

## **The Road Less Travelled**

Once a month on a Friday afternoon, at the school where I teach we forgo our regular schedule and devote the afternoon to different areas of study. We call these activities "Special Days." Every elementary teacher works hard to prepare a meaningful learning center for the students to experience on Special Days . Last year, some of our Special Days included Pioneer Day, Science Day, Math Day and Health Day. But according to our students, Bible Day was the best Special Day of all.

For weeks prior to the event, I worked hard preparing my Bible Day activity: the "Walk of Faith." Together, with the help of my sixth grade students, I dipped the bare feet of every elementary student in paint and made a path of footprints, on paper, that completely encircled our school hallways.

Positioned at different intervals along the path of footprints, were several physical challenges that were designed or adapted to mimic experiences that Christians face in real life. Students travelling the path had to overcome the Leap of Faith, the Valley of Darkness, Walking on Water and the Mountain Top. My favorite challenge, however, was the False Path.

As students came through in groups, at the beginning of the Walk, I explained the Gospel (we can't begin a walk of faith without the Gospel!). I also warned the children to stay on the true path and not to become distracted by attractive alternative paths. The children all assured me they would stay on the true path.

About one third of the way through the Walk of Faith course, the children met a "fork in the road"; a very sparkly, shiny path that had a sign that said, "For fresh baked cookie turn here!" The students also heard a friendly voice inviting them to come and sample the cookies which were displayed on a beautiful china tray. I asked my students what they wanted to do: continue the Walk of Faith or go down the sparkly path for the cookies. I was certain that my students would choose to stay on the straight and narrow—after all these children had been in Bible classes and Sunday school for years. To my shock and amazement a vast majority of every class choose the cookies...which turned out to be unappetizing chunks of cardboard, decorated to look like cookies. The few students who choose to stay on the path had to pray and speak scripture in order to help their friend be released from their bondage.

My students learned a valuable lesson that day... sin always promises but never delivers. I learned a valuable lesson that day as well—God’s Word is true. “Narrow is the path and few are those who find it.” Or stay on it.

Today, we will be studying verses from the Old and New Testaments about paths. Before you begin your study, ask God to forgive you of any known sin and fill you afresh with His Holy Spirit.

**Now please read, Matthew 7:13-14.**

*"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.*

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

**Please write down every detail concerning the *narrow way* that you glean from verses 13 and 14.**

**First, the entrance to the path is narrow.** The narrowness of the gate suggests that the gate must be entered one person at a time. The decision to enter is a personal, private choice. One may not enter the path of life with a group of friends or family members. The choice is made one soul at a time.

The original Greek word for *narrow* used in this verse is *stenos* which means: narrow, strait, an opening that is narrow from obstacles within close proximity. The mention of *obstacles* suggests that the decision to enter the narrow way may not go unopposed. The Enemy will do what he can to convince people to stay on the path of destruction.

**Second, the narrow path is difficult.** We will encounter enemies along the way...not only outward enemies but an inward enemy as well—our flesh. Righteousness and holiness are not man's natural inclinations. In order to travel the narrow path we will have to deny our flesh every step of the way.

The word *difficult* comes from the Greek word *thlebo* which means "to press (as grapes), to press hard upon, to trouble, afflict, oppress." *Thlebo* descends from another Greek word which means "a path, a worn way." Jesus, as He walked upon this earth, made the path for us with His own feet and He promises to accompany us every step of the way.

**Third, the narrow path is the path that leads to life.** The narrow path is the *only* path that leads to life. The definition of the word *life* used in this verse is: "the absolute fullness of life... life full and genuine...a life active and vigorous fully devoted to God."

**In the above definition, what word is repeated three times?**

The only way we will live a life "full of life" is to give up our own path and walk the path that God has planned for us. Walking our own path of life will leave us empty, injured and lost for eternity. The more fully we are devoted to God the more life we will have. Isn't it ironic that in order to walk the path of life, we must die to self?

Please consider another portion of the definition for life "in the portion [of life] even in this world of those who put their trust in Christ, but after the resurrection to be consummated by new accessions (among them a more perfect body), and to last for ever."<sup>i</sup> Scientists are constantly seeking ways to increase the longevity of man. Some scientists even believe that with the right food, lifestyle and medical interventions man may live forever. The

answer to life eternal does not lie in the hands of scientists, however, but in the hands of God.

**Finally, few are those who find it.** Why are there few who find the narrow way? I think it is because it takes effort to find and walk the narrow path.

The word used for *find* in verse 14 is *heuriskō* which means: to find by inquiry, thought examination, to learn, to discover, to understand. Thinking, examining and discovery all take effort and energy, therefore, some will miss the narrow way due to laziness. Also, few choose the narrow path because it can be a lonely path. There will be times when you will have to walk without the company of your friends. In contrast, the broad path is easy and there are many who walk it. Please do not mistake a majority opinion for a correct opinion. In addition, other people will miss the narrow way because they will choose to live to their flesh instead. As mentioned above, the narrow way goes against every natural inclination of our flesh. Lastly, the lure of the world will cause others to miss the narrow way. Afraid that they will miss an exciting life, many will reject the narrow path.

I once received a letter from a friend who, commenting on my life as a Christian remarked, "Remember, there are many paths." My friend couldn't have been more wrong.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

When it comes to life, mankind has only two choices; the path of life or the path of death. Matthew Henry states, "There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place hereafter, no middle way now: the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity. There are only two ways...and Jesus is The Way."

There is no Middle Way... no "out" because you don't believe in God. One way leads to heaven and one way leads to hell. All of humanity is on one path or the other and most of mankind is headed in the wrong direction.

### **Which path are you on right now?**

If you know that you aren't on the path, please take time right now to address that problem. Tell God that you are ready to accept the death of Christ on the cross as payment for your sins and ask Him to come into your heart; tell Him that you are ready to quit walking your own path and follow Him for the rest of your life.

Once we have decided to follow Christ, we need to get ready for the journey. When my youngest son hikes out in the wilderness, he takes a backpack loaded with gear that is essential to his survival. Scott does not load his pack with frivolous items such as video games and candy bars; those items are left behind. He takes only what is necessary and essential. Anything else would waste energy and slow down his journey. Like Scott, we also need to rid ourselves of meaningless, useless items and take what is essential for our journey.

**Thankfully, Jesus tells us what is essential for our journey. Please turn to Matthew 16:24 and record what crucial piece of equipment we need for our journey:**

We need the Cross of Christ. As I reflected on the cross, **death, life** and **grace** came to my mind. How will these three things help us walk the narrow path?

**Death:** death to self, old habits, and terrible seasons of sin.

**Life:** resurrection of dead relationships, marriages and dreams. New life breathed into an old job, long standing problems, and crushed hopes.

**Grace:** grace for terrible mistakes, harsh words, bad choices and missed opportunities.

In my journey with Christ I have needed all of these things death, life and grace. How thankful I am for the Cross that Christ requires that we carry as we walk with Him.

**Name something in your life that needs to “die”:**

**Name something that needs life:**

**Name something that needs grace:**

Now let’s take a look at a few other verses from the Bible and record what we learn about walking the Path of Life with Jesus.

Please read Psalm 16:11

**Please record every detail you can about the “Path of Life.”**

God wants us to find this path; we will not stumble onto this path accidentally or intentionally—God must reveal this path to us; this path will be marked by His Presence; we will find great joy, (not happiness) while on

this path; and God will show us things that are truly pleasing as we walk with Him.

**Please read Isaiah 35:8 and record every detail you notice about the Highway of Holiness:**

This highway is marked by holiness (this highway is not I-94); I will not enter this highway by my own merit; and even the foolish will be able to walk this road in victory (there's hope for a woman like me).

**Now please read Isaiah 30:21 and record what you learn about staying on the path:**

When you are walking with Jesus, He will specifically guide your steps.

**Please record what you learn about Jesus while walking on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35):**

While walking the road of what seems to be your worst spiritual defeat, Jesus will be there to walk with you and to encourage you to continue your journey with Him. Your faith and your witness will be stronger because of this particular journey.

**Now turn to John 14:6 and write what you learn about The Way in the space below (the word way in this verse also translates as road):**

Jesus is the only way to go to the Father. Jesus is the only life we can live that will please our Father in Heaven.

**What have you learned thus far while walking the path that God has laid out for your life?**

In closing, the path of life is a journey. There are only two paths of which all of humanity will walk; the path of life and the path of death. God longs for all people to choose the path of life. The final destination of this path is not so much a place as it is a Person. The reason that Heaven will be heaven is because Jesus is there.

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<sup>i</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *zōē* (Strong's 2222)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 24 Sep 2011. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G2222&t=NLT> >