

Matthew 7:7-23

Truth or Dare?

How many of you have ever played truth or dare? It can be an innocent game where the players have the choice of answering truthfully a question that is asked of them or they can choose a dare.

Most times it can be an innocent game but there are those who slide into less innocence and it can get a bit raunchy. But at its core, it can be quite fun.

Here is some examples of some of the questions you might get asked.
Who was your first kiss and what were the circumstances surrounding it.
What is the grossest thing you ever ate?
When was the last time you were really angry?
What's the most embarrassing thing that happen to you when you were in a crowd?
Have you ever lied to a friend?

Or, if you didn't take a question then you might be dared to do one of the following.

Do a cart wheel. Drink an ounce of lemon juice. Act like a chicken until it is your turn next. Drink some tabasco sauce. Spin around 12 times and then try and walk straight. Lick a bar of soap without rinsing your mouth out after.

In the game, each player has a choice. Get a question asked and then tell the truth or do something strange that is asked of you.

In a way this is what I think Jesus is talking about in the passage we find ourselves in Matthew. You can pick a road that is the truth or you can take a chance on God being something other than what He really is. I'll explain in a minutes.

Look with me at the first two verses.

Matthew 7:13-14, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is narrow and the way is narrow that leads to life and there are few that find it.”

Jesus lays out a choice. A wide road that will lead to all kinds of funkiness and eventually eternal death or a narrow road that leads to life, eternal life and a stronger, more blessed life during your stay here on earth. One is truth and the other is to take a chance, a dare, that the Creator of the Universe is a loving God who would only send just a few deserving people to an eternal hell. People like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini or Idi Amin, who were mass murderers responsible for millions of deaths.

Do you know this is the predominant belief in America today? A recent poll of Christians and non-Christians alike found out that 75% of people who believe in heaven believe that all roads of religions lead to heaven.

This type of thinking is called

Definition: Universalism – All religions lead to heaven.

A universalist believes that all people are inherently good and as long as they live a pretty good life and believe there is a God and a heaven, then they are assured to get there when their life here on earth is over.

Michal and I were visiting with a couple just last week that was telling us of a pastor who was teaching just that. Scary stuff when a pastor takes that position and teaches it to his church. That is why Jesus, right after this passage on a wide or narrow road goes into the following verses.

Look with me.

Matthew 7:15-17, “Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles are they? So every good tree bears good fruit but the bad tree bears bad fruit.”

Just as false prophets were around during Jesus’ day and after, so there are false prophets around today. A universalist believes in a god, but their thinking is twisted.

A false prophet is a person who might have a little bit of truth but they have mixed it with enough untruth that it all has turned to untruth. Like all roads lead to heaven. Jesus tells us though, the road to destruction and the road laid out by false prophets leads to death.

Here’s the challenge for us today. The gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction and many are on it. Because of this

1. It is easy for Christians to put themselves in dangerous positions by following the crowd

In order to be liked by everybody, they want to follow the crowd. They want to follow the crowd in their clothing, their entertainment, in their opinions, habits, language, thoughts about God and salvation and many other ways.

Jesus says though if you follow the main group of people it is going to lead to destruction. If you are not saved then it can lead you to hell and even if you are saved it can lead you to a destruction of your spiritual growth, becoming all that God has in store for you and the great possibility of denouncing your salvation and the damnation in hell follows.

David of David and Goliath fame face this issue of following the crowd on the wide road and this is what he said in Psalms 26.

Psalms 26:4-5, “I do not sit with deceitful people nor will I go with pretenders. I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked.”

I don't think David is saying that he will totally avoid sinful people. But he is saying that he is careful who he spends a lot of time with.

Think about this today. A sinful person biblically, is one who is not following the Lord, they are on the broad path. If we were to avoid every person who is not following the Lord in all their ways then we would certainly have limited contact with people. But we are not called to pull ourselves out of the world are we? We need contact with those who do not have a relationship with the Lord so we can be the salt and the light, possibly bringing salvation into their lives.

But I think David is saying I am not going to hang with them to the degree that they will begin to influence me. Yes, I want to be an influence to them but I know if I hang with them too much, then I began to slip in my following of the Lord, my thinking about spiritual things might get diluted and/or I can easily get caught up in the things of the world only, the things they are caught up in.

We know that in this world, there are a lot of distractions people can get caught up in other than God. Jesus spoke of this in Luke when He said that because of the worries, pleasure and riches of this world, the seed, the good news of Jesus and the people who received salvation, the seed of Jesus landed in the thorny soil of a person's heart but it did not reach maturity. The saved person fell short of their potential of producing more spiritual fruit in themselves and helping others grow in their spiritual walk and producing spiritual fruit as well.

That is the hope God has for us isn't? Maturity and to be a fruit bearer for His kingdom.

David says here in verse 4-5, nope, I not going there, I am not going to go down the wide road and later in verse 6-8 he says, I am going to hang with my spiritual buddies, I am going to hang with my God.

I think

2. God's message for us today is for us to check and make sure we are out of the line the crowd is moving in

The crowded line is the wrong line. Just because there is a lot of people on it doesn't mean it is the right one. The broad way, the way of the crowd, is the one that leads to destruction.

But Jesus tells us there is another way. There is another way but the gate is small, the way is narrow and very few find it. It is the way of life. Eternal life in heaven and a greater, more blessed life during your stay here on earth.

Popular opinion says there are many ways to eternal life and a blessed here on earth but Jesus says there is only one way, one gate. If we believe Jesus, and I think most of you would say that you do then you believe the following statement Jesus said about Himself.

John 10:7, "I am the gate."

John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

John 6:35-48, I am the bread of life."

John 10:11-14, "I am the good Shepherd."

John 8:12, "I am the Light of the world."

John 11:25, "I am the true vine."

John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life."

3. Over and over again Jesus says in different ways, I am the narrow gate that leads to life

Some people say that this is so narrow minded, thinking Jesus is the only way. And yes, that is exactly what Jesus is saying. It is a narrow gate.

Compared to the multitude of things the world can invent and come up with, ways to eternal life, Jesus says I am the one and only true gate through which one must enter to be able to go to heaven.

As we think about Jesus, His life and His ministry we can see why these statements Jesus made must be true. As you study the Bible, right from the beginning we read this truth.

Genesis 1:27, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Humanity was created to be like God. Not to be gods, not to have all the power of God but to have His holy image upon them. In the way they thought, acted, spoke, loved and lived, they were, Adam and Eve, like God. They were holy in all their being.

Then as you know, sin entered into their hearts. A separation occurred between God and the men and women He created and loved. They were cast out of the garden, forbidden to walk and talk with God as they once did.

Being a holy God, God could not be in the presence of sin. So all of humanity was thrust into a darkness that was passed from generation to generation.

But in His great love for people, for you and for me, God made a way for people to once again regain the holiness that was lost. He made a way that would bring men, women and children back in a loving relationship with their Creator. But it was a narrow way and only a few find it, find the gate, find Jesus.

Christianity is the only religion that deals with the reality of humanity's sin issue the way Jesus did. All other religions tell you to do good works so you will be good enough to get into heaven. But I have news for those

individuals. You will never be good enough to get into heaven. Even Jesus prayed, God, if there is another way I will do it.

But there was no other way so Jesus went to the cross. 100% God and 100% man. The perfect sacrifice. When Jesus died on the cross, He was the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins for all those who would place their faith and trust in Him. But that wasn't all. That wasn't enough to seal the deal.

He died but He rose again and scripture testifies to His resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:5-6a, "...He appeared to Cephas (Peter) then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time..."

We know also that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and another Mary at the tomb and I am sure there were several others. Like the two men on the road to Emmaus.

No other religious leader can claim this truth. Resurrection from the dead. Jesus was the only one. He was the first born of the dead and took His place as first of all things.

Some may say we are narrow minded about Jesus being the only way. Maybe this is actually a compliment. Maybe they are saying that we are part of the few who found that gate and the narrow way. If that is true of each of you, and I pray it is, you are truly blessed amen?

Not only this. Not only are you blessed to be on the narrow road of salvation, eternal life, but I pray you are on the road to being spiritually fruitful in this life.

Look at one of Jesus' I am statements. **John 15:5, "I am the vine, you are the branches, the one who abides in Me and I in them, (stays on the narrow road), they will bear much fruit..."**

John 15:16, “You did not choose Me but I chose you...that you would go and bear fruit...”

Jesus chose you to be connected to Him and to be a fruit bearer for Him and His kingdom. As we stay on the road that God created through Jesus the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience and even God’s power will be working in and through you.

As followers on the road of Jesus, we must be committed to believe the word of God, not our own logic, not what sounds good or makes sense to other people. There are going to be things that are not popular, or may not make sense to us, because we are not God and His ways are higher than our ways. But we are to trust what His word says, we are to live by it, take our stand on it when it is unpopular or even dangerous to do so.

504 years ago, in 1517, a priest named Martin Luther took a stand on the word of God against the false teachings that was coming out of the church. He said, “don’t tell me what the pope said; don’t tell me what the council said, don’t tell me what the people say, tell me and show me what the word of God says.

God is telling His people the same thing today. **Read the word of God, learn the word of God, stand on the word of God so that no matter what the crowd around you is saying, you will know the truth and the truth will keep you free and keep you producing great spiritual fruit for God’s kingdom.**

The gate is narrow that leads to life and few who find it.

Let’s all continue to be that few...Amen?

Let’s pray