastor Henry spoke of the "narrow gate" as being Jesus, and his way of life.
 - If you have already chosen to follow Jesus, in what practical ways has that decision impacted the trajectory of your life?
 - If you have not yet chosen to follow Jesus, is there something about his "way" that is holding you back?
2. On Sunday, we first considered Jesus' **command**: "enter through the narrow gate."
 - How do you feel about the "narrowness" of the way of Jesus—in other words, the necessity that one must enter through faith in Jesus and the gospel, in order to find life?
 - Henry made use of a popular-but-flawed analogy, which imagines God as an elephant, and the major religions of the world as blind men who contact some part of that elephant. In the popular analogy, none of the major religions see the whole elephant, so they each are able to speak of only small parts of the larger truth. As the analogy goes, it would be arrogant and ignorant for any one religion to claim to see the whole truth.
 - What are the problems with this analogy?
 - Read John 1:1-5 and 1:14. What bearing do these verses have on this question?
3. Secondly, Henry spoke of the **cost** of heeding Jesus' words: "*small* is the gate and *narrow* the road that leads to life..."
 - The word "narrow" has the connotation of being constricting, or creating pressure. Have you felt this aspect of choosing to follow Jesus?
 - What has your faith in Jesus cost you? What might it cost you, as you look at your future?

- Henry shared the story of Dr. Kent Brantley, who battled the Ebola virus and eventually contracted the virus himself. After a miraculous healing, when questioned about whether his faith healed him, Brantley insisted that it was his faith in Jesus that got him sick in the first place.
 - What did Dr. Brantley mean?
 - Is there some area where God is calling you to follow him into risk and discomfort? Is anything holding you back?
- 4. Lastly, Henry spoke of the **confidence** you can have in following Jesus: the way leads to life.
 - What does the word “life” mean in this verse?
 - In what way does this promise give you confidence in the present?
 - How does the way of Jesus provide confidence or assurance that no other way can offer?
 - Henry made reference to the Panama Canal, and how one ocean (representing the way of the world) gives way to another ocean (representing life in God’s kingdom) by way of a narrow channel. In what way does this image comport with your experience of life with Jesus?

PRAYER:

- Pray for one another with respect to what has been shared in your discussion, as well as any other needs that exist in your group.