

July 2 – Leader’s Guide

Matthew 7:12-23 “The Path that Leads to Life”

Read Matthew 7:12-23.

1. What is Jesus’ thesis statement of the Sermon on the Mount? What is the Old Testament equivalent? (See Lev 19:18) With these two summaries of the Law in mind, what would you say the point of the Mosaic Law is? What place does the Law have in the Sermon on the Mount?

Matt 7:12 – The Golden Rule, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. The OT equivalent is Lev 19:18: “Love the Lord your God, and love your neighbour as yourself.” The point of the Mosaic Law is restored relationship: with God and with each other. Jesus came not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it – to live it perfectly and restore our relationship with God and each other.

2. Verses 13-26 are the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Verses 13-14 talk about the only two paths that we can find ourselves on. How does this language sit with you? Is it uncomfortable? Why?

It is a hard thing to think of only a few people finding the path of life, and most people not finding it. Allow room for discussion about this in your group, without judgment.

3. What are the three places that Jesus mentions judgment in the conclusion? Why do you think he wants to make a point of it in his conclusion?

Verses 13, 19, and 23 all mention judgment/destruction in some form. Judgment is a very hard thing for us to talk about. Explore with your group whether they have had negative experiences in church or elsewhere talking about judgment, and how they feel when Jesus talks about it. What effect might he be wanting it to have on his original listeners?

4. What were false prophets known for in the Old Testament? How might that look today? What are some of the ‘bad fruits’ that they might be known by? What about good fruits?

False prophets were known for encouraging people in idolatry and injustice: in other words, not loving God, not loving their neighbour. Explore some of the fruits that may be good or bad, but beware of slipping into judgmental attitudes! How can Christians be both discerning and wise without condemning, which is God’s job?

5. What are some characteristics of the narrow gate and path? Why are they characterised that way?

The narrow gate is narrow, because it requires people meeting Jesus individually; it is hard to find, because it means accepting that Jesus is the only way to life; and it's difficult, because it means following Jesus and dying to self. Are there other perspectives on this that arise in your group discussion?

6. How has walking the narrow path felt to you? Does it always feel worth it? As you are comfortable, share with the group your experience walking the narrow path.

Free-range discussion.