

REAL or RELIGIOUS?

"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."

Matthew 7:13-14



Get to Know You: Share a memorable experience you had when going through airport security, passport control or customs.

1. **Read Matthew 7:13-14.** Jesus described the way to life as "narrow" and "hard to find", however the Gospel is pretty straightforward and simple--we are sinners and the only way to fix that is through Jesus' sacrifice (the resurrection signified that God accepted the sacrifice as evidenced by the temple veil being torn top to bottom). Have you ever shared the Gospel with someone and struggled to help them understand? Why do you think it's often easier for people to practice religious rules rather than the way of Jesus?
2. **Read Genesis 13:1-18.** How is Lot's choice in Genesis 13 illustrative of choosing the wide over the narrow road? So often we choose things we think are better in a moment of opportunity only to find out later the full consequences of our decision. If you feel comfortable, share of a time when you chose something because it looked good on the surface, only to realize later that you'd made a mistake. What did you learn from this experience?

4. **Referring back to Genesis 13:14-18.** Thinking about Abraham's offer to his nephew to have first choice--how does he emulate the "Platinum Rule" we studied last week? We have the benefit of knowing the whole story, but Abraham and Lot had to live it out in the moment. What does Abraham's example teach us about trusting God, even when the path God allows us to walk seems harder or less desirable? What's one area of your life that your desire for comfort gets in the way of choosing a better path where God's blessing awaits? What holds you back?
5. **Read Luke 13:22-30.** In this passage we see people waiting too long or trying to do things their own way (religious practice without real relationship). Why do you think Jesus warned that "few ever find" the narrow road? How do we help others find and walk this road without placing a lot of performance obstacles in their way? What role does the Bible play in helping us know if our faith practice is real or just religious? Can it differ from person to person? Give a reason for your answer.
6. **Read John 14:6 & 2 Timothy 4:3-4.** What do we learn about truth from Jesus in the book of John? What was Paul's warning to Timothy (written more than 1,500 years ago)? How do you see that evidenced in society today? How can we hold onto truth with both conviction and compassion without being arrogant or condescending to those struggling to believe that God's absolute truth exists?
7. **Read Acts 4:11-12.** Rejecting Jesus is nothing new. The religious people of His day were the ones who manufactured reasons to crucify Jesus. Why do you think the exclusivity of Jesus ("only one way") still feels offensive to many today? How can we speak this truth in a way that invites rather than alienates?

Take time to Share— What has God been teaching you as you spend time in His Word each day? How is this helping your walk be "real" & not just religious?

