

Walk Wisely

Matthew 7:13-23



It is often said that life is a journey that requires us to constantly choose our path. The decisions we make determine whether we are on the easy path or the difficult path. The Bible uses this metaphor, too.

What about you? Do you tend to choose the solitary trail or the crowded road? The nature walk or the paved highway? The obstacle course or the relay race? The narrow ledge or the broad plain? Do you ask for directions from an expert or just choose randomly?

In this lesson, Jesus gives us advice, signs, and warnings intended to help our personal GPS choose the wisest path to Him.

Gates and Roads

Read Matthew 7:13-14.

Notice the contrasting words used in these verses: narrow (small/constricted) versus broad (wide); many versus few; life versus destruction (loss/ruin). These contrasting words are used to emphasize the immense gulf between the life of a believer and the life of a non-believer.

- There are two different Greek words both of which are translated as “narrow” in our English translations. One means a space with many close obstacles (the narrow gate). The other means constricted, crowded, full of hardship (the narrow path). How do those descriptions apply to life as a Christian?
- Why do only a few find the road to life?
- How have you experienced the narrow gate and the narrow road in your faith walk?

Fruit Trees

Read Matthew 7:15-20.

Verses 15 and 16 describe false prophets. Jesus is telling His disciples to “watch out/be cautious/pay attention” to the people around us that claim to be righteous, or knowledgeable, or prophetic.

- Why are false prophets sometimes so difficult to identify?

- How are we to recognize false prophets? What would you consider to be a sign in our society of a false prophet?

The words “good” and “bad” used in verses 17 and 18 to describe trees and fruit are the same in English but totally different adjectives in Greek. For “good” the Greek words are *agathos* for trees, meaning beneficial, and *kalos* for fruit, meaning honest, worthy, beautiful, valuable, or virtuous. For “bad” the Greek adjectives are *sapros* for trees, meaning corrupt, and *poneros* for fruit, meaning evil, diseased, or hurtful.

- Instead of good or bad, use an alternate adjective from above to fill in the blanks below (from verses 17 and 18).

Likewise, every _____(*agathos*) tree bears _____(*kalos*) fruit,

but a _____(*sapros*) tree bears _____(*poneros*) fruit.

A _____(*agathos*) tree cannot bear _____(*poneros*) fruit,

and a _____(*sapros*) tree cannot bear _____(*kalos*) fruit.

- According to verses 19-20, what are we supposed to do when we discover a false prophet? What might that mean for us?
- When Jesus repeats a phrase that generally means that it is very important. Verse 20 repeats verse 16. What is Jesus emphasizing here?

My Fruit

Read Matthew 7:21-23.

- According to these verses, how will we be evaluated on Judgment Day?
- In verse 23, Jesus will say, “I never knew you...” The Greek word *ginosko*, translated as “knew” in English, means “to be aware of, to know absolutely, to be sure of.” What kind of knowing is Jesus talking about?

Living It

Share with your group how you were able to see others in a new way last week.

This week:

Examine your fruits. How would an acquaintance evaluate you based upon your fruits? Have you opened the wrong gate? Are you walking the narrow path? Are you producing good fruit? Jot down ways you have changed direction in the past and ways you make decisions when confronted with diverging paths. List the fruits you are producing and new fruits you want to grow in your life. Be prepared to share these with your group next week.