
Just How Narrow is the Narrow Gate?

The narrow gate, also called the narrow door, is referred to by the Lord Jesus in [Matthew 7:13-14](#) and [Luke 13:23-24](#). Jesus compares the narrow gate to the “broad road” which leads to destruction (hell) and says that “many” will be on that road. By contrast, Jesus says that “small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” What exactly is meant by this? Just how many are the “many” and how few are the “few”?

First, we need to understand that [Jesus is the Door](#) through which all must enter eternal life. There is no other way because He alone is “the way, the truth and the life” ([John 14:6](#)). The way to eternal life is restricted to just one avenue—Christ. In this sense, the way is narrow because it is the only way, and relatively few people will go through the narrow gate. Many more will attempt to find an alternative route to God. They will try to get there through manmade rules and regulations, through false religion, or through self-effort. These who are “many” will follow the broad road that leads to eternal destruction, while the sheep hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow Him along the narrow way to eternal life ([John 10:7-11](#)).

While there will be relatively few who go through the narrow gate compared to the many on the broad road, there will still be multitudes who will follow the Good Shepherd. The apostle John saw this multitude in his vision in the book of Revelation: “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” ([Revelation 7:9-10](#)).

Entering the narrow gate is not easy. Jesus made this clear when He instructed His followers to “strive” to do so. The Greek word translated “strive” is *agonizomai*, from which we get the English word agonize. The implication here is that those who seek to enter the narrow gate must do so by struggle and strain, like a running athlete straining toward the finish line, all muscles taut and giving his all in the effort.

But we must be clear here. No amount of effort saves us; salvation is by the grace of God through the gift of faith ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). No one will ever earn heaven by striving for it. But entering the narrow gate is still difficult because of the opposition of human pride, our natural love of sin, and the opposition of Satan and the world in his control, all of which battle against us in the pursuit of eternity.

The exhortation to “strive to enter” is a command to repent and enter the gate and not to just stand and look at it, think about it, complain that it’s too small or too difficult or unjustly narrow. We are not to ask why others are not entering; we are not to make excuses or delay. We are not to be concerned with the number who will or will not enter. We are to strive forward and enter! Then we are to exhort others to strive to enter before it’s too late.

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