

The Narrow Gate Matthew 7:13-14, NLT

13*"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who CHOOSE that way.*

14*But the gateway to [eternal] life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.*

Now, is that doesn't jar you awake, drop down a few verses

True Disciples, Matthew 7:21-27, NIV

21*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but ONLY THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER who is in heaven.*

22*Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name, drive out demons, and in your name, perform many miracles?'*

23*Then I will tell them plainly, 'I NEVER KNEW YOU. Away from me, you evildoers!'*

24*"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine AND PUTS THEM INTO PRACTICE is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; YET IT DID NOT FALL, because it had its foundation on the rock.*

26*But everyone who hears these words of mine and DOES NOT PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and IT FELL WITH A GREAT CRASH."*

- Jesus spoke these words in the midst of His Sermon on The Mount.
 - The Sermon that not only launched His ministry and laid the foundation for all His other teachings, miracles, parables, etc.
 - But it's the sermon that also directed our gaze, hearts, and hopes to The Kingdom of God (The Kingdom of Heaven)—aka, Eternity

Over the next 3 ½ years, Jesus didn't just practice what He preached; He gave us further insight into what it means to surrender to Him and be a True Disciple so WE can practice what He preached, Amen?

And what are the characteristics of a True Disciple?

One who:

- Believes in Jesus (John 3:16, Hebrews 12:14); Puts their faith in Him (Ephesians 2:9, Galatians 2:20, Hebrews 12:2); and Follows Him—wherever He leads (John 8:32)
- Confesses and turns from their sins (Matthew 4:7; Acts 3:19; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9) so they can be forgiven (1 John 1:7)
- Grows daily in the grace and knowledge of Jesus through prayer and Bible Study (2 Peter 3:18)
- Obeys God's principles and precepts as laid out in Scripture (Psalm 119:11; Luke 6:46)
- Understands they own nothing.
 - (Gifts, talents, abilities, possessions, careers, physical attractiveness, intelligence, athleticism, etc.)
 - They know everything they have is God's, and He's given them stewardship over those resources to serve Him and further His Kingdom. (Luke 14:33)
- Loves God so thoroughly that their love for others looks like hatred in comparison (Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26)
 - Meaning rather than family being the most important thing, the most central thing, in their life—the source of their identity, value, self-worth, purpose, and place in this world—God is.
- Puts aside selfish desires, lives for Christ's purposes, and is willing to face daily humiliation and suffering as they determine to follow Him (Luke 9:23; Philippians 3:14)
- Remains faithful to His teachings (John 8:31; Psalm 119:11; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 1:8-10, 2:4)
 - handling them properly (2 Timothy 2:15)
 - being purified by them daily (John 17:17)
- Does good works for God's glory not their own (Matthew 5:16; 2 Timothy 2:15-26)
- Bears much Spiritual fruit because they remain connected to the One True Vine (John 15)
- Loves, encourages, and accepts other believers (John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Hebrews 12:25)
- Spreads the Gospel and makes more disciples (Matthew 13:1-58, 28:19; Acts 1:8; 1 John 1:3)
- Walks in the same way Jesus walked (Ephesians 4:1-32; 1 John 2:6)
- Allows the Spirit to constantly change them as they become more and more like Jesus (Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:29, 12:1-2)
- Refuses to deny Jesus and is willing to die for the Cause of Christ (Luke 14:27)
 - Following Jesus requires complete and total submission to Him only
 - We cannot serve 2 masters (Matthew 6:24)
 - The LORD knows who are His (Numbers 16:5, 2 Timothy 2:19)

Did you realize what I did when looking at this list?

- Each and every one of these things requires our surrender to God and His will and eternal Surrender
- Surrendering to the work and activity of the Holy Spirit
 - First in us
 - Then through us

But what exactly is surrender?

- **Congregation Response, Participation**
- Merriam-Webster defines surrender as
 - to yield to the power, control, or possession of another either voluntarily or under duress
 - to give (oneself) up into the power of another especially as a prisoner
 - [Paul calls himself a slave to Christ]
 - b: to give (oneself) over to something (such as an influence) unrestrainedly
 - [inviting the spirit to transform us by renewing our minds]
- Surrender in the NT, is often rendered by the Greek word *hupotássō* ⁱ(var. *hypotássō*ⁱⁱ) which means to subjugate, subject; to place in submission;ⁱⁱⁱ to submit, place under subjugation, be submissive, be subordinate^{iv}
 - *Hupotássomai* = To subject oneself, place oneself in submission^v
 - It is a willing personal subjection and an act of a free agent^{vi}
 - “It does not involve a breaking of the will or servile submission to another’s rule; rather, the verb ‘describes a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden.’”^{vii}

In your notes I have the Merriam-Webster definition and the rendering in Greek and its definition

- But for the sake of time, I’m going to boil it down for you

Surrender is:

- A willing personal subjugation of a free agent
- It’s the daily determined decision to COMPLETELY empty yourself of yourself and then invite the Holy Spirit to come in, fill you, and take over.

Put another way, Surrender is:

- **The exercising of our free-will to wholly lay down our will in order to do the Father’s will.**
 - **Let me repeat that**

But MERCY! Surrender is HARD, isn’t it?

- Why is that?
- I struggled with this A LOT!
- Why is it so hard to do what we want, what we know is right?
 - But keep tripping over our own 2 feet, meaning our flesh and sinful nature and desires

Paul answers that for us in Romans 7 & 8

- When we sincerely put our faith in Christ
 - Our souls are instantly made new, regenerated, reborn, redeemed due to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
 - However, our bodies aren't.
 - They're still cursed, fallen, sinful.
 - Subject to
 - death and decay,
 - aging and illness
 - injury and limitation
 - How many of you are living this reality with me?
 - This is why we groan
 - We groan to be released from our mortal bodies;
 - We groan to be released from sin and suffering
 - And we groan to receive our promised new bodies (Romans 8:19-25)
 - Bodies that are redeemed and immortal
 - Bodies that are able to stand in the presence of God and see His face (Revelation 21:3-7, 22:3-5)
 - Oh, I can't wait!
- Until That Glorious Day, while we walk, talk, and breathe on this planet we have to wrestle with our flesh—our sinful nature (Romans 7)
- But here's the problem
 - Our flesh is ferociously hostile towards God (Romans 8:7)
 - It's never obeyed His laws, principles, and precepts—and it never will
 - In fact, it can't because it's not a FREE AGENT—completely freed from the bondage of sin
- However, as we read in Matthew 7:13, many will CHOOSE TO surrender to their sinful nature,
 - To travel on that broad highway to hell and pass through its expansive gate (Romans 8:6a with Matthew 7:13).
 - To allow their flesh to control their mind, dominate their impulses, and enslave them in every way (vs 5a)
 - To pursue
 - sinful things = anything that brings them pleasure and fuels their pride
 - To chase after anything that benefits themselves and gratifies their body
- They are the foolish builder who built his house on the sand, ignoring God's warning in Isaiah 7:9b

*If you do not stand firm in your faith,
you will not stand at all.*

 - These people put their hope and faith in earthly, temporary things—power, possessions, prestige, pride, prosperity
 - But when life's storms erupt, these things crash like a house of cards
 - Their security, hope, plans, happiness, etc. is gone

BUT—don't you love that word?

9But you [You who are True Disciples of Jesus Christ] are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to Him at all.)

This is why Jesus didn't know those called out to Him—they were STRANGERS!

- They were doing their own will, not the Father's will
- They were all about replicating the sensational practices of Christ
 - Not a personal, intimate relationship with the One who came to save them
 - They were not interested in the filling of the Holy Spirit.
 - They were not willing to surrender to the Father's will, purpose, and plan for their lives
 - Their feet were firmly planed on the Highway to Hell what they pretended to be on the Narrow Path to Life

BUT

- Beloved, if you are one of the few who chooses to travel the narrow and difficult road to Life,
- If you are one who chooses to surrender to and be controlled by the Holy Spirit,
 - you will think about things that please the Spirit
 - You will walk in the footprints of your Savior
 - You will have a heart that chases after Him
 - You will not only delight in His word but will find exceed joy in putting it into practice
 - It will be your life-breath
 - Your sustenance
 - You security and strength
 - Because the more you study God's Word, the more you get to know Him
 - The more you get to know Him, the more you love Him
 - And the more you love Him, the more you realized He is the ONLY ONE who can sustain you
 - And then your faith will explode and grow
 - And then surrender is natural, pleasurable, and joyful!
 - Notice I didn't say easy
- You will be like the wise builder who—by faith—determined to build his house on the rock

In other words, when we put our faith in Christ, fully surrender to Him, and determine to stand firm in our faith, God helps weather the storms of our life by empowering us to stand firm. Oh, we may be battered, bruised, and broken—but we are still standing as a testimony to Him!

And it all starts with a deliberate daily decision to empty ourselves of ourselves, surrender our will to Jesus, and be filled by the Holy Spirit.

When we live in accordance with the Spirit,

- our minds are set on what the Spirit desires
 - His will and purpose—not ours
- He fills us with God’s knowledge and truth
- He reminds us of what we’ve learned in Scripture so we can apply it
- He makes God’s Word come alive as He reveals its vibrant relevance to our day-to-day lives
- We’re motivated to pursue spiritual realities and do what pleases God
- We put our hope in Eternity and believe God to fulfill all His promises
- And we find eternal spiritual life and peace

Ok—We’ve talked about

- What Surrender is
- Why it’s Difficult
- And how to overcome that difficulty
- Let’s move on to talk about what’s at stake

Turn to Matthew 24-25

Just days before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus was alone with his core group of 12 disciples. They’d come to Him privately with a burning question: “...what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” (vs 3)

This question sparked Jesus’s final sermon known as The Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25)

- Before we proceed, I want to share something astounding. In my opinion it adds even more weight to this profound sermon
 - The Olivet Discourse was given on the Mount of Olives, right?
 - This is the very place where Zechariah prophesied the Messiah will stand with His feet on the ground, when He comes with us—His Bride, The Church—to establish His Kingdom at the end of the Age—the end of the Tribulation (Zechariah 14; Revelation 1:7, 19:11-21)
 - In other words, Jesus was revealing the signs leading up to His Second coming at the very location where His feet will touch the ground when He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords!
 - This event is not be confused with the rapture when we who are faithful followers of Christ will meet Him in the clouds—which I believe will happen before the Tribulation
 - (John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11 with Matthew 24:36-44)
- See everything Jesus taught and demonstrated over the course of His ministry points to that glorious event and the opportunity to spend eternity with Him—it’s our choice, remember (see John 3:16-18)
 - In fact, that’s the point of all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation

Now back to Matthew 24,

- Jesus starts by warning them not be misled by a variety of false teachers and fake messiahs (1 Timothy 4:1-5)
- Then He answers their question in 3 parts
 - First, He describes what will happen in and to the world in general (vs. 4-14)
 - In nature
 - Between people, ethnic groups, and nations
 - And in people's hearts—it will be like in was in Noah's day (vs. 37, Genesis 6:9-7:24)
 - (cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-9, 4:1-4)
 - Next, He tells His disciples what will happen to the Jews (vs. 15-35, cf. Daniel 9-12)
 - The point of the Tribulation is Israel's Salvation
 - Hence why it's called "Jacob's Trouble" (Jeremiah 30-31)
 - It's God's last attempt to get all people's attention and draw them to Himself
 - Judgment of the world, sin, and rebellion is secondary
 - Third, He describes what will happen to Believers, The Church, His Bride—which includes both Jews and Gentiles like us (vs. 36-41)
 - We will be raptured and the Church age will end, redirecting God's focus once again to the Jews

All through this sermon Jesus impresses upon His disciples to always be ready for the rapture, to be prepared, to be watchful because no one but the Father knows when it will take place (42-51)

- Jesus is the *Thief in the Night* who takes His own up to meet him in the Clouds (Luke 12:40, 21:36; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 3:3, 16:15)
 - If Satan knew His plan, he would institute preventative measures to keep his domain from being broken into and robbed of the souls he's so desperate to claim
- **Being READY AT ALL TIMES is an exercise of faith and submission to the Spirit**
 - This is a pursuit of spiritual things and believing Jesus—taking Him at His word

Then in chapter 25, He goes into more detail about WHO will be taken and WHO will be left behind during the rapture with THE Parable of 10 VIRGINS

- For the sake of time, I'm not going to pull this parable apart and dig deep into it today—though I would love to—
 - However, your very own AUNT VENESSA taught on this parable about a year ago during your series on Fresh Oil.
 - Go back into the archives on You Tube and relisten to her teaching—IT WAS FABULOUS!

The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13, ESV)

1“Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.

2Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

3For when the foolish took their lamps, they took **NO OIL** with them,

HOW MUCH OIL DID THEY HAVE WITH THEM? Say that again

4but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.

5As the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and slept.

6But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.’ 7Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.

8And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’

9But the wise answered, saying, ‘Since there will not be enough for us and for you, go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.’

10And while they were going to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut.

11Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, lord, open to us.’

12But he answered, ‘Truly, I say to you, **I do not know you.**’

13Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

What is the difference between the wise virgins and the foolish virgins?

Oil

Who had the oil?

The wise virgins

What does the oil represent?

The Holy Spirit

Ok. Look at these two lamps.

- One represents the wise virgins the other the foolish.
- **Which is which?**
- **Can you tell them apart?**

Externally they are identical

- They are made from the same material
- Are the same size
- Have the same design
- Each has a wick trimmed and ready to go
 - And if I lit them, they would each hold a flame

What makes these two lamps different is what you can't see

Oil or no on the inside

The interesting thing about these lamps, is that you don't know which is which until it's time to light the wick

- And even then it will take some time to distinguish one from the other because both lamps will burn
 - But the one without oil will burn out much faster than the one with oil because its only fuel source is its wick
- But a lamp like his one will last about 4-5 hours when it is filled with oil
 - So if you were to light it as the sun goes down (about 8:00) it will last until about midnight or 1:00am or so
 - And if you have oil with you to refill the lamp...the light should last until dawn

Now, let's bring this home.

Think about your lights at home. **When do you turn them on?**

When it's dark

The same is with these lamps, they were lit to help them see in the dark.

We live in dark times,

I don't know about you, but it seems as if my lamp is constantly burning. I find myself am continuously going to prayer or the Word to be refilled.

- My short little quiet time that used to sustain me, is no longer enough
- I find myself spending longer and longer times in the Scriptures. Digging deeper and deeper.
- I'm relying on memorized Scriptures throughout my days more now than I ever did
- I often need to go back to the Word and prayer during the day, mixing it up with praise and worship, other solid Bible teachers just to have the strength and encouragement to make it through the day and to ensure my lamp and oil jar stay full.
- This requires me to exercise my free will to lay down my will in order to do the Father's will.
- Why?
 - This takes time. Intentionality. And dedication

- And as a wife, mama of 4 boys, friend, and woman of ministry time is precious to me—I never have enough of it
- But God has taught me the vitalness of this
 - Without the emptying of myself of myself,
 - there is no room for the Spirit to fill me,
 - no way He can use me
 - And my time and activities lose their value because it's all about me
 - Then I'm miserable, lost, easily frustrated, and find myself sliding into a dark place
 - Until I hear, "Baby..." and look up, gather my lamp and my oil jar, and surrender to Him once again

See here's the interesting this about this illustration

- If I have my lamp in one hand and the oil jar in the other my focus is all about the Father's will
 - Remember the oil represents the indwelling, power, and activity of the Holy Spirit
- Let's look back at Matthew 7
 - Notice those not allowed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven didn't say:
 - Didn't we believe in You, surrender to You, and follow You?
 - Didn't we study Your Word and apply it to our daily lives?
 - Didn't we tell others about You and Your gift of Salvation?
 - Didn't we surrender to you in all areas of our lives?
 - These people think they're good
 - They walk the walk
 - They talk the talk
 - They know the verbiage and the verses, the rites and rituals (Isaiah 29:13)
 - They have light in their lamps
 - They look like all the other Christians. They blend in well.
 - Their questions could've easily been
 - Didn't we go to church in Your Name?
 - Didn't we go to Sunday School and Bible study in Your Name?
 - Didn't we go on mission trips and give to the poor in Your Name?
 - Didn't we participated in communion and get baptized in Your Name?
 - Didn't we go to conferences and retreats in You Name?
 - Didn't we serve on all kinds of committees, tithe, and attend every function at church?
 - Weren't we always the first to volunteer? To lead? Even for the middle school youth group?

Outwardly they're compliant to all God says in His Word. But inwardly, they harbor rebellion in their heart.

- Their hearts really don't belong to Him
- While they hold their lamp on one hand, their other hand is free to do their will, for their glory

Beloveds, they never surrendered to Jesus.

- They never emptied themselves of themselves and invited the Spirit to fill them and them to guide them.
- And Jesus's reply to these people and to the 5 foolish virgins was the same:

I do not know you. I never knew you.

Doesn't that wreck your heart?

- It does mine.

But it doesn't have to be this way! Jesus gave a better way. And it starts on our knees—In complete utter surrender to the God who so loved the world, He gave His one and only son that whosoever (and Darlin', you are a whosoever) believes in Him will have everlasting life.

This morning I want to give you a few minutes to start this dialogue with God. And I would like to start the prayer in Psalm 139:23-24 and give you a little time with out Lord Jesus

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

ⁱ Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D. The Complete Word Study Dictionary, New Testament (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers International, Inc., 1992)1427.

ⁱⁱ Geoffrey W. Bromiley, et al. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Volume 4: Q-Z (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988) 643.

ⁱⁱⁱ Zodhiates, 1427.

^{iv} Bromiley, 643

^v Zodhiates, 1427.

^{vi} Ibid., 1428.

^{vii} Bromiley, 644