

Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-14)

Checklist: - Paths set up for the obstacle course activity (see below)

Wide and Narrow Gates Obstacle Course:

Ahead of time, set up (1.) a large “gate” (using cones or something) with an easy, wide path and (2.) a narrow “gate” with a narrow, hard path. The entrances should be opposing so the paths lead in opposite directions.

Let youth know they can do the wide path any way they want but if they choose the narrow path they have to go through the obstacles. Have each of the youth choose a path and go through it. Then...

Matthew 7:13-14:

Read Matthew 7:13-14 (while everyone follows along in Bibles)

Ask:

- How is what Jesus teaches here similar to the activity we did?
- What does the wide gate and the broad road leading to destruction stand for?
(It is the world's way of living life – Satan's way - the selfish way. It's about doing whatever you want and living your life however you want. That leads to destruction – it hurts people right now and it ultimately leads to hell.)
- What are some examples of people doing whatever they want (doing things Satan's way) and how it hurts them?
(Maybe have kids discuss how having sex outside of marriage might be easy and seem fun for a while and that many people do that, but also about what the consequences are both emotionally and physically. You could also discuss this for drugs, disobeying parents, or etc.)
- Jesus said many choose the wide gate. Why do so many choose the wide gate?
(We're sinful by nature and so that is the way that is easy to choose on our own.)
- So what does the narrow gate stand for?
In answer to this question, make sure the youth understand:
 - Jesus is the gate!
 - In John 10:9, Jesus said, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved” (NIV)
 - And in John 14:6, Jesus said, “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (NIV)
 - There is only one way to true life right now and eternal life in heaven and that is through Jesus.
- What does the narrow road stand for?
(It's living God's way. It is walking toward God in our life. It's staying within the way God has set up for us to live and not going outside those boundaries. It means not following Satan and not giving into temptation.)

Little Pilgrim's Progress Excerpt:*

Let's read a little bit from a great story called Little Pilgrim's Progress that relates to Jesus' teaching about the broad way of destruction and narrow way to life. The story begins...

Little Christian lived in a great city called Destruction... Now and then a grave-looking man, or a woman with a gentle face, would come to the city for a little time, and these strangers always tried to make friends with the children and were willing to tell them stories whenever they would listen. “There is a beautiful country,” they would say, “far away from this city. A very good and wise King rules over it, who loves little children dearly. The Prince to whom your city belongs is wicked and cruel, and he hates our good King. But one day an army will come from the King's country to fight against your Prince, and this city will be burned, and all the people in it will be killed.” (p9-10)

The story goes on to talk about Christian heading out on the Way of the King road toward the Celestial City and the different challenges he faced (like a difficult hill to climb and a dark valley to go through), battles he had to fight (like with Self), and about people he met along the way that either tried to help him or tried to lead him away from the path. Here is what happened on part of his journey while he was with a friend he met along the way named Hopeful...

The boys were both feeling very tired. They had found the path leading from the river rough and stony, and their feet were sore and aching.

Christian stopped when he saw the stile and leaned over it. A fence divided the meadow from the Way of the King, but a smooth grassy path ran close to it.

"Could we not walk along this path for a little way?" he said, turning to Hopeful. "The stones are hard and my feet ache dreadfully."

"So do mine," answered Hopeful; "but would it be safe?"...

"Oh, I think it must be," said Christian. "See, it runs close to the fence. We could climb back again anywhere in a minute."

Hopeful did not feel quite sure that they were doing right; but as he thought that Christian knew more about the King's law than he did, he followed his companion into the meadow. The grass was soft and pleasant to their feet, and not far before them another boy was walking along near the fence.

Christian called to him, saying, "Can you tell us where this path leads to?"

The boy, whose name was Vain-Confidence, turned round and replied, "To the Celestial City."

"You see," said Christian, "I was right. We shall be quite safe." (p105-106)

It goes on to say that it became dark and they became scared and realized they were on the wrong path and tried to find their way back in the dark (and now stormy) night. They ended up getting caught by the Giant Despair and were not able to escape for many days until they prayed and remembered they had earlier been given a key called the Key of Promise. And so they were able to escape and get back to the right road and head again toward the Celestial City.

Ask: What truths does that story help explain about the wide road of Destruction and the narrow road that leads to life that Jesus taught about?

Application:

Ask:

- Have you ever had a time when you did things God's way, even though it was hard, and it ended up being the best? What are some examples of when doing things God's way might be hard, but good?
- So since Jesus says in verse 14: "small is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and only a few find it," does that mean we have to earn our salvation by being good enough and living for God well enough?

In answer to that question, make sure the kids understand:

- The Bible makes it clear that the only way we are saved is by faith in Christ and not by being good enough. We can't earn it!
- The Bible says that if we have faith in Jesus, His death on the cross pays for our sin and His perfect life is counted for us. (In other words, He lived a perfect life and "walked the narrow way" for us).
- Then, if we have Christ, it is the Holy Spirit working in us that helps us to live the way God wants us to. So, if we do have Jesus, the evidence of that is that - more and more - we do live for God. (While we will not do it perfectly and we will many times need God's forgiveness for failing, if the Holy Spirit is working in our lives we should "walk the narrow road" better and better over time.)

There are two gates to choose from – the world's way and Jesus' way.

- If you've already given your life to Jesus, ask Jesus to continue to help you live the narrow way for God so you can please Him and experience the joy and peace that obeying Him brings!
- If you haven't given your life to Jesus do it! Jesus said to enter the narrow gate!

- If you believe Jesus died on the cross to pay for your sin and that He rose again, ask Him to forgive you and save you. If you believe in Him, you will be saved and you will have entered into the gate of eternal life.
- Then, ask God to help you live the way He wants you to so you can experience the best life He has for you right now!

Closing Prayer

Notes:

*The excerpts are from *Little Pilgrim's Progress*, by Helen T Taylor (Moody Press, printing date note given). (It is based on the classic book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan. I feel that the amount of the book used and its use here constitute fair use.

References:

William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew*, part of New Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, fourth printing 1979), 366-371.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament Volume I* (Colorado Springs: Victor, imprint of Cook, 2001), 30-31.

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