

Fitness Training

by Don McClure

The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God as our source of strength and grace while encouraging us to treat others with kindness and understanding.

Duration: 47:44

Scripture: Matthew 7:7-8, Matthew 7:12-14, Hebrews 3:7-13, Hebrews 3:18-19

Topics: "Narrow Path", "Faith Guidance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of a narrow gate and a narrow way. He explains that there are two paths in life - one that the world follows and another that those who know and trust God follow. The preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking God and trusting Him fully. He encourages the listeners to treat others the way they would like to be treated and to enter through the straight gate and walk the narrow way that leads to life. The sermon concludes with a prayer for guidance and a recognition of the turmoil in the world.

Transcript

Matthew chapter 7, if you'll turn to it. In verse 7, just to back up for a moment, it says, Ask and it shall be given unto you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Verse 12, now he goes on, he says, Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets. Enter ye in at the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth unto the destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there are that find it.

Father, we thank you for your word, and Lord, the wonderful things that you always have to say to us, and we'll just but open up our heart. And Lord, we ask that now that you would help us just to open our hearts, set everything else aside. Lord, may we even tonight, in one way or another, our world is in turmoil.

It seems as if the earth is being removed, the mountains are just crashing into the sea, the waters are troubled, and the mountains are swelling and shaking with the swelling thereof. But Lord, may we therefore just be able to be still and know that you're God, and those things that you have for us, that we would hear them tonight, that our lives would be strengthened, our walk with you would become stronger and stronger, our convictions deeper and deeper, our walk, our fellowship, our strength would be touched

by you, even by your word tonight. For we ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, here is Jesus, as we're picking this up, when he noticed there in verse 12, as it begins with, therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them. This is the law and the prophets. But as many people of Oppenheim said, that anytime you see the word therefore, you should always ask, what's it there for? And because the word therefore, it's basically wanting to go back in a sense, gather some of the previous thoughts just have been made, and then take those thoughts into another thought.

That's what essentially, when somebody, you know, they present an argument, and then they said, now therefore, or as if to say, in light of these things, or because of these things, that leads now to this. And the things that he has essentially been teaching here in the previous verses, is therefore, and essentially because, if a person knows what it is, that God knows all the things that we have need of before we do. That God is our Father.

He loves us. He's created us in his image. He's prepared all the ways to get to heaven, all by himself, all in his own sufficiency, his work on the cross, his wonderful life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension.

He ever lives to make intercession for us. We are complete in him. Everything that my life truly needs is found in God.

And therefore, I'm to come and to ask of him, to seek from him, to knock from him, you know, in his door. It's as if he's saying, you come, and whatever it is you have need, he says, come and ask me for it. Everyone that asketh, you'll receive.

Everyone that seeketh, findeth. To him that knocketh, it shall be opened. And here, this wonderful promise of there of God, I believe being two aspects there.

One is, is God meeting all of our needs, but even more than that, God being all of our needs. There is the, when I realize that there's two great things in life, number one is I need to be found in him. I need constantly to have my life being rooted in him, grounded in him, growing in him, maturing in him, never-endingly so, all the way through my life, to say, Lord, take me, strengthen me, draw me, seek me, you know, yourself, into a greater relationship with you.

And in those processes, he'll always be giving me himself, and not only he'll be giving me himself, but he'll give me what things that I have need of. And here is, he's essentially been saying there, he says that I'm the source, I'm the sustainer, I'm the provider. I am your heavenly father.

Your heavenly father knows all of these things. Go to your father. We looked at that word earlier in our studies.

Pater means provider and protector and sustainer. Go to your father and he'll provide. Go to your father, he'll protect.

Go to your father, he will sustain. And therefore, when I realize this, it ought to have an effect in my life, and that is, is that the world is no longer the source for my life. We come into this world and we're constantly, you know, needing from the world and constantly requiring, you know, from people or circumstances or environment to draw from it constantly in our life.

We're all the sources of life. And on one hand, in many ways, we do have much from there. I mean, parents obviously have been the channel through which God has given to his life.

Others give us education. Somebody else gives us a job and a paycheck. Other people along the road do many, many things for us and are agents, essentially, that God uses many times in our life.

But still, God looks and he says, I'm the one from which he came. All of it comes from God, as far as he's concerned. He is the source from which all the rivers, you might say, of life flow from, all the blessings of life.

And thus, he wants to be the one that we, rather than we spend our life looking at our boss, looking at our friends, looking at our parents, looking at all of these other people around there, that rather than that, we'd realize, God, you are the sovereign one. You are the one that loves me. You're the one that's created me.

You're the one that is going to take care of me. And you are sovereign. And you are powerfully, wonderfully sovereign.

And therefore, God, you are working out your plan in my life. And when I learn this great truth, when it really settles in, even though there's all sorts of people around me, I'm realizing, God, you are the one that I need to be looking to in all ways. And I realize people are not in control of my life.

Sometimes it may appear that they are, but they aren't. God's in control. Even as when Pilate, you know, of course, so well, when Jesus stood before him and he says, don't you realize I have the power, you know, to do whatever I want to you in your life.

And Jesus, of course, looked right at him. He says, you have no power at all, except to be given you from heaven. I don't know what you think about yourself, but Jesus could look right at him and say, you can't touch me without heaven.

Heaven is where all the power, it's my father. And when we realize that in our own lives, realize there are people around us, pronouncing judgments, having opinions, doing these things, hiring or firing or blessing or cursing or do all of those other things around us. But when we realize, no, God is, God is the one that's the center of it all.

People aren't making it for me and they aren't breaking it for me. Yet God is the one who's behind it all. And if I, if I don't know that, if I don't know that God is sovereign, if I don't know that he is a sustainer, if I don't know that he knows what things I have need of and he cares about it and he is going to be working in my life, if I don't know those things, I'll look to you.

I'll simply look and say, I've got, I'm gonna find somebody else therefore to take care of me, somebody else to get me out of trouble, somebody else to resolve my problems. And it'll have huge effects on my life if I don't know that the, the absolute power and love and a commitment that God has for me. And, but if I do know that, then the flip side of that is therefore I can look at my circumstances right now and realize, well God, you know all about them, don't you? Everything about them.

And God, you're working. You're working in my life right now to produce something. We may not like them.

We may not like them circumstances, but when we realize God knows all about them and he knows what is best and he is doing that right now. My business now is to know it and to respond to it. We may, as I

said, we may not always like it.

Paul, the wonderful, great, tremendous, the Apostle Paul himself, when you look at him on one hand, he knew what it was to come and ask of God and to seek God and to knock on the door. The three times he knocked and he sought after and he, and he asked God to take away this thorn in his flesh. He looked at the circumstances in his world and he went and he said, God change it.

God fix it. God do something about it. And after he asked and he sought and he knocked on God's door essentially and there's still no great, no, no change.

Then God spoke to him and he said one of the most wonderful and yet I suppose amazing things, but he said, Saul or Paul, he says my grace is sufficient for thee. And here the interesting thing is, is here on one hand Paul is there saying, God I have this thorn. I have this problem.

I've got this circumstance in my life that is not going away. Take it away. Remove it.

Remove it. In the name of Jesus, remove it. In the name of Jesus Christ, remove it.

And it didn't go. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, remove it. In the name of Jesus Christ, son of the living God, creator of heaven and earth, remove it.

And it's still there. After he prays and he no doubt fasted and other people waited upon God, remove this. Then God did the most interesting thing.

He said, I'm not taking it away, but I'll tell you what I'm going to do. My grace is sufficient for thee. I am going to give you a greater portion of grace with which to resolve it.

And you know, that's when we say, Oh no, that's not the answer I want. You know, we have problems and, and, and we just want something taken away. And if God doesn't take it away, then with the other day, at that point, we usually just system shut down.

And, and rather than realizing so often when God doesn't take a thing away, he is offering us a greater answer. I believe then taking it away because he's actually turns to Paul and he says, Paul, how about instead of fewer problems, how about greater grace? How about a greater measure of me? How about a greater work of me in your heart and in your life? How about a greater presence than you even known of me thus far? What do you think, Paul? And when you and I realize that means so often, let me ask you a question. If right now, let's say you're a hundred thousand dollars in debt and, uh, uh, and if you're a good American, you ought to at least be that much, I suppose, but, uh, you know, something, but anyway, suppose you and you don't, how am I going to pay it? And you're saying, God, take it away.

Take away this debt. Please take it away. Take it away.

Come on, God. I beg you in Jesus name. I know you can do it.

He doesn't take it away, but instead he says, hot, tell you what, how about if I give you a hundred thousand dollar raise, would you say no, take it away? Or would you say really? That means I can even handle more debt, you know, or something how that's so often what we want. Most people do not spend their life getting rid of debt. We find ways to get more capacities, to create more debt and handle more debt.

That's the good American way. Well, as a Christian, I think so often that's almost sometimes God's plan as well in the spiritual realm where they're going on, take this away, take this away, take this away. And he says, how about I just give you a greater measure of my power and my presence with which, you know, to handle all of the problems and the burdens of life.

That's what God did for Paul. And later on, Paul actually commented on this thing. And when he didn't get the answer, he realized later that had God not given him greater grace, but had he taken it away, Paul himself commented that he himself would probably have been exalted above measure.

And if God had removed the thorn, he would have had an air of pride that maybe would have been above measure and crippled his entire life. We don't know what Paul's thorn was really don't. We know he was small in stature.

We know that he had bad eyesight. We know by other comments that people made and that Paul referred to, he seemed to be a rather unattractive man to common people's thinking. It's a belief by many that his wife, if she was alive, was an unbeliever.

She's never mentioned, but it's believed to be a member of the Sanhedrin, which Paul was that he had been married. So either she had, excuse me, died or an unbeliever and that he had some sort of a speech impediment of one form or another. We just don't know exactly what it has been, but at the same time, so often God gives to us things in our life that he designed specifically to cause us to need more of him.

And instead of taking them away, he takes us into a greater knowledge of him. You look at Joseph on one hand here, God gives him these wonderful dreams for his life in these visions. And then of course his brothers end up selling him and down, you know, to the Midianites and down, they take him down to Egypt and then Potiphar's wife sells him or I mean tries to seduce him and then gets him thrown in prison.

And then he sits in there as the years go by. But each time, instead of God removing and solving the issues of the human problems in his life, God gave him a greater measure of himself. That's so often what growth is really all about.

David on one hand, though he oftentimes prayed, God, get me out of this. Is God allowed for years and years and years, 10, 15 years, Saul is chasing him over every hill and Dale and nook and cranny and cave and corner of Israel. And he's running for his life, his praying that it would end.

And instead, you know, God is doing something wonderful within David. He ended up to be one of the best runners I suppose in history. You know, he was pretty fast guy, ultimately pretty strong, pretty powerful.

And yet God conditioned him sometimes spiritually and, and made him a great warrior and put together so many facets of becoming a tremendous leader through those years and years of difficulty. And instead of God removing the trial, he gave him a grace that was greater than the trial so that he could handle and lead a nation through trials later on. And so often when we, you know, when we realize this of God's power and God's strength, William Coper, a man in a previous century, but pioneer ultimately a great spiritual awakening in England.

But he was a man who knew great suffering. He was frail described as a shuddering bundle of nerves, a man with a pinched face and eyes that were constantly swollen from chronic inflammation. The man was so disturbed by his health and other problems that he once even attempts to attempted suicide.

He actually spent time as well in an insane asylum and where all sorts of contempt and cruelty seemed to be the order of the day. But yet out of these sufferings, God brought this man, William Coper into a man who ultimately again brought about a great revival. He became a great writer of many letters in ministry in England.

But one of his great things that William Coper once wrote, he says, God moves in mysterious ways as wonders to perform. He plants his footsteps into the sea and he rides upon the storm, deep and unfathomable minds of never frailing, failing skill. He treasures up his brightest designs and he works his sovereign will.

But so often God, he has this way where he puts people through and he lets them knock and he lets them seek and he lets them ask. And he lets them while all of this thing that's sometimes a superficial thing that we are knocking and seeking and asking and wanting so desperately, knowing that if that was answered, our life would become so much better. It'd be so much easier.

Condition around us would become so much more acceptable and the environment would be so much more wonderful. And so often God doesn't change the environment, but in the process of it, he takes us into a depth or a strength or an understanding of him, of his grace, of his sufficiency, of his capacity to do something we never dreamed would happen. Sometimes God allows things in our homes.

He allows them in our marriage. He allows them in our family or children or with our health or our job or financial situation. And times there to where it almost seems unknown to God or isn't interested in it.

And yet there he's working yet there in those times, God is teaching us to learn to trust him in a wonderful way. And it isn't so much that in these times he's making our life any better. Sometimes we dislike and we were living there with these things, but they're the very same things that God is taking in our, in our life and in our home and in these experiences, taking us deeper with him.

And what Jesus here, when he says there, therefore, at this point to me, when Jesus turns in a key aspect of this in verse 12, when he says, therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you. In other words, here, Jesus, he's there. Now he takes us there after looking to God, seeking God, knocking and seeking and asking God, answering, holding, looking to God, letting him become the total sovereign sufficiency of our life.

If you can do that, he said, now what I want you to do is hold God accountable for everything in your life and hold man accountable for nothing. Let man off the hook, let him go, leave him alone. Don't be worried about it.

Essentially. That's what I believe he's saying here when he says in verse 12, therefore, all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you. Don't be worrying about men and what they're doing, what they're not doing, what they're all about, but he wants to free us up.

Now he says, just instead of looking at the people that you wish would do this and you would knock here and you seek this and you ask this from people and they aren't fixing it. You go to your wife and you say, honey, I love you, but you're not perfect yet. And, and I wish you'd get perfect, you know, or something in life would be so much more wonderful.

Me, if you're perfect, you see, because I don't intend on getting perfect. So I do need somebody that is perfect to balance me out or whatever else. But we're looking to people say, do this, or we're looking at our

children because we don't have the strength or the wisdom or the power to know what to do with them.

And so God just, then, then, then get them out of here, you know, or something and said, and God says, no, let them go. Look to me, knock and seek and ask for me in these things. And then I now want you, instead of being upset with them or holding them accountable or frustrated with them, I want you now to be able to look at all these people around you and however it is that you would like them to treat you, you treat them, let them go.

Don't worry, you know, about all of this. And until we can really begin to understand this and just so simple, it's so wonderful, but it is yet so powerful. Maybe tonight right now, you could be so happy.

You're convinced you could be happy. If one or two people would just do something for you or three or four, maybe 10, I don't know your, your personal list, but you have people on your list. We all have people in circumstances on our list.

If I could have my wish list of one or two or five, and I could knock at this door and I could seek at that one. And I could ask over there and this guy would do this and that person would do that. And that whole life would be wonderful here.

Jesus said, you come and ask me anything, everything, all things. And then as far as people are concerned, now, instead of worrying about them, I want you to just treat them however you would like them to treat you. Isn't that a wonderful thing, but you see, we can't do that if we're mad at them.

We can't do that if they aren't doing what we want them to do. We can't do that if they aren't solving our problems and we, and we want them to. But if we can look there and realize it's all solved.

I mean, right now you may have a problem with your boss, but suppose on the way home tonight, you won the lottery. I'll bet tomorrow with your boss, you'd say, you know, I knew I had something I wanted to ask you, but I can't remember it. How all of a sudden you could be so free towards people.

If somebody had something you needed or you wanted, but all of a sudden it was entirely taken care of, you wouldn't have to worry about it. And this is something that is so powerful, so important. And now, as he goes on in verse 13, he says, enter ye in at the straight gate.

For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction and many there be that go in there at. And straight is the gate. Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life and few there be that find it.

But here is something now, I think again, as you stay within the context and you realize here, I believe two things are happening. I believe he is winding down the sermon and that he is pulling some final thoughts together, but I believe the thoughts still have a tremendous flow to them in the sense that on one hand, he is wanting to tell you and I, as he's closing off the message, come and seek me for everything. Let people off the hook.

Don't worry about holding them accountable. And just simply look at the whole world. However, you'd like to have them treat you, treat them that way.

Just start doing it. And in doing now, just you enter in with your heart, with your life, with your walk, you know, at the straight gate, which in wide is the straight gate for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction. But here, you know, the thing that essentially the Lord is wanting to do now as

he's closing off the sermon is essentially saying, listen, I've told you a lot of things.

Now I want you to do them. I've told you a lot of things in this sermon, but now I want you to enter into them and I want you to follow through with them. And as if to say, don't just listen to the sermon and like it, he says, now I want you to do it.

That's what he's saying. When enter in you with your life, you go on and you follow God, you follow his Lordship. You follow the things that he has to say.

And he said, it's a call essentially to obedience. And I think sometimes, you know, to hear Jesus as people love to listen to him and say, wasn't that a tremendous sermon? He'd like to say, well, it is if you enter in. You know, I think the Lord, he's very, very used to be listened to, but he's also used to being ignored.

He's the somebody we all love to hear what Jesus has to say. But then when he says, you like it, we saw, I love it. And he says, now do it.

Oh no, I don't want to do it, but it was really good. In fact, I'm going to write it down and I'm going to put it on my refrigerator, you know, and look at it every day, you know, or something and hope other people look at it and think, I believe that, but I'm not going to do it. I mean, we're famous for that.

We're famous for ones that the Lord has looked at us and says, I'm your father. Now trust me entirely, knock, seek, ask of me, trust me, give your whole life over to me. Let people go.

I'll handle them. And now he says, now follow me, follow me into these truths. Follow me into this life, you know, and, and this is where, you know, God is so used to having masses of people that love what he has to say that they don't want to do it back in the old Testament, as it's written about in the book of Hebrews in chapter three, it says, wherefore, if you hear his voice in reference to God's, as you hear his voice, he says today, if you'll hear his voice, he says, hard, not your hearts as in the provocation, the day of the temptation, the wilderness, he says, when your father's tempted me and they proved me and they saw my work 40 years, but wherefore I was grieved with that generation.

And he says, they do always air in their heart. And he says, so they, I swore my wrath. They'll not enter into my rest because of their unbelief.

God looked at them and he says, I loved him. I ministered to him and they did nothing, but provoke me and provoke me and provoke me for 40 years. Every time I did and works and I blessed him and I fed them and water out of rocks, man out of heaven, quail out of the sky earthquakes to destroy their enemies.

And yet every time, as I revealed myself, I said, now follow me. He said, Oh no, we don't do that. And he says to us, he says that we are to be ones that we need to be following him, not just hearing his word, but doing it, coming in, giving him our lives and saying, Lord, I give you my problems.

I do want this thorn removed or whatever it is. But if you've got a dimension of your grace and your power, your sufficiency that I have not yet known that can overrule and give me the power in this, then God give it to me. Take me.

I want to follow you. I want to hear your voice and I want to enter into your rest. And I want to go through the straight gate and the narrow is the way, as he says there.

And here essentially there's Jesus is closing off the message. He's saying they're doing. And this is where we struggle.

So often, you know, we kind of do things. We come together and we sing. We have a wonderful worship time.

And here Noel sings for us tonight. Be still and know I'm God. And we just think, oh, that's so wonderful.

But are we still are we knowing he's God right now within our life or as we sing some of these wonderful songs that we sing, do we believe them or do we just sing them? We can hit the key, know the chorus, sing right along with everybody else. Not as we sing him, isn't that beautiful? But do we believe them? Do we follow them? We, you know, the church, sometimes we get together and we sing, you know, standing on the promises of God, you know, I cannot fail and things, you know, we don't get to get standing, standing, standing on the promises of God, my savior, and we sing it all through. Are we standing on the promises? No, but it's a wonderful song.

You know, we should change the words. I think that sitting on the premises, you know, or something instead, you know, and, you know, or something that is what we ought to just do and then just put it in there. I'm not standing on it.

I'm just sitting on the premises, occupying space, nodding at it, but not doing here. Jesus says, do it. Follow me.

Enter into it. The amazing things about us is like with the children of Israel, as they went so far, they actually heard so much and they were so familiar with God's voice and with God's work and with God's revelations of himself that they actually made assumptions that they were just fine. And at the same time, they had a hardened heart of unbelief because their life was not following.

They were not hearing his voice. They hardened their hearts and they provoke God through unbelief, lack of obedience to go into the land or to trust him. And many times we can be like that.

On one hand, we kind of believe, but yet our life doesn't follow. We're kind of like the story of the fellow that went into a bar and he asked the bartender, he says, I want three shots of whiskey. They line up the three shots of whiskey and he lifts one up and drinks it and lifts the second, drinks it, lifts the third, drinks it.

Well, he came in every Friday at three o'clock, ordered up these three and sat over there in the corner and drank these three shots of whiskey. And finally, one time the bartender, he was so interested, he said, can you tell me, I've never seen anybody do what you do. You come in here every Friday at three and have three shots of whiskey.

And he said, well, I had two fellows. We went through the war together and we were such great buddies and we used to go out and have a whiskey together. Well, then we all went our separate ways, but in honor of each other, wherever we are in the world at three o'clock every Friday, we all gather wherever we are, though we're not together, line up three shots and lift one to each one of us, you know, and wherever we are thinking about each other and what we mean, he says, oh, that's nice.

He thought it was. But anyway, the then one day the fellow kept coming in, but this time he ordered two. And then for you notice him for a few weeks and Friday at three, he was only getting two.

And, you know, it didn't take long. The bartender realized, well, one of his buddies must have died. And he goes to him and he said, you know, I noticed you're only getting two now.

And he said, yeah. And he said, I assume one of your friends died. He says, no, no, that didn't happen.

Actually, what happened, I became a Christian. And so I gave up drinking for myself. But in some way or another, we're kind of like that.

A lot of times we go and in one sense, we lift one to God. You know, I believe that, you know, I trust in that, but don't happen to put two and two together and realize we're still doing a lot of stuff that we aren't entering in. We ourselves are not following.

We ourselves are not really in our own life wanting it to be transformed. We're just doing it less or something. So we say, see, look at my I'm being changed.

And I think other people would look at this and say, well, I'm not sure about that. But here, Jesus, he essentially, as he goes on, he says, I want you to follow me and I want you to trust me. I am your father.

I am your God. And I want you to come to me and seek me for everything in life. You need, I'll take care of you.

And he says, and then let people go and now follow me. Just let them go and follow me and trust me and seek me and you'll find me and I'll take care of you. And then he gives this wonderful little picture here to us as we're kind of following him.

And you might say in a sense when here, he tells us there to go in at this straight gate as he, you know, turns to us, you know, to, to follow the straight gate in this narrow way. And kind of, as we come along here, we look over and here on one side, we see this, this broad gate, this wide gate in this broad way, this wide, wide road. And we look there and there's many people going in and we look over this and he's kind of showing it to us.

You might say, and then next year we look over here and here's a narrow little gate. And there's a narrow way there is it kind of seems to go on at least awful narrow and confining in appearance starts narrow stays narrow sort of a thing. And there, as he looks at this, he says, one of these is the way the world goes.

And the other one is the way that the people that know and love and trust me fully go with their lives. And he looks at there and he says, as he draws this picture, he tells you and I, it's like Jesus saying, I, I know exactly the perception the world has of me and all the things going on. And I know the world looks at life in a certain way and, and it can go and do what it wants to.

And it has all of its liberties and all of the way that it lives. And he says, I know that when I am asking somebody to turn to me and love me and trust me and follow me, it seems very, very narrow. It seems very, very tight.

It seems very, very confining, but I'll tell you the most wonderful thing that ever happens is that when somebody I believe becomes very, very narrow about Jesus, when something happens in our heart and in our life, and we become very confining, you might say about him, I believe the Lord loves his people to be narrow about him. He loves us to take him very, very literally. He loves us to look at God and take his

father is very, very narrow.

He loves us to take his Lordship and his mastery and his right to rule and be very narrow upon about that. He loves us to look at the spirit of God and be very narrow. He loves us to look at values and processes and lives and be very, very narrow about them narrow about his right to rule narrow about his authority there in and to do that.

Because you see, the wonderful thing is, though, is this narrowness. It's also a tremendous paradox. Because here, Jesus says the broad way leads to destruction.

But the narrow way leads to life. If the Son has set you free, you're free. Indeed, there's nobody freer in all the world than the person that is extremely narrow and confining about Jesus and following him.

There's nobody more liberated. There is nobody that is that has a greater, freer, fuller, richer life than the one that has has determined. I want to be very narrow about Jesus Christ in my life and whatever it is he wants.

I don't want to play with it. James in his epistle, he he calls the gospel the law of liberty. I like that.

It's like on one hand, he did this law, but it's something there. The gospel when it when it becomes only in a sense to my heart, it becomes something so high, so narrow, so confining. It's a law of liberty.

It sets me free there. When I find there the Lord, you take over and I want to be very, very narrow about you. The narrow I am about him, the greater my liberty.

And you know, that's also true in the rest of our lives, too. Any of you, the more you're a Christian, the more you know in your own life, the narrower you have become about Jesus, the greater your freedom, the greater your freedom. When I first became a Christian and Jesus was just this wonderful person that died on the cross, but I still did whatever I want to, wherever I want to, whatever it was.

When I was early on as a Christian, I got saved. I know I was born again. The spirit of God had come into my life.

He had borne witness with my spirit that I was a child of God. But I still here I am in college and I got my friends that come and say, Don, we're having a party. You're in the fraternity.

You got to show up. Yes, I am. And I would literally have people when I tell them I'm stopping drinking, they'd say, Well, you mean a Christian can't drink? Where does it say a Christian can't drink? Well, I don't know.

Well, yeah, I mean, I don't know. Jesus drank. Hmm.

Well, guess it was okay for Jesus. Okay for me, you know, or something. And next thing you know, you take all these liberties on how you know, not only was I free enough, and it was it was I that I could have one drink.

I was free to have two and three, four. In fact, I was so free. I didn't even have to drive home because I didn't know where it was.

But the but on how so often the very exercise of freedom really produces the destruction of it. When somebody thinks they're exercising their own liberties and their own freedoms outside of Christ, all they're really doing is destroying their liberty. Same thing in your marriage.

Either the the happiest marriage or the most narrow of marriages. The one there that if there's this couple that in this century, I mean, this day and age actually look and say, you know something, we're absolutely faithful to each other. We don't entertain anybody else.

We don't even flirt with anybody else. We don't go out with anybody else. Boy, you're awful narrow.

Yep. I'm happy to. If you don't, if you don't know that's true tonight, just go home and tell your wife that you think you're too narrow when you're going to include somebody else.

You'll lose some freedoms. And your bed and your car and your house and a lot of other stuff will be gone real fast. And but the person there that it is though that is narrow in their relationship with Christ.

They find themselves there absolutely fixed on him straight as the gate and narrow as the way and they love that narrowness. They love that absolute nature of his sovereign power in his life and they want to rely only upon it. That's how Jesus was.

Greatest life that ever lived. He was somebody in John 8. Jesus said, I do only always those things that please my father. You want to know what makes me tick every moment of every day? I'll tell you, I'm extremely narrow.

I do whatever pleases my father. And what a life. What an unbelievable life.

John 5:30. Jesus said, I can't on my own self do nothing. But as I hear, I respond.

And my response is always right because I seek not my known will, but the will of him that sent me. Jesus was so narrow. He could look at the world.

He said, you know, I'm going to tell you some, I know I really can't do anything myself. Amazingly, which we don't quite understand here. We have the second person, the triune Godhead who, when he essentially seemingly willingly divested himself of all of the rights and the privileges of being God, he humbles himself, takes upon himself the form of a servant.

He becomes a man. And therefore he lived as a man under the power of a man filled with God, born of God in situations. You know, I can't have my own self do nothing, but I'll tell you what I'm different about.

As I hear, I respond. And my response is always right. Cause I'm not like you.

I do only always those things that please him. That's why predictably, wonderfully narrow about his life. And you know, when we, when we stop and we realize that what it is that we really ought to long for more than anything else is Lord, make me this narrow.

We're watching a whole world now that, uh, as it is determined, broad is the way in broad is the gate. Why does the gate in broad is the way that leads to destruction. And what an amazing thing it is.

There's a man, not a Christian who wrote an interesting book called the closing of the American mind. It was written by a non-Christian named Bloom. It was on the best selling list.

Amazingly a few years ago, but he essentially, he brings forth this, this thing of looking at America today. And he says America has been destroyed through openness, openness. That is, he says people wanting to have an open mind and they found it intellectually fashionable.

He says to throw out all preconceived absolutes and there to become open and to be flexible to new thought. And then at that point, as soon as you become open, now absolutes are all gone and everything becomes relative is what happened to our country. Truth is no longer absolute.

It's relative. Your truth might be different than my truth. Your morality might be different than somebody else's morality.

Your values might be one thing. And if we're going to progress as a nation and we're all going to get along, we've got to be open to one another. We've got to look at there and make life relative one another.

We can't have anybody that's absolute and narrow. And the amazing thing is we're watching a country literally self-destruct through openness. But in the midst of it, Jesus looks at the Christian.

He says, you be narrow. Narrow is the gate and narrow is the way. It starts off.

You go in with one very narrow, narrow, narrow concept. You enter into eternal life because you say my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. Christ and Christ alone died for me.

His blood on the cross is all I need alone, all by itself to save me. His forgiveness is all I need is that one person at the right hand of the majesty of whoever lives to make intercession for me. I'm very narrow.

That's all that I need. That's the great. That's the gate.

He says, narrow is the gate, but he says, and narrow is the way. He says, if we could just stay as narrow along the way is we were the day we got saved is the day that I came and said, Jesus, without you, I'm hopeless. And if I can live every day that way, every day that way, having that dependence.

But again, so often we have this great capacity to kind of go on and just do our own thing. We go on and we live our life and we say, well, this doesn't have to change and I don't have to repent of this. And my marriage will be all right.

And Hey, I just hang out with the guys and we probably, yeah, maybe we, we have, we tip a few and we, yeah, there's some bad humor and yeah, they got some movies that, you know, are questionable, but they're guys and they're just, oh, you know, guys watch those kinds of movies and for a person not to think that's going to affect their life. And as a Christian, not going to all of a sudden move them right out of a narrow gate in a narrow way, put them on a broad way that then now they come home and now they're lying. Now they come home and now they, they, they find themselves where they they've wounded and they've hurt and they've crippled.

They've lost their freedom in their own life and walk because I don't stay narrow in the Lord, how he wants us to stay narrow. Don't make excuses. When we got a problem, there's something in our life.

It's not right. We're not trusting him. We're looking to other people.

We're going to other resources, living in a way that's not right. Jesus says, follow me, trust me, ask of me, I'll take care of you. But if we don't do it, or we excuse it, and we're famous for that.

The other day, I'm reading this thing, the mayor of Washington, DC, the highest per capita crime rate in the United States. And they're asking him about the high, you know, this terrible high crime rate, his answer. Well, if you take away murders out of our town, we're no longer the highest.

Oh, just take off a few little thing like murders. Just don't count them in and you're not the worst. Well, great.

I mean, that's as if, well, I don't know what he was trying to say, you know, with it, but it sounded to me like a Christian talking to God, you know, sort of a thing, you know, like, Hey, Lord, I know things aren't right. I know you feel a little upset with me. And, and, you know, I just hang out this, you know, with this, she's really a nice prostitute.

But that's I take that out of my life. And I'm really not too bad. Really? Oh, just that one little thing.

And everything else is okay. Yeah, that's that. Yeah.

I'm really doing good in other areas. Oh, and we think this way. And you have to hear the writer of Hebrews.

He said, you know, as he says, wherefore, if you will hear the Holy Spirit today, hard not your heart, as in the provocation and the day of the temptation in the wilderness, when your father's tempted me, prove me saw my works 40 years, I was agreed with that generation, I swore my wrath, they will not enter into my rest. And then he goes on a couple verses later, he says, and their carcasses died in the wilderness. Oh, that we could just come and say, Lord, I want to follow you fully.

And maybe there's areas of our life where we're just living with things and excusing them. And we're kind of like that guy, you know, that we think we're doing better, but we're still tipping a few just in memory of the friends, but me, I don't drink anymore. How can we be like this? But rather to come and say, Lord, take my life and take my walk.

Maybe tonight some of us are here. And we're upset with people. We've been knocking and seeking and asking and people haven't answered us.

But maybe the Lord looks at you and he says, my grace is sufficient. Instead of begging me to take away the problem, why don't you come to me and get more strength, and more power, and more grace, and more sufficiency, and see what I can do in your marriage. See what I can do in your walk, see what I can do at work.

See what I can do anywhere. If instead of saying God change, and then point your fingers. And we can look there and say, God, change me.

Give me a sufficiency of your grace. More power. I need more income, spiritually, to meet the issues of life.

Father, we thank you and praise you for your love and your goodness. And Lord, we pray that while we live in a world that is with a wide open gate and a broad way, and many there be that are going in all around. Lord, I pray that with our lives we'd be able to come before you and say, Jesus, take them.

We want to come to you and just knock and seek and ask from you. You take care of us. And help us, Lord, let the whole world off the hook.

Let the people off the hook around our lives that we think have let us down. And come to the God who has created us, who is sufficient for everything, and say, Lord, give me your strength. Give me your power.

I need a spiritual raise. I need more spiritual income. Instead of saying lower the standard, let's raise the spiritual income.

And Jesus, be greater in me. And Lord, may we become very narrow about you. May we be ones that sometimes the world would look and say, you're awfully narrow.

And may we say, oh, thank you. Thank you so much. That's just what I've been praying would happen in my life.

More and more. Narrow about God. Narrow about his power.

Narrow about his sufficiency. Narrow about his ability to care for me. Narrow that he can meet all of my needs.

Narrow that I don't need anybody else but him. Don't need to rely upon others. And then, Lord, we ask that you would take our life and that we would follow you fully.

And anything, Lord, that you would look and say, you don't need this. You don't need to be there Friday at three o'clock with the boys. You need to be here with me.

With your real friends. The kingdom of heaven. Lord, take us and teach us and strengthen us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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