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Grounders:

We approach life with God through one of two gates, traveling one of two roads, leading to one of two destinations. One is religious, traveling from the outside in. The other is relational, traveling from the inside out. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the two gates, the two roads, and the two destinations (Matt. 7:13-14).

The first gate is wide (Matt. 7:13). Jesus referenced *the Pharisee's outside-in righteousness*, using an analogy of wide city gates typical of the day. They had taken God's covenant community through a wide gate of rules, adding 1,500 of them to the 613 Old Testament laws. Paul said that they had created a righteousness of their own, not one that came from God (Rom. 10:1-3).

The road is broad. Two thousand years ago, the main road traveling in and out of city walls spanned about 24 feet wide, an image familiar to Jesus' audience. The broad road most likely referred to *the sinful nature*. When we trust in our own man-made righteousness, we end up trusting in our own sinful nature for success. We fluctuate between legalism and license, based on our personal preferences, leaving us disconnected from intimacy with God. Paul said that those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God (Rom. 8:5-8).

The destination is destruction. The wide gate and broad road lead to *death*. Jesus said that the Pharisees' outside-in righteousness actually closed the gates to the kingdom of heaven to others and even themselves (Matt. 23:13-14). The result is no life abundant and no life eternal.

Many are entering through it. The many are the *proud in heart*, both the legalistic and the licentious (Matt. 7:1-5, 6). Our natural state, by birth and by choice, travels through the wide gate, down the wide road, and to the destination of destruction (Gen. 8:21). Pride is the lock on the human heart.

The second gate is narrow (Matt. 7:14). *Narrow* meant that only one gate led to life. In Palestine, a narrow gate is entered within one's being. Jesus described *inside-out righteousness*, one that looks within to find His Spirit. *Christ is that gate* (John 10:7-9). Jesus told the Pharisees that the kingdom of God was within them, or in their midst (Lk. 17:21). Describing the two gates to the Israelites who were entering the Promised Land, God said through Moses that the narrow gate was in their mouths and in their hearts (Deut. 30:14). Referencing this passage, Paul told the Romans that the narrow gate within is where they find Christ (Rom. 10:4-13). He called this the mystery of the gospel—Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

The road is narrow. Two thousand years ago, there were narrow roads traveling in and out of city walls. These were the private entrances that spanned only 6 feet wide. Jesus was describing the personal relationship with His *Spirit*. Paul described this as the road that led to life (Rom. 8:9-11).

The destination is life. The Greek word for *life* is *zoe*, which means abundant and eternal life. Jesus said that we find both with God when we enter His narrow gate (John 10:10).

Few find it. They are the humble in heart (Matt. 5:3; 18:3). *The key to the narrow gate of Christ is humility*. He holds the key (Rev. 3:7) because He is humble in



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heart (Matt. 11:29). His half-brother James said that we should humbly receive the word of God planted in us that can save us (Jas. 1:21).

Choose life (Deut. 30:19). Go through the narrow gate. It's a matter of the heart, and the only way to experience life with God.

Two people read the Bible. One goes through the narrow gate, one through the wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ in order to build up others while the other hardens his heart to be puffed up with knowledge.

Two people go to church. One goes through the narrow gate, one through the wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ's mercy while the other hardens his heart hoping that others will see his religiosity.

Two people pray. One goes through the narrow gate, one through wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ's lordship while the other hardens his heart in an attempt to manipulate the Savior.

Two people give. One goes through the narrow gate, one through the wide gate. One softens his heart to Christ's generosity while the other hardens his heart desiring attention for his gift.

This week, choose life. Go through the narrow gate of Christ, not the wide gate of religion. Travel down the road led by the Spirit, not the road blinded by the sinful nature. Enjoy the destination of life abundant and life eternal with God over the destination of destruction. Pride is the lock on your heart. Humility is the key.

In Christ,
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