

# The Narrow Way

by Jon Couch

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding and following God's commands, trusting in Jesus Christ, and living a life of obedience to experience genuine revival.*

**Duration:** 29:30

**Scripture:** Genesis 1:1

**Topics:** "Narrow Way"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of belief being accompanied by action. Trusting in God and relying on Him daily is not a passive act, but rather an intentional and urgent clinging to Him. The speaker references the story of the Centurion in Matthew 8 to illustrate the need to truly understand who God is and embrace His word in order to experience genuine revival. The sermon also highlights the responsibility of parents to protect their children from the influence of culture and to lead them in serving the Lord. The message concludes with a reminder that the narrow way of following Jesus requires a great cost, but it leads to the glory and majesty of God.

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## Transcript

Now, here's the deal. We can bring in all the great singing, we can bring in all the great preaching, we can bring in all the wonderful evangelism and discipleship, but the reality is this. Unless we truly begin starting today, unless we begin today to start really understanding who God really is, who Jesus the Christ really is, to begin understanding what God's word really is, unless we begin to grapple with that and process it and to embrace it, we will never experience real, genuine revival.

See, when we hold ourselves up to God and His glory, when we see how majestic He is, when we see how wonderful His Son, Jesus Christ is, when we really understand how amazing the grace is that God shed for you and for me through His Son, Jesus Christ, when we hold ourselves up to the word of God and the mirror of the word of God, we come with one conclusion and one only, we see how wretched we really are. And I want to welcome you to another broadcast of This Day in the Word, the radio teaching ministry of This Day Ministries. It's a joy to have you listening today and our prayer is that you'll be challenged and motivated to live for Christ like never before.

Well, I don't know about you, but I need to be fed through scripture today. And so let's go to God's word now and let's see what He has to say. Now, here's the reality.

Our culture is after the heart of our kids. Our culture is looking to take and to shape the hearts of our children. If we don't rise up as husbands and mothers and take the lead and not leave it to the school system, not even leave it to the Sunday school teacher, but to take this job and this role seriously and to say, as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord because they are after the hearts of our kids.

And this leads right into our text today in 1 John 3, 23. And in 1 John 3, 23, we're going to be discussing the title, which is the narrow way. That if we really understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, we understand that the way is narrow.

Matthew tells us in Matthew 7 that there is a narrow way and there is a wide path. The wide path is very wide and there are many who will go in by it and what they will reap is destruction. But Matthew also goes on and says that there is a narrow way.

That the path is very narrow. And the path is one that follows Christ. And they will reap a life of abundance, eternal life that is, as they follow the narrow way, but only few, the text says, will find it.

We have a narrow path, we have few, and we got eternal life. We got a wide path. A wide path and drives people by the masses are going down the wide path.

They will continue to go down the wide path and they fulfill self and they fulfill the pleasures of the world, but they do not seek God and their time of pleasure will come to an abrupt end. Because in the next life there will be eternal life, but it will be apart from Jesus Christ and God the Father. And so we got to understand that there really is something that is of consequence.

You know, I was thinking through this text and just kind of going back through what John has been saying as we've been studying this text here for a number of weeks, here in 1 John 3. And as you look at this and kind of step back for a moment and get kind of an aerial view, a snapshot, you see that John is communicating, he is challenging, he is imploring his listeners to grasp the biblical concept that just speaking in word does not mean you're saved. We got lots of people all over our country that are gathered today on a Sunday morning in churches that talk a great game. They talk a wonderful game, but the reality is they're talking a lot of smack because it's not founded in evidence of their life being truly converted by the cross and the empty tomb.

Would you and I, if someone was to see our lives and monitor our lives and we didn't know it, away from church, would they see a life that is sold out to Christ and therefore would we be convicted of being a passionate follower of Jesus Christ? You go away from church when you're alone, when you're out doing your thing, when you're at work, when you're at the retirement center, when you're at school, when you're doing activities, would people look at you and I and would we be convicted of being a passionate follower of Jesus Christ away from the church? I was thinking through revival. That's something that's really heavy on my heart right now. And when I say revival, I'm not referring to having a set of services called a revival.

I'm more interested in experiencing genuine revival. I'm more interested in seeing God do a work that only he can do. I'm more interested in seeing families restored back together.

I'm more interested in seeing marriages restored back together. I'm more interested in people who've been riding the fence and they professed years ago that Jesus is their Lord, really start living a life proving and showing that Jesus is their Lord. But here's the deal.

We can bring in all the great singing. We can bring in all the great preaching. We can bring in all the wonderful evangelism and discipleship.

But the reality is this, unless we truly begin starting today, not tomorrow, but today, unless we begin today to start really understanding who God really is, who God really is, who Jesus the Christ really is, to begin understanding what God's word really is, unless we begin to grapple with that and process it and to embrace it, we will never experience real genuine revival. See, when we hold ourselves up to God and his glory, when we see how majestic he is, when we see how wonderful his son Jesus Christ is, when we really understand how amazing the grace is that God shed for you and for me through his son Jesus Christ, when we hold ourselves up to the word of God and the mirror of the word of God, we come with one conclusion and one only, we see how wretched we really are. And therefore, the genuine believer or the person that's being convicted who's not a believer will be cut to the heart.

We'll be cut to the heart in such a way that we don't want to walk that way anymore, that we don't want to live that lifestyle. We want to put that to death. We want to live in victory.

Oh, we got to understand that we are more than conquerors and we have a cause worth fighting for because we need genuine revival, don't we? We need believers in Jesus Christ. We need men today to step up and stand in the gap. And so here John writes, and it's a wonderful text, 1 John 3, 23.

I want you to listen closely as I read these words that he penned. A very simple verse. It says this, and this is his commandment.

Underline that. Now here we go. That we should believe on the name of his son, Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment.

What does this mean? And this is the commandment. When you think of commandment, what do you think of kind of in your mind's eye? Well, it's really simple. When you look at the Greek language there, that word commandment simply means this, an order that has been given and is expected to be obeyed.

I mean, let's just kind of process this in real logical terms. How many of you have ever worked for someone? Raise your hand. Got a lot of grumpy hands going up.

Must have been a bad experience. How many of us, you put your hands down, how many of us were ever given an order or a command or a directive by that employer, that boss? Now, you can put your hands down. Now, not that we liked the directive or the order of the command, but did the boss give us a directive and order of a command so that we could kind of mull it over, and then if we really felt like doing it, then we would just go ahead and do it? I mean, what would the response be from the boss to you, to the employee? Well, unless he or she made themselves very clear that it was optional, unless the employer made him or herself very clear that what they were telling you was a suggestion, my gut tells me that when they give you or me the directive that they were expecting us to follow through in obedience.

Is that a fair assumption? Why is it when we take the greatest employer ever, God the Father, who is the supreme, there's none other, and he gives us commands and he says, this is the way, walk in it. Oh, no, I don't give you the commands to make your life boring. You ever heard that excuse? Well, God's given us that stuff, you know, to regulate us.

He's the greatest regulator going. No, he isn't. He's the greatest protector going.

God has given us these commands through his holy word, not to give us a boring life, but to give us a life of freedom, joy, and peace that's only found in him. Oh, we can take all the things that are in the Bible and we can go, oh, this makes our life boring. Oh, not really.

It's going to save you from a lot of heartache and pain is what it's going to do. So we need to get to this point that we understand that John is saying, look, and this is his commandment. Who's he or who's his? Do we know? It's God, isn't it? John's not saying, these are my commandments, so follow me.

No, John is simply the conduit saying, look, I walked and I talked with Jesus the Christ. I was there. I was a witness.

And oh, let me tell you this. These are his commandments. Oh, you follow him.

You just walk in his word, amen? Here's the reality. When God, through his word and through his prompting, instructs us to do or not do something and we disobey, take this to the bank. There are always consequences.

Always. We may not see the consequences initially, but there are always consequences. And I was processing that thought and I thought, you know what? I think that's why I disobeyed my heavenly father at times, because I know I can, quote unquote, get away with it.

It's not like the employer on the spot that says, hey, John, I told you to go make that widget and then take the widget and put it in the Chester drawers. No, it's God says, John, go do this. I'm going to prompt you to go do that.

John, don't do that. That's not good. That's going to harm you.

It's going to harm your family. And I just kind of make a blind eye to him because I know that I can technically, quote unquote, get away with it. But don't we realize that when we sin by either omission or commission, there is always a consequence to our sin, always.

For God hates sin, amen? And so as we set this up for the narrow way, we've got to understand that this is a commandment. What I'm going to tell you this morning that John wrote through the inspiration of God the Father is not a suggestion. This is not something that is optional.

This is something that will truly make or break your life. And this is what John writes. And this is the commandment that we should believe.

What does it mean to believe, do we know? But when you look at that in the original context, it simply means this, to have an unwavering trust in. I think one of the greatest travesties of the American church in 2012 and even preceding is simply this, that we have regulated the belief in God to a one-time single event. Oh, I believed in God when I was 12 and now I'm good to go.

No, belief is not a one-time thing. Belief is a lifetime thing. No wonder the American church is floundering like it is because we haven't spoken the truth according to God's words.

We fed the people a bunch of bologna and hogwash. And the reality is belief is action. When you and I trust in God and we get up every morning and we don't know how we're going to make it through the day, that is not passive.

That is intentional. That's urgent. That's clinging to the rock of our God, our savior, like nothing else.

You are listening to This Day in the Word, the radio teaching ministry of This Day Ministries. Please make a note that all of these broadcasts are archived and are free to download at [thisdayministries.org](http://thisdayministries.org). Let's now go back to the second part of this message and let's see what God's word has to say. I was thinking through Matthew 8. I love this account.

Remember the centurion who had the servants? Love this story. There's a centurion and he was a Gentile. And he had a servant who was in dire need of some physical help.

Well, Jesus just came into Capernaum there in Matthew 8. And guess what happens next? The centurion knows that Jesus is in the area. And he knows what Jesus has been doing and how he's been working in an incredible way. And he goes to Jesus and said, Oh, my servant, he needs your help.

He's in dire need of healing. Oh, you need to do something. But the centurion knows that in Jewish tradition, you don't invite a Jew into a Gentile's house because that would defile them according to their belief.

And so this is what he simply says. He doesn't say go get the servant. This is what he does.

The centurion says, but just speak a word, just speak a word. In other words, what he was saying is this. I'm a centurion.

You're Jesus the Christ. I believe in you. I understand who you are.

I understand the power that you bring to the table. You just speak a word and my servant will be healed. Does that show you great faith and trust? I hope it shows you great faith and trust because Jesus commented on his faith and trust.

And he said this, I have never seen such great faith in all of Israel. He says, because of your belief, go home. And the text says within an hour, the servant was healed.

Do we see how important this is? This is the commandment, John says, that you believe, that you have an anchor, that you have a stronghold in the time of storm, that you will not be denied or swayed. Oh, the word of my God will stand and will last forever. I was thinking of an illustration.

How many of you have been on an airplane? Anyone? Have you ever been on an airplane and you're going through that wonderful experience called turbulence? That will test your belief, won't it? Amen? I mean, you ever been through some serious turbulence where like, I mean, we're not talking where it just kind of, you know, jostles you, but I mean, literally where you're like going up and down in the seat and backward and forward, but you hit turbulence and you're flying along and it can be unnerving. I'll be quite honest. I mean, when you're up 40,000 feet and you're hitting this turbulence, it can be very unnerving.

But when we hit the turbulence, do we panic to the degree that we run to the nearest door and jump out? I mean, when we hit the turbulence, do we rummage through all the overhead containers and the bins and go, I got to find a parachute because I see a couple doors. I'm getting out of this thing. That would be ludicrous.

What we do is we trust the pilot to take us to safety, don't we? See, that's just like our lives. Some of us right now are flying through major turbulence. I mean, we are going through major turbulence.

It's not fair. We don't like it. It stinks.

It's lousy. But do we run for the door and jump out of the plane? No. We trust our pilot, God the Father.

And we say, oh, I'm going to trust you. I'm going to believe in you. I'm going to have faith and action that says, I am going to trust you whether you slay me.

Oh, what may come my way? The Lord gives. He takes away. But blessed be the name of my God.

Because what happens next is when our neighbors and our co-workers see that we're going through that turbulence and they see we haven't jumped for the door, that gets their attention, doesn't it? And that opens the door to invite them and say, hey, you want peace like I have peace? Let me show you how I get the peace I have. I love what God's word says here in John 1, 12. Don't miss this.

But as many as received him to them, he gave the right to become children of God. Now, here it is. To those who believe in his name.

See, that leads us right into the last point. Can I just, by this command, believe in anything? I mean, can I just believe in Muhammad? I mean, is Buddha the way? Do all roads really lead to God? Do I just need to have an action of trust that even maybe believes in myself and trust in my bank account and my retirement plan and I'm being propped up by all these things? Is that what he's talking about here? Here's the commandment that you should believe. Is that where the end of the verse cuts off? Oh, that just sets up where we're going, doesn't it? We're just climbing up the hill.

We're going to get to the pinnacle here in just a moment. Because it's a belief not in anything. It's a belief in the only thing.

And his name is Jesus. Because this is what he says. And this is the commandment that we should believe.

On the name of his son, Jesus Christ. That's a powerful name, isn't it? I mean, when you're in the valley, when you're going through the turbulence of life, do you ever sit there in the darkness of the night, which is so eerie and so quiet and your mind's racing? And do you ever just say, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. The name that's above every name.

I love how you define this from the Greek language. Jesus, of course, is Jesus, which means Jehovah is salvation. Christ is Christos, which means anointed.

I think part of our challenge is, I think we understand that there is a Jesus. I think intellectually we know who he is, but we've never really understood him and known him from our heart standpoint. You know, that we hear that he was this wonderful person and that he died a cruel death and that he did all these great things.

But do we really understand that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord's? I mean, do we understand the power that's in the name of Jesus? He's our Messiah. He's the savior of the world. He's God incarnate.

Scripture calls him the vine, the door, the way, the truth, the life. And we can go on and on. The hope of glory, the horn of salvation, all these wonderful things that describe my Jesus and nothing that human words could say would point to the reality of who he really is.

My words, your words could never describe in the fullness what Jesus Christ is and what he really did for you and me in that amazing grace as he shed his blood on Calvary and said, I want to redeem you not from some sin, but from all sin. I love what Bonhoeffer says. He's one of my favorites.

Bonhoeffer, only he who believes is obedient. Only he who is obedient believes. I mean, think about that.

When we are obedient, we really do believe, don't we? And when we really believe what this book says, this glorious book called the Bible, when we believe it, even though we may not understand it, but we believe it, oh, we believe it in such a way and have such a love and a passion for the words and the truth and the doctrine that we take the Bible and it becomes central to our hearts and our minds and our desires and oh, we are no longer the same, but we go and walk in newness of life. That's the power of the name of Jesus. God's word is powerful, amen? John 6, 29, Jesus answered and said to them, this is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he sent.

John 20, 31, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son, and that believing you may have life in his name. If there is any question this morning that you can have life apart from the name of Jesus Christ, let me clarify it once and for all. There is not any ounce of life apart from the name of Jesus, both here in this life and certainly in the next, amen? That's why it's so critical that we make the mission critical, that we really understand what it means to be that surrendered disciple and that is in a narrow, narrow way.

It's a narrow path and the great news is as we give our hearts truly to God, even though we fail, even though we sin, that there's always redemption at the foot of the cross. Oh, that gives me hope and I pray it gives you hope because I know there's some days I need lots of forgiveness, amen? And praise be to God that it's not 7 times 70, but it's infinite, amen to that? So I guess the question as we close this morning is are we walking in this commandment? You know, at the end of the verse there, it also said to love one another. I intentionally skipped over that.

We've been talking about love for many, many weeks. I think we're very clear on love and what it means to love regardless of, but it's certainly not endorsing people's bad behavior. Sometimes we love and we actually take the tough love approach because that's what we really love, people enough to confront, to say, no, this is not how we behave as Christians.

See, the two go hand in hand. Don't miss this final point here. The two go hand in hand.

You cannot, because you look at this text here, you've got obey and a commandment, you've got belief and you've got love. You cannot separate those three if you really want to be a believer in Jesus Christ. There is going to be obedience, there's going to be belief in Jesus' name, and there's going to be love towards one another.

It is all tied together. There's love from the cross. There's love from the empty tomb.

There's belief in His name. There's obedience by us that are following Him. Oh, it all goes together just like the Bible does, and please don't miss this here.

We've got to understand that from Genesis through the middle of the Bible to Revelation, the common denominator through all of Scripture from the beginning to the end and everything in between is one thing and one thing only, and it's the glory and the majesty of our God. And through what He did through all these wonderful accounts, and as He sent His Son to be executed and butchered as a ransom for you and

I, oh, it gives us hopefully a hope and a longing and a desire to serve Him and to serve Him only, amen? Let's pray. Lord, thank You for this morning.

It's a narrow way, and Lord, I pray this morning that everyone in this room is on the narrow way. That's my heart's desire, is that we've understood that the good, that the cost is great, but the rewards are infinite. I hope we understand that by rejecting Christ, the minimal rewards that we reap on this earth will equate to an infinite cost in the next life.

And so, Father, as You speak and minister to our hearts this morning, maybe there's one here today that You've been speaking to, that they know that there's a commandment, if they want to really follow You, that they need to believe and trust in You, and they've never given their heart to You, but they're longing that they need to do that today. I pray that today would be that day of salvation. Maybe there's some here this morning that have made that profession, but the reality is it's been a life of casual Christianity, just tinkering with God.

Oh, Father, we pray that today that would stop. You have been listening to This Day in the Word, the radio teaching ministry of This Day Ministries. These messages are recorded at Manhattan Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida.

Thanks again for tuning in. Let's all go out intentionally and urgently this day, and let's go make a difference for Jesus Christ. Amen.

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