

## Which Road Will You Take?

Matthew 7:13-14

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Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference. ("The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost)

These, of course, are the beautiful and timeless words of Robert Frost.

He doesn't tell us in his poem why one road was less traveled than the other. That is left to our imagination.

What we do know is that the author believes that he made the right choice in taking the less traveled road. He said that choice made all the difference.

All of us are faced with decisions like this through life. Shall I go this way or that way? Life presents us with diverging roads all the time. Some of our decisions are reversible; others not so much.

All of us hate living with regret. None of us want to travel the wrong road.

Many of us live and wonder what our lives would have been like if we had taken a different road. What if we had gone to a different school, chosen a different major, not broken off a

relationship, or accepted that job? What if we had gone into the military, gone to college, hadn't married so young, or built up so much debt? If we had made a different choice, what would the difference have been?

Far too many of us live with guilt, remorse, grief, and anger about our past.

We cannot seem to move past yesterday, last week, last month, last year, or even five or ten years ago.

However, like an ever-moving assembly line, new days keep coming. More choices regarding diverging paths keep being presented.

If we spend too much time lamenting the past, we will never make good choices about our future.

Jesus was nearing the end of his Sermon on the Mount. He had included some very challenging things in his teachings to the people on that hillside.

If they were going to be his disciples, they were going to have to see the Kingdom of God in a radically different way.

They had never thought that adultery could be committed in their hearts or that they should pray for their enemies. They had not thought about giving up their right of revenge, or of going the extra mile. Men were going to have to stop treating women like property.

Jesus made them stop and think about how they were using God's name loosely and how important it was to keep their promises.

They had never thought about addressing God in a personal way when they prayed or that they should forgive others of their sins as God forgave them of theirs.

They had not thought about God taking care of their needs to the point that they should cease worrying. They were challenged to stop being selfish with their possessions.

Everything Jesus said and taught them was radical. Each teaching represented a new path they could go down or not.

So when Jesus got close to the end of his message, he didn't sugarcoat it. He told them flat-out: There are two roads.

One road has a small gate and a narrow road and that road leads to life and only a few find it. The other road has a wide gate and a broad road and that road leads to destruction and a lot of people enter through it. Make your choice.

According to Jesus, all our paths lead to either a place of life or a place of destruction.

When there is a place that's difficult to get to sometimes people say, "You can't get there from here." In other words, "This road will not take you there."

People that fly frequently understand this because there are lots of destinations that do not have a direct flight to them. You must go somewhere else to catch a plane to that destination.

If we want to get to heaven, we can't get there from here.

All paths to heaven go through Golgotha. All paths to heaven go through the cross and the Garden of Gethsemane.

If we want to get to a place that Jesus has prepared for us, we can't get there by traveling the broad road.

We must choose the small gate and the narrow road.

The wide gate and the broad road lead to a place of destruction that the Bible calls hell.

Now a lot of people have decided to dismiss hell as a place that is not real. But Jesus never talked about hell metaphorically. If Jesus speaks of hell as a place, as a destination, we should be slow to dismiss it as reality.

Hell is a place of eternal destruction for those separated from God.

Jesus seems to say that there are a lot of people on the road to that terrible place.

So why are so many people on this broad road? Well, that's a great question.

1. The road to hell is easily accessible. The access ramp is easy to get on and once on the road, the temptations to stay on it are great. All you must do is think about yourself.
2. There are plenty of pleasurable experiences along the way designed to appeal to our flesh. Pleasure is not sinful but Satan uses pleasure to attract us to a lot of sin. The Bible says "There is pleasure in sin for a season."
3. There are addictive experiences along the way designed to keep us on the path. The Apostle Paul wrote, "The very thing I hate I end up doing." It can be difficult to exit the broad road. Lots of things are working against us.
4. The broad path is filled with mirrors. In other words, this path is all about self and it has little to nothing to do with the welfare of others. We may hate ourselves or love ourselves but people on this path are mostly concerned with how their decisions affect them.
5. We are comfortable taking this road because there are so many others on it. We feel like we are in good company.

6. Any contemplation of getting off the path to travel the narrow one is met with ridicule. When we exit the broad path to become a disciple of Jesus, some will ask, “Are you crazy?”

Jesus once told his disciples, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” John 10:9

What did Jesus mean?

1. *To enter through the gate means that we adopt Jesus’ teachings.*

How can you be a disciple if you do not adopt the teachings of Jesus?

We cannot be on the narrow path unless we are following what Jesus taught.

Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.” John 8:31

That’s the reason there are so few on this road. They do not want to be obedient to Jesus’ teaching.

Oh, there are a lot who give lip service to God.

But Jesus said “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

If you are on the narrow road, it means that you are trying to live out the Sermon on the Mount in your dialing living.

2. *To enter through the gate means that we accept what Jesus did on the cross to cover the debt of our sin.*

While it is true that being on the narrow road means that we are following what Jesus taught, it also means that we have accepted what Jesus did.

Jesus died for our sins. Our sins are covered by God’s grace through Jesus life, death, and resurrection.

By being the gate, Jesus reminds us that no one come to the Father except by Him.

Jesus wants us to acknowledge that it is in him that we find refuge and strength.

Jesus used the imagery of a sheep pen and a shepherd that protects the sheep to help us understand what it was like to take the narrow road.

He used the gate of the sheep pen as a metaphor. He said, “I am the gate.” He is also the shepherd that protects the sheep.

3. *To enter the gate acknowledges that we are not self-sufficient.*

We need Jesus. Jesus is our shepherd. In the 23 Psalm the Psalmist beautifully describes all that a shepherd means to the sheep.

We must begin with the truth that Jesus is the gate. Jesus said that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through him. (John 14:6)

So to get on this narrow road that leads to life, we all have to go through Jesus.

The Bible gives us lots of stories of people who found the small gate and narrow road when they met Jesus.

People like Nicodemus, Zacchaeus, Matthew, Peter, the Woman at the Well, the Apostle Paul, the man that was born blind and received his sight, Martha and Mary, the men walking home to Emmaus after the Resurrection and many more.

It is by the grace of Jesus that their life changed through their faith in him.

It was the grace of Jesus that caused him to call Zacchaeus down from the tree, a man everyone hated. but Jesus changed, and then he began a journey on the narrow road.

It was grace that caused Jesus to heal a blind man that everyone believed had been steeped in sin from birth.

But Jesus said that sin had nothing to do with his blindness and he healed the man and he began a journey on the narrow road.

It was grace that caused Jesus to speak to the woman at the well and forgive her of her sins and her life changed. She began a journey that day on a narrow road.

It was grace that caused Jesus to restore Peter to his ministry after he denied knowing him three times. After Jesus was raised from the dead, Peter began a journey on the narrow road.

It was grace of Jesus that allowed Saul the murderer to become Paul the Apostle and his life changed. He stepped off the road to Damascus and onto the narrow road of discipleship.

While the road itself isn't easy to travel at times, Jesus has said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

How can we at the same time say that the narrow road is difficult and say that the Lord's burden is light?

I think that is easy to explain.

The broad road might be easy walking, but it eventually becomes burdensome from all the mistakes, sin, and ungodly decisions we make.

The narrow road isn't that easy to travel, but God lightens our load, and through the Holy Spirit, even becomes a yokefellow with us to help us pull our load.

In Robert Frost's poem, he said that the road less traveled made all the difference.

Today, the road of discipleship is still the road less traveled, but it is the road that makes all the difference in this life and in the one to come.

Which road are you traveling?

Think about all that you've learned about the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus has set the bar high and he knows we cannot attain it. That is the reason grace is available to us. But we cannot simply appeal to grace without putting in the effort, which demonstrates to God our love and affection for Him.

Here's a quick checklist for you.

#### Narrow Road

1. Christ is the Gate. – Your decisions are made with the teaching of Jesus in mind, by the prompting of God's Spirit, after you have prayed or studied scripture. Christ remains in the center of what you are doing.
2. You try to follow the teachings of Christ. The Golden Rule is often at the center of how you decide things: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
3. When you act selfishly, you seek forgiveness.
4. You realize your salvation does not hinge on your keeping all of Jesus' commandments but is about God's grace, but you still try to keep them.

#### Broad Road

1. You make your own decisions. You go with the flow. You do what feels good and feels right.
2. You think that just because you are a good person you are going to heaven.

3. You aren't concerned so much about others but everything on your journey revolves around you.

4. You figure there are lots of ways to God besides Jesus and your way of believing is just as good as someone else's.

Now which road are you traveling?

Which road do you want to be on?

If you are on the broad road, you don't have to do anything. Just stay on it. Jesus says that everyone that's on it will end up destroyed.

If you want life, abundant and eternal life, you must be on the narrow road. You have to walk through the small gate.

You need to be intentional about telling Jesus that you want His ways to be your ways. Pray and ask that His Spirit guide your life. Accept his forgiveness for your sins. Trust in Him as the one to lead and guide your life and follow Him from this day forward.

Trust me. It will make all the difference.

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