



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2017

360 DISCUSSION GUIDE



From Robert Frost's famous line "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood..." to Cormac McCarthy's award winning novel (and the film based on the novel), roads have served as vivid metaphors of the choices we make, the direction our lives take, and the hope we fix our hearts on.

Jesus uses the image of "two roads" to bring the Sermon on the Mount to a fitting conclusion.

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).

Jesus tells us that there is more at stake than simply enjoying a scenic detour or embracing one set of possibilities over others. The road we choose is a matter of life and death.

In Matthew 7:13-27, Jesus describes the roads we choose, how we know we are on the right road, and how we stay on the that road.

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CHOOSING THE RIGHT ROAD (vv. 13-14)

Jesus vividly portrays the roads we can choose from. Their character is as different as their outcome. The two gates describe how we enter the path, the two roads how we walk in the path, and the two outcomes the result we can expect from the path we choose.

VERSES 13-14: ¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

1. How would you describe the “wide gate” and the “wide road” Jesus highlights in this passage?
2. How would you describe the “small gate” and the “narrow road?”
3. When someone asks, “Is the Christian life “easy” or “difficult?” the answer is, “Yes!”
 - a. What makes coming to Christ (the small gate) and walking with Christ (the narrow road) difficult?
 - b. What makes walking with Christ easy (see Matthew 11:28-30)?
4. How does the broad road lead to destruction in both this life and the life to come?
5. How does the narrow road lead to life in both this life and the life to come?

A SURE SIGN YOU ARE ON THE RIGHT ROAD (vv. 15-23)

While Jesus’ primary concern in these verses is discerning the heart of those who teach us, they can also help us discern our own hearts as well. Simply put, we know we are on the right road if we are producing the fruit of the kingdom, which Jesus describes as, “Doing the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

VERSES 15-20 “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

VERSES 21-23 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

1. How would you describe the fruit of the kingdom (hint: the entire Sermon on the Mount is about bearing the fruit of the kingdom, see especially 5:3-10)?
2. What do you make of the fact that Jesus says “a good tree cannot bear bad fruit,” and the implications for our life in Christ?
3. According to verses 21-23, what are some unreliable indicators of authentic faith?
4. According to verse 21, what is the one true indicator?
5. What does it mean to do “the will of [the] Father who is in heaven?”

REMAINING ON THE RIGHT ROAD (vv. 24-27)

While we are mixing our metaphors a bit, we remain on the right road by building our lives on the sure foundation of Jesus’ teaching. While building our life on Jesus’ teaching requires that we think rightly about Christ and his kingdom, in the end, it is great obedience rather than great theology that establishes us in Christ.

VERSES 24-27: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

1. What is the major difference between the wise and foolish builders?
2. What are some of the things that tend to test the foundation of your life?
3. What is the ultimate test for the foundation of your life?
4. What are some steps we can take to insure we are both “hearing the words of Jesus” and “putting them into practice (see also the letter written by Jesus’ younger brother James 1:19-25)?