

Recap from  
last week's study:

**Persistence**  
Matthew 7:7-12

- Persistence catches His ear.
- Expectation receives His response.



MATT.  
7:12-23  
NIV

# NARROW PATHWAY A HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

FOLLOW THE FRUIT. CHOOSE WISELY. ETERNITY IS AT STAKE.

12 So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

## The Narrow and Wide Gates

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.

## True and False Prophets

15 "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.

## True and False Disciples

21 "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!'

## Additional Reading

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. - Isaiah 35:8

## Call to Action - Repentant Response

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. - Isaiah 40:3

- What John the Baptist in Matt 3:2 declared, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near!". And Jesus in Matt. 4:17.

## LET'S EXPLORE MATTHEW 7:13-23

### Observe:

- **Verse 12:** for cross-reference, Read Matthew 22:37-40
- **Verses 13-14:** Jesus mercifully warns us.
  - Verse 13: What does the size of the road tell you?
  - Verse 14: How many people find it?
- **Verses 15 - 20:** Jesus describes the difference between True & Imitation followers. Those who are of Him and who are not.
  - **Verse 15:** "False Prophet" - Strong's Concordance 5578: From *pseudes* and *prophetes*; a spurious (false or fake) prophet, i.e. Pretended foreteller or religious impostor.
    - Does their inner-being match their outward appearance?
  - Verse 16: Jesus advises us to recognize what kind of tree they are.
  - Verses 17-19: He instructs us *how* to recognize.
    - **Read:** Matthew 12:33-37 and pay attention to the fact that *words* give a window to the condition of the heart.
    - **Read:** Luke 6:43-45
    - **Read:** 1 John 2:4-6, 3:6-7, 4:11 & 4:15-20
    - **Further wisdom on choosing who we allow to influence us:**
      - **Read:** 2 Tim. 3:1-5 & Galatians 5:16-26
        - Bad Trees: 2 Tim. 3:1-5 & Gal. 5:19-21 & verse 26
        - Good Trees: Gal. 5:22-23
          - **Conclusion on who really is from Christ:** Read 1 John 3:7
- **Verses 21-23:** Jesus tells us that some will frivolously assume they are in right-standing with Him.
  - Verse 21: Condition of the heart provokes outward *action*.
    - "but only the one who does the will of my Father"
      - Willingness without action isn't enough.
  - Verse 22: Some will *do*, however, without the heart of Jesus. Empty actions without His love is meaningless.
    - **Read** Luke 6:32-36 & 1 Corinthians 13:1-7
    - **Read** Matt. 22:37-38 again
- Summarizing Matthew 7:21 & 22: Inner motives influenced by the radical love of Christ will provoke outward *loving* Christ-like action. A mirror reflects accurately what it sees. Same with a godly-heart. (Matt. 7:17)
- **Verse 23:** Come back to Matthew 7:23. Let that sink in. Look inward. Repent if need be.
- **Read:** Matthew 7:13-14 and Matthew 3:2 again
- **Read & Pray:** Psalm 51:10-11 (renewed inner-being...to produce outward action)
  - Read Psalm 51:17 & Romans 2:4 <---the outward action of a renewed heart...lead people to Jesus with the love, forbearance, patience, and kindness (Fruit of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22-23) of Jesus.

## NOW, LET'S READ THE AFTER-SUMMARY TOGETHER

In Matthew 7:13-23, Jesus warns us that the path to true life is narrow and difficult, while the way to destruction is wide and easy. This isn't about rules or mere appearances; it's about choosing the kind of life we're building and carefully considering who influences us. The gate to eternal life requires holiness, commitment, love, and integrity, challenging us to move beyond the crowd's comfort and truly follow Jesus in thought, motive, and deed, obedient to *all* of His Word. Just as a tree is known by its fruit (Matthew 12:33-37, Luke 6:43-45), our lives reflect our hearts, revealing whether we are rooted in Christ or not. Fruit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in a true believer's life. It will be revealed in our actions *and* words. The condition of the heart will reveal whether it has truly been redeemed by Christ, transformed & submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit, or a fleshly heart that is led by sinful and selfish desires, hijacking spirituality as a cover for an agenda that isn't God's. The Holy Spirit will help you to recognize the difference.

Only you can control what kind of fruit you will produce. You will either be submitted to the leading of the Holy Spirit, or be influenced by Satan who gives you what your flesh craves. It is imperative that we take inventory of our lives right now. What voice(s) are you listening to? Who is influencing you? Inspect (not judge) other's fruit to recognize what kind of tree they are. Most importantly, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you? Looking inward, are your influences guiding you to produce and reflect the Fruit of the Spirit or the fruit of the flesh? Have you asked Him, or are you just going with the voices of the crowd? Paul warns us in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 that in the end-times, people will be influenced by what their flesh (itchy ears) wants to hear. Matthew warns us in Matthew 24:24 that near the end, even the elect (believers) may be deceived. The path is narrow. Few will walk on it. Choose wisely who influences you.

Jesus emphasizes the need for discernment, warning against false prophets and people who appear good but lack a true heart of love (Matthew 7:15-20). These voices may lead astray with empty words and selfish motives. This cannot be excused. The Holy Spirit will never approve of a bad tree that produces good fruit. The Bible reminds us in 1 John 4:11 and 4:15-20 that true knowledge of God is evident through love. Anyone claiming to follow Christ but lacking this love is not His ambassador. We are called to recognize the heart of Jesus in those we allow to influence us, for only those who genuinely love others reflect His Spirit.

To summarize it all...Jesus' message carries an urgent call to action (Matthew 7:13-14). The wide path, though tempting in its ease, offers only superficial fulfillment. Entering the narrow gate means committing fully to Christ, making choices that align with God's love, and resisting the lure of empty promises. This path is walked on by followers of Jesus who are obedient to Matthew 7:12, "...do to others what you would have them do to you. For this sums up the Law and the Prophets.". Though challenging, this path brings the true and abundant life God intends, something only possible when our hearts are genuinely aligned with Jesus.

If you find yourself drifting from Jesus' guidance in Matthew 7:13-23, now is the time to reflect and turn back to Him. Repentance is about more than regret; it's a heartfelt commitment to realign your life with God's heart, path and purpose. Jesus invites us to examine our hearts honestly, confess where we may have chosen convenience, ungodly influence, or empty words over a sincere faith rooted in love and integrity that is seen and felt by all around you. Even your enemies. Meditate on Psalm 51:10-12, asking God to "create in me a clean heart" and "renew a right spirit within me." Let this be a prayer for genuine transformation, seeking God's grace to restore joy and strength in your walk with Him. Embrace this moment to begin again on the narrow path, grounded in Christ's love and truth.



## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

**Jesus is returning soon for those who walk on the narrow path.  
A Highway of Holiness. Where the compromised will not go. (Isaiah 35:8)**

- Our lives are a mirror reflection of our master...Jesus or idols. Recognize fruit.
  - Do your biggest influences reflect the heart and love of Jesus towards others (even their enemies - Matt. 5:43-48)?
  - Does your voice and actions reflect the heart and love of Jesus towards others (even towards your enemies - Matt. 5:43-48)?
  - How can you be more discerning in choosing influences that align with what Jesus has been teaching us?
    - What practical steps can you take this week to limit ungodly voices and increase Christ-like voices in your life?
- In what areas of your life might you be tempted to choose the “wide path” of ease and convenience over the “narrow path” of integrity and love that Jesus calls us to?
  - What practical steps can you take this week to align your choices more closely with Christ’s teachings?
- Repentance is about realigning with God’s purpose. What is one area in your heart or habits that you feel needs renewal?
  - As you meditate on Psalm 51:10-12, how can you invite God to help you change, bringing you closer to the life Jesus describes?

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### *Closing Prayer...*

Heavenly Father, we come before You with humble hearts, seeking Your guidance and strength as we choose the path that leads to true life. Help us to resist the pull of comfort and ease that distracts us from fully following You. Open our eyes to recognize the voices and influences in our lives, and grant us the discernment to follow only those who reflect Your heart and truth to all people who they come in contact with. Lead us away from anything that keeps us from a genuine relationship with You and guide us toward a life that bears the fruit of Your love, grace, and peace.

Lord, we ask that You create in us a clean heart and renew a steadfast spirit within us. As we meditate on Psalm 51, let Your Spirit fill us with a desire to live in integrity and faithfulness, restoring our joy in following You. Give us courage and wisdom to walk the narrow path, and empower us to be a light to others. May our lives honor You and bring Your love to the world around us, even to our enemies. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

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### Homework for the next 2 weeks

- Read all of Jude (book before Revelation, only 1 chapter long) and 1 John chapters 1-4, & 5:1-12 (just before Jude - not the Gospel of John).  
**\*No Discipleship next week due to Thanksgiving. Bible study resumes on Wednesday, Dec. 4th.**