

D-Up: A Series on Discipleship
Am I Even on the Right Road?
Matthew 7:13-23

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Text Introduction: This morning I am beginning a new preaching series on discipleship. We are calling this series of messages “D-Up!” For those of you who might be basketball fans, you might be familiar with that phrase. This might be a phrase that the coach yells out to the team when it is time to get more intense in their defense.

I sense that it is time to get more intense in our discipleship. To borrow from the title of a book by Pastor Kyle Idleman, Jesus has not called us to be his “fans.” Instead, He has called us to be completely committed followers. There is a huge difference!

Over the next several weeks, I want us to explore together the essentials of Christian discipleship. That is, “What does it mean to be a completely committed follower of Jesus?” We begin our journey this morning by asking the question, “Am I Even on the Right Road?”

One of the passages that ought to be important to us in our discovery of discipleship is the Sermon on the Mount. It is there that we turn today for this initial lesson.

Text: ¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. ¹⁴ How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. ¹⁶ You’ll recognize them by their fruit. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit; neither can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that doesn’t produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ So you’ll recognize them by their fruit.

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 in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in Your name, drive out demons in Your name, and do many miracles in Your name?’ ²³ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, you lawbreakers!’

Introduction: After spending Thanksgiving with family in Seattle, Washington, the Kim family began their long journey back to San Francisco on November 24, 2006. James and Kati, along with their daughters Penelope (4) and Sabine (7 months), traveled south on Interstate 5 until late in the evening, intending to exit onto Highway 42 and spend the night in an upscale lodge. But they missed their turn.

Instead of backtracking, the Kims decided to follow an alternate route. Using an official Oregon Department of Transportation road map, they traveled 62 miles south and drove onto Bear Camp Road, which seemed like a more direct path to the southern Oregon Coast. Tragically, both James and Kati failed to notice a small box on the map indicating that the road might be closed during winter. The Kims

eventually encountered warning signs announcing that snow drifts had blocked the pass, and decided to turn off onto a spur road. According to George Arnold, an area resident, this was a tragic decision: **"Once you get off that main road," he said, "you're lost."**

After struggling for 15 miles along the unpaved road, their station wagon became stuck in the drifting snow. Rather than attempting to backtrack on foot, the family decided to remain with the car and hope for rescue. They remained there for a week, running the car intermittently for heat and rationing their small amount of food. Once the gas ran out, they burned magazines, wet wood, and eventually car tires in an effort to keep warm.

Finally, on Saturday, December 1, James Kim decided to leave his wife and young daughters and set off on foot in order to find help. Again looking at the map, he determined that the town of Galice was about 4 miles away. But according to state police officer Gregg Hastings, the distance was actually 15 miles. James's body was found the following Wednesday. He died of exposure and hypothermia.

After waiting two days for her husband to return, Kati gathered up her children and began her own trek to find help. Thankfully, she was spotted by rescue helicopters and saved soon after. (*Source: Martin Kasindorf and Andrea Stone, "Rescuers Laud Dad as Hero," USA Today (12-8-06), 3A*)

"Once you get off that main road, you're lost." What wisdom! A good summary of our text today could be "Anything besides a relationship with Jesus is the wrong road."

Here in this passage this morning, we are talking about the main road.

Jesus' words at the close of the Sermon on the Mount . . .

1. Help us to draw some certain conclusions about eternity.

(1) Only 2 eternal outcomes: Heaven or Hell

This passage is filled with pairs: narrow gate and wide gate; destruction and life; many and few; good trees and bad trees; good fruit and bad fruit; those who enter Heaven and those who do not. When a person dies, there are two outcomes, but only two outcomes. Some go to Heaven and others go to Hell. It's that simple.

(2) Only 1 way to Heaven

The way is narrow. The way is difficult. I believe that both of these descriptions point to Jesus. The way is free, but not easy, because Jesus had to die.

The idea that Jesus is the only way is not popular theology, but why would Jesus have to die, if there was some other way? Remember, Jesus prayed in the Garden before His agony, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass before Me." If there could have been another way, the Heavenly Father would have provided at that moment the release of the Son from the agony of the cross.

(3) Those that choose the right way are less than those who choose another way.

Unfortunately, many are the ones who will travel down this dangerous, deadly road.

In Bolivia, there is a road that translated from Spanish is called "The Road of Death." (*el camino de la muerte*) It has been named the "world's most dangerous road."

This dirt and rock route stretches 38 to 43 miles, depending on the source, and descends from La Paz (at 12,000 feet) down to the beautiful rain forest town of Coroico at the edge of the basin of the Amazon River.

Why so dangerous? An average of 26 vehicles fall off this road each year; and 200 to 300 people lose their lives on it annually. Steep hillsides, cliffs, and drop-offs with no guardrails present hazards, and the road in places has room for only one vehicle. Rain and fog complicate the trip, along with muddy surfaces and loose rocks sliding down hillsides. On July 24, 1983, over 100 passengers were killed when a bus veered over the edge and crashed into a canyon.

But, despite the danger, the road has become an increasingly popular tourist attraction since the early 1990s. (*Graham Gori, "Thrills on the Highway of Death," Associated Press (11-24-02)*)

Interesting, isn't it that this dangerous road would attract so many? But, isn't that the way life is?

2. Lead us to ask some clarifying questions about our salvation.

These words from Jesus' Sermon lead us to ask some clarifying questions about our salvation. So, here we are understanding that there are only two eternal outcomes, only 1 way to Heaven, and that few choose this way. Don't we want to make sure we are on the right road? Don't we owe it to ourselves and to our families who love us that we are on the right road—that we will be in Heaven the day we die? Here it is in simple terms.

Heaven is not reserved for those who . . .

Say the right Words OR

Do righteous Works.

Heaven is reserved for those who . . .

Have a relationship with Jesus.

Remember those words in the beginning: "Once you get off that main road, you're lost." Anything besides a relationship with Jesus is the wrong road.

So, what about the sincerity of that relationship with Jesus?

3 Questions to Ask about the sincerity of that relationship

- (1) *Is my faith only in Jesus?*
- (2) *Does my life bear fruit?*
- (3) *Do I want to obey Christ?*

3. Call us to make a clear Decision.

Jesus' words call us to make a clear decision. We must choose. This is not about being an admirer of Jesus; this is about being a follower of Jesus. You must choose. You decide that Jesus is the right way

and you follow Him or you decide that He is not the right way and you go another way. But, you have to decide. To not decide is to decide.

Once you decide, you must follow Him whole-heartedly not half-heartedly. You cannot follow Him when someone is looking or no one is looking, you must follow Him always. You cannot follow Him when you decide it is convenient, you must follow Him always. You cannot follow Him, when it fits your schedule, you must follow Him always. You cannot follow Him, when you agree with His teachings, you must follow Him always.

But, follow Him, you must, because Heaven and Hell hang in the balance.

4. *Force Christians to have a Passion for those not yet believers.*

As we close, a word to the Christian is in order. This passage should drive our passion for urgency to reach those not yet believers in Jesus. There ought to be a greater urgency to our praying and our telling the story of Jesus. The strength of your commitment might very well be determined by how willing you are to share this message with those who do not yet know or who do not yet believe.