

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Matthew 7:13-29 aloud. Since this a longer portion of Scripture divide it into pieces. For example, vv. 13-14, 15-20, 21-23, 24-29. This is a good exercise for getting several people involved.

1. Take some time to discuss what you heard in the text and sermon. What struck you from the reading of this text? Was there a word, phrase, or image that captured your attention? Why?

What was said in the sermon this morning that caught your attention? Was there a point, story, or image used that struck you? Why?

2. Jesus begins this final section with an exhortation to his disciples.

In your own words what is Jesus calling his disciples to do (13-14)?

Name some of the “wide paths” in our world that seem easy but ultimately lead to destruction.

In contrast, what does the narrow gate of Jesus look like? Describe this kind of life. What is it that makes it difficult?

Why do you think Jesus wants his disciples to do such a challenging thing as choose the narrow path?

Talk about a time in your life when you took the more difficult path of following Jesus. What did you learn? How did you find life in it?

3. Jesus gives two warnings following his exhortation (15-20, 21-23). What is the first warning?

Why are false prophets (preachers) of God so dangerous to the people of God?

Have you ever been deceived by a man or woman of God?

What happened and what did you learn from this experience?

Does this mean we should never trust our brothers and sisters in Christ?

If not, then how do we learn to be discerning of those around us?

What could we look for in order to determine a true Christian? What might be their fruits?

4. Jesus follows his first with a second warning (21-23). What is the second warning?

What about this set of verses is intimidating?

What about this set of verses should encourage us?

How might you put verse 22 in more modern language? In other words, what kinds of “proofs” might people give today to “prove” they are Christians, but really are being deceptive?

In contrast, how would you describe the “will of the Father” that Jesus calls his disciples to obey? Be specific.

Hint: A good place to start is the Sermon on the Mount.

5. Jesus closes the entire sermon with a parable (24-27). Reread this parable aloud. How does this parable relate to the entire sermon that Jesus just preached?

Why is this parable an appropriate way to end Jesus’ teachings?

What do we learn about discipleship from this parable?

What might we do to build our lives upon the life and teachings of Jesus?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Pick one thing from the Sermon on the Mount that you need to implement in your life. What is it and why did you pick that one?

Resources

Bible notes

One helpful way to think about the structure of Jesus' final section is this: Exhortation to his disciples (vv. 13-14), Warnings about the exhortation (vv. 15-23), and Explanation of his exhortation (vv. 24-27). This structure is helpful because it reveals what Jesus is calling for from his disciples—a decision to choose to live their lives in sync with the narrow way of his teaching. He is exhorting them to choose a life of conforming all they are to his life and teachings.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

"Finding The Narrow Way" Activity

Prep: Create an obstacle course through your house, yard or even both. Make sure that at least one part of the course requires the kids to make a decision about which path they will choose (one should lead to an easier path; the other should be more difficult).

Delivery: Have each child make his or her way through the course. One way to make the activity more fun would be to time each child (and make some friendly competition). Another possibility would have them maneuver through the course in pairs while holding hands. After everyone has finished then gather them together.

Read: Matthew 7:13-27.

Ask: What did you like about the obstacle course?
What did you find challenging?
How did you make your decision about which path to choose when faced with the option during the course?
Where else in life do we have to make decisions?
How do we decide what is the best decision in those situations?

Delivery: Jesus tells us that we have choices when it comes to following him. Sometimes it is tough to follow Jesus, but it is the best path to choose because it leads to life.

What can you do this week to help you remember to make decisions that help you follow Jesus more closely?

Pray: God, give us wisdom to make faithful choices this week.
Amen.



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LIFE Group Guide

Matthew 7:13-29 – The Heart of Decision

By Wilson McCoy (wilson.mccoy@gmail.com)

The theme: As Jesus concludes his Sermon on the Mount he offers a decision for his disciples. They can be the kinds of people who build their lives upon his teaching and live in sync with the kingdom or they dismiss what he says and do their own thing. They can pick the narrow path of obedience to Jesus' will or they can disobey and follow their own desires. Either way the choice is inevitable. We all must decide what we will do with Jesus and his teaching.

Over the last two weeks Kevin and Wilson explored the concluding portion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. One theme that emerged was the inevitability of decision when it comes to Jesus. Jesus calls those who claim to be disciples to begin building their lives on the solid foundation of his teaching. This is the way of life and wisdom.

Leadership tip: Once upon a time one preacher said to another preacher, "That's a great point, but what difference does it make for my life?" Both sides of this comment should be kept in mind when discussing in your group. First, take time to talk through some of the questions that focus on the insights of Jesus about how we should live. Second, spend plenty of time on the questions that bring out the relevance of Jesus' words to our lives. Both are important for a hearty time of discussion and life change.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ If you could have any super power what would it be?
- ❖ What is your favorite summer time way to stay cool?
- ❖ What are your special plans for the summer? Vacation? Work project? Learning a new hobby? What's your plan?