

Go Your Own Way?

Matthew 7:13-14

Intro

When I go on a road trip, my two favorite bands to listen to are ***Fleetwood Mac*** and ***The Eagles***...

- And you may critique my musical tastes but these two bands help the miles fly by...

With that said, I would not unreservedly endorse the music of these two bands...

- Some of their songs are better than others and some of their messaging is *helpful* while other times they share things that are *false*...

For example, in 1976 Fleetwood Mac released a song called *Go Your Own Way*...

- The song is about a man who wants his love interest to stay but she wants to leave — she wants to *go her own way*...

And *going our own way* — simply going wherever we want to go and doing whatever we want to do is something that is promoted in our culture...[expand]

Now, a much better song, in my opinion, is *Desperado* by The Eagles...

Interestingly, *Desperado* shares a message that is essentially the opposite of *Go Your Own Way*...

In *Desperado*, the singer counsels a man to *stop going his own way* — to stop living life in isolation — and to come live life with others...

Here are my favorite two lines from the song...

*And freedom, oh, freedom, well, that's just some people talkin'
Your prison is walkin' through this world all alone*

Now, I share these two songs not because I want you to spend the afternoon exploring classic rock from the 70's...

- Instead, these are two simple examples of the timeless truth that as human beings we are *going somewhere* — and we must choose which way we will go...

All of us are moving forward — we are all time-travelers moving through time and space at the rate of 60sec/min — and we don't know how much time is left in our earthly lives...

- Now, we don't have a choice as to whether or not we will move forward through time, but we do get to decide the path that we will take — we can choose the road that we will walk...

And I believe that this is what the Lord Jesus is sharing in the section of the Sermon on the Mount that we will be looking into this morning...

We will only work our way through **Matthew 7:13-14** in our study but we will be making connections to many other places in Scripture during our time together...

Would you please follow along as I read our verses...

Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV)

13 "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.

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

Let's move into our first section...

1) The Way of Destruction (vs 13)

Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)

**There is a way that seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.**

This verse is a stark reminder of the biblical truth that there are ultimately only *two ways* — **God's way** and **man's way**...

- God's way is the path of life and blessing while man's way is the path of death and destruction...

And all of the disharmony, the chaos, the wars, the death and the destruction are ultimately the result of man choosing his own way in opposition to God's way...

This is how sin came into the world in the first place — Adam and Eve chose to go their own way instead of staying on the path that God had laid out for them...

This choice of paths was offered to the Israelites by Moses in...

Deuteronomy 30:19 (NKJV)

19 “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live...

Joshua reiterated this choice in...

Joshua 24:14-15 (NKJV)

14 "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Now, I am arguing that it is this same choice that the Lord Jesus is offering to us here in Matthew 7:13-14...

- And I believe that the Lord is offering this choice in the context of ***discipleship***...

You see, something that I believe is a real problem in professing Christianity is the idea that it is simply about Heaven or Hell...

- ***Believe in Jesus and you go to Heaven and escape Hell — and that's it...***

And as long as you have prayed to receive Jesus then you can keep going your own way...

- You can keep doing life however you want to because no matter what you are getting in...

[ex. Going through the wedding ceremony but choosing not to live as a married person...]

- Now, this failure of Christians to ***be disciples*** and ***make disciples*** has been referred to as "*The Great Omission*"...

And that is because it is the *omission* of *The Great Commission*...

With this in mind, would you please turn to...

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

- [expand — the Great Commission is all about *being a disciple* so that you might *make disciples* — this is the entire point of the life of a believer...]

Let's turn back to Matthew 7 as we move into vs 13...

13 "Enter by the narrow gate;

The word **Enter** here is an *imperative* — *it is a command...*

- And though it is a command, we know that commands can be disobeyed...

So a choice must be made — a choice of which way to go...

This choice reminds me of what the Lord Jesus taught in...

John 14:1-6 (NKJV) *[please turn there...]*

1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

4 And where I go you know, and the way you know."

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

I think it would be fair to say that the Lord Jesus Himself is the narrow gate — He is way of abundant life...

Let's turn back to Matthew 7:13...

Enter by the narrow gate

narrow gate — *restrictive, tight...*

Here are some thoughts on the fact that the gate is narrow...

- *The **narrow gate** may speak of the fact that only one person can get through the gate at a time...*
- *The **narrow gate** may speak of the fact that you don't accidentally pass through the gate — you must intentionally enter it...*
- *The **narrow gate** may speak of the fact that you can't take everything with you — you have to leave behind things that won't make it through the gate...*

*Now, as we continue on in vs 13 we see that there is **another** gate — a gate that the Lord Jesus **does not want us to enter...***

for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.

Please notice that — according to the Lord Jesus — there are only two gates — the narrow gate of discipleship to Christ and the wide gate of everything else...

Now, the fact that the gate is **wide** means that anyone can enter in by it — there is plenty of room for all to pass through...

- It is so wide that a person can enter it without knowing it — and there is no need to leave anything behind because anything and everything can pass through this gate...

*And the Lord Jesus tells us that the **wide gate** feeds into the **broad way**...*

broad — *spacious, roomy...*

You can take whatever you want with you through the **wide gate** and onto the **broad way** — no sacrifice necessary...

And it seems like a great deal — we can go our own way with all our stuff, doing whatever we want...

- But as you well know — if a deal seems to be too good to be true, it usually is...

And the catch is that the broad way is **deceptive** — because you can find plenty of people on the broad way who are telling you that you are doing great...

- There is no condemnation, there is no conviction — just people encouraging you to go your own way and telling you to be true to yourself...

But things on the broad way are not what they appear to be...

*Because the Lord Jesus tells us that what is waiting at the end of the broad way is **destruction**...*

for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction,

Now, I believe that there are two ways of understanding this destruction — and I believe that they are both true...

The first way is to understand this destruction as the fate of the lost person...

- ***This destruction refers to the unsaved being eternally separated from God and from all good in Hell...***

This is the person who ultimately wasted their life because they failed to enter into relationship with their Creator...

- They enter into judgment because they rejected the only One who could save them from the punishment they deserve because of their sin...

With that said, I do believe that there is a secondary interpretation/ application for the wide gate and the broad way...

I believe that it also refers to believers in Jesus Christ who refuse to enter the narrow gate of discipleship...

- Though these believers have been born again by the Holy Spirit, they choose to travel the broad way and they will experience the destruction of their life's work at the Judgment Seat of Christ...

For more on this topic, please turn to...

1 Corinthians 3:9-15 (NKJV)

9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.

10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Now, please turn to...

2 Corinthians 5:9-11 (NKJV)

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

Now, you may disagree with my interpretation that the wide gate and the broad is travelled by Christians who refuse to live as disciples of the Lord Jesus...

I understand your hesitation — but I will share this with you...

I have consistently participated in various Christian ministries since 1998 and the most common theme that I have seen is *the failure of professing Christians to take discipleship seriously...*

- And I have seen this same tendency in me — to either fail to take discipleship seriously or to want to quit on the path of discipleship...

And as we move into our second section we understand why it is so tempting to give up on a life of discipleship...

2) The Way of Life (vs 14)

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

So, the Lord Jesus makes it clear — many go in through the wide gate and few enter the narrow gate...

Now, not only is the gate narrow, but the way beyond it is difficult...

difficult way — *a narrow, confined road and therefore a source of trouble or difficulty to those using it...*

As we turn to Matthew 16:24-26, we see that the Lord Jesus wasn't shy about the challenge of discipleship...

Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV)

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Now, the way of discipleship is so difficult because we have three enemies that war against us as we seek to follow Christ...

Enemy #1 — the Devil and his demons...

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Enemy #2 — the fallen world system and the people who perpetuate it...

John 15:19 (NKJV)

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Enemy #3 — our own sinful desires — “the flesh”...

James 4:1 (NKJV)

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?

So, with all of this in mind — we would be wise accept the reality that the path of discipleship is difficult — that’s just the reality of the situation...

John 16:33 (NKJV)

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Acts 14:21-22 (NKJV)

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

So, life of discipleship is entered through a narrow gate that feeds into a difficult way — but is that a good reason to quit on it — just because it is difficult?...

- [ex. Tuesday mornings at Far West — annoying runners — they get up early to do something that they know will be difficult — because they have some goal — some telos...]

And people do this sort of thing all the time — they willingly choose to stay the course on a difficult path because they believe that it is worth it — that there is a reason for staying the course...

And I believe that this is what the Lord Jesus is communicating as we look again at Matthew 7:14...

narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life,

life — *blessed life, life that satisfies, life of being indwelt by God but not necessarily favored by circumstances...*

So, we understand that the difficult way leads to life in Heaven — that Heaven is the destination of the path of the believer...

- But we don't have to wait for Heaven to experience life — you see real life — life that counts both for now and for eternity — is lived on the difficult way of discipleship...

John 10:10 (NKJV)

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

[ex. Bonhoeffer — The Cost of Discipleship / Willard wrote on the cost of non-discipleship...]

“Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God’s overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, nondiscipleship costs you exactly that abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring. The cross-shaped yoke of Christ is after all an instrument of liberation and power to those who live in it with him and learn the meekness and lowliness of heart that brings rest to the soul.”

The good life is found on the difficult way of discipleship — God wants to give us that life but we must make the choice to enter the narrow gate and go His way...

Let’s look now at the last part Matthew 7:14...

and there are few who find it

Why is this? Why do so few find the narrow gate and the difficult way?...

- Simply because they don’t want to find it...

Jeremiah 6:16 (NKJV)

Thus says the LORD:

"Stand in the ways and see,

And ask for the old paths, where the good way is,

And walk in it;

Then you will find rest for your souls.

But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'

John 3:19-20 (NKJV)

19 “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.”

Conclusion

Now, there is so much more to say on this subject of discipleship but we need to wrap up our time together...

So I will close with one more quote from Willard and then ask you to turn to a final passage of Scripture that highlights the abundant life that is promised to the disciple...

“The word ‘disciple’ occurs 269 times in the New Testament. ‘Christian’ is found three times and was first introduced to refer precisely to disciples of Jesus—in a situation where it was no longer possible to regard them as a sect of the Jews. The New Testament is a book about disciples, by disciples, and for disciples of Jesus Christ. But the point is not merely

verbal. What is more important is that the kind of life we see in the earliest church is that of a special type of person. All of the assurances and benefits offered to humankind in the gospel evidently presuppose such a life and do not make realistic sense apart from it. The disciple of Jesus is not the deluxe or heavy-duty model of the Christian—especially padded, textured, streamlined, and empowered for the fast lane on the straight and narrow way. He or she stands on the pages of the New Testament as the first level of basic transportation in the Kingdom of God.”

With this in mind, please turn to...

Psalm 1 (NKJV)

1 Blessed is the man

**Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;**

**2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.**

**3 He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.**

**4 The ungodly are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.**

**5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.**

**6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.**