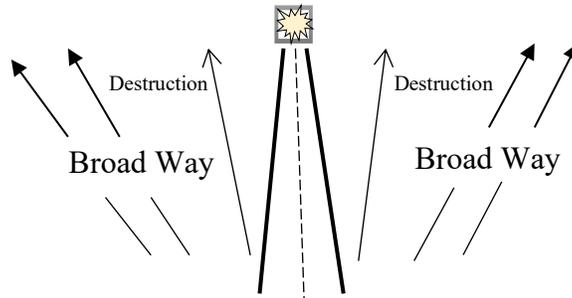


~ Part Two ~

Side Roads that Miss the Mark

Jesus is the Narrow Gate



Jesus poignantly described the way to the Father, stating in John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Later, Jesus illustrated His statement using a word picture in Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus is the narrow gate. "You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell¹ 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." (NLT)

According to these scriptures and others, Jesus is the narrow gate. Entering by the narrow gate represents the way to know God and to experience His infinite love. The invitation to enter by the narrow gate is extended to every person. *Every person is invited* to enter God's kingdom through the narrow gate; no one needs to miss heaven. God wants us to experience His love, so that is why He has given us a clear and precise way to know Him.

The enigma of the narrow gate

To many people, the premise of the narrow gate, as presented by Jesus, represents an enigma.² That is because Jesus Himself is an enigma. Why? Because Jesus exemplifies and is the epitome of perfect love, yet He also personifies perfect justice. Jesus' perfect love compelled Him to come, on our behalf, to bring perfect justice to the highest court in the universe. Therefore, pairing Jesus' perfect love and perfect justice, in the same context, produces an enigma. How can this be? To the natural mind, perfect love would overlook the need for justice, and similarly, perfect justice would exclude or supersede perfect love. These two immutable characteristics of God are not only unattainable in a human capacity, but are incompatible with the natural mindset. However, God demanded both, and Jesus accomplished both.

Let's consider Jesus' proclamation about the narrow gate, including His warning to those who are on side roads. It is vitally important to discern how you will respond to God's invitation to know Him through His Son. Please note that choosing the broad way, (side roads) are not minor miscues, but according to Jesus, are miscalculations with fatal consequences. Side roads can only offer a false hope of salvation, which, in fact, is no hope at all.

Side Road # 2 Mental Assent—a well-traveled side road

In Christian jargon, mental assent is also known as "head knowledge." Mental assent is a fatal side road because it does not infer a heart-to-heart relationship with God, which is the basis for the Christian experience. Being "in Christ" is more than knowing about God. It's about knowing Him personally and experiencing Him with your heart.

¹ The NKJ translation says, "...the way that leads to destruction."

²Enigma - e·nig·ma—*noun*—a person or thing that is mysterious, puzzling, or difficult to understand.

I often use the following analogy to make this point: You can know *about* the President—facts, quotes, family trivia and such, but that doesn't mean that you *know* him. However, suppose the President knew you personally and you were able to converse with the President about family matters, mutual interests, and personal concerns. In that case, you could say that you know him personally. It is the same with God and His Kingdom. You can know *about* God through what you have heard or read, but that does not mean that you *know* Him personally and belong in His family.

God instilled into every person the desire and inclination to seek Him and find Him.

He wants you to know Him and He wants You to draw close to Him as a well-loved child.

The Bible mentions many times that God looks on your heart to determine your true bearing. God knows if you have a heart-to-heart relationship with Him. Using the Strong's concordance, I discovered that the Greek word, *kardia* (Strong's #NT2588), is mentioned 156 times in the New Testament. *Kardia* is mostly translated *heart*, but in every case, the context implies the inner feelings, understanding, or the deep-seated thoughts of the mind.

The way *kardia* is used in Scripture tells us that a person must know God with his heart and not just through head knowledge. We cannot base our relationship with God upon what we know *about* Him. It is not enough to know God with only our intellect through reasoning, training, reading, conjecture, or by practicing the tenets of the Christian faith. These are not bad practices, but unfortunately, these good works can be, and often are, accomplished outside of a true, personal relationship with God.

In most instances, a person who serves God through mental assent does not know better. This person feels that he or she is in good standing with God and serving Him well.³ However, a relationship with God goes beyond conveying a genuine aspiration to serve Him. Many people possess a deep-seated love for the institution of faith, participate in timeless liturgy, and adhere faithfully to valid Christian doctrines while displaying a vibrant witness as a good person. However, without a genuine one-on-One relationship with God, a nagging feeling of emptiness will invariably reveal a "God-shaped void," despite awe-inspiring devotion and effort.

Having a genuine relationship with God produces an overflow of His abundance that is beyond what we could ever think or ask. Scripture poignantly points out that claiming to be God's own without truly knowing Him in a heart-to-heart relationship, in fact, a rejection of Him, which produces an inward hollowness.⁴ —Ω

 Information and Revelation
 Application and Transformation

Heavenly Father, thank You for calling me into a relationship with You. Thank You loving me first and inviting me to know You, even when I was yet a sinner. Thank You giving me a clear and precise way to know You, and giving me the faith to believe that You are for me and not against me. Thank You for Jesus who is the epitome of perfect love and perfect justice, satisfying the demands of the highest court in the universe. LORD, I submit to Your Word today and forgo the dangers and the carnal trap of knowing You through "head knowledge." Today I seek a heart-to-heart relationship with You, so I can experience You with my heart. So, LORD, right now, I answer Your invitation and receive Jesus as my savior. I believe that He paid the price You demanded for my sins. I believe that Jesus was crucified and buried, and on the third day He rose again. I receive His resurrection power that transforms me into a new creation, so that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. LORD, I give You permission to keep on the narrow path at all costs to my mortal being. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Excerpted and adapted from, "Having the Mind of Christ"

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³ See Matthew 7:21-22—note the dumbfounded reply given in response to Jesus' rebuke.

⁴See Galatians 2:20-21; Matthew 7:21-23