

February 19

Matthew 7:13-14 (ESV) [Jesus said,] ¹³“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy^[a] that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

When I was young, my bother-in-law Elwyn was the one who took me under his wing and taught me about hunting, fishing, working, and so much more. He is a man of great patience because I was not good at any of those things. Elwyn was an avid hunter and was excellent at it. When I first went quail hunting with him, he provided my gun, my clothes, and everything else I needed. Unfortunately, I could not hit anything. He coached me and showed me how to lead birds, but I continued to struggle. Walking in the cold for hours upon hours and never hitting anything was difficult. At times I thought it would be easier to quit. Yet, Elwyn persisted in teaching me. Others would bag their limit of birds while I returned home empty. It was challenging, exciting, but difficult. However, that all changed one day when I finally hit my first bird. I was so excited. I had made it over the hump.

For a long time, I always thought that being a Christian was an easy stroll down the narrow path with Jesus. With Him at my side, I had to worry about nothing. However, when I encountered difficulties, I began to question my walk. When tests appeared, I began to wonder if this walk was worth it. As I grew and began to understand the word better, I could not find any scriptures that described walking with Jesus as an easy stroll. Walking with Jesus is not each because, well, we are going to encounter the same trials, challenges, tests, and persecutions that Jesus encountered. After all, we are walking with Him. This revelation should not discourage us; instead, it should prepare us. What made my hitting my first bird so exciting was the difficulty I had in learning how to shoot. Jesus tells us that the gate is narrow, and the way is hard that leads to life everlasting. The “hard” aspect teaches us not to give up, not to become discouraged, to depend upon Jesus more and more each day, not to trust in our own understanding or in the wisdom of the world, and to appreciate the sacrifices of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is the way difficult? Will we encounter opposition and trials? Will people mock and hurt us? Yes, to all of those questions. Will the journey be worth it? Yes, it will.