

INTRODUCTION

Life is made up of a myriad of choices...what to wear, what to eat for breakfast, which way to drive to work, who to marry. But as Aaron shared last week your most important decision is what road to choose – the narrow or broad one. The narrow road, which leads to life, is a difficult road with many dangers. How can you “check the road that you are on”? What is the best way to guard against false prophets? How can you know what your fruit is?

SCRIPTURE

¹³Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. ¹⁵Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. ²¹Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7:13-23

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been “taken in” by someone who wasn’t who you thought they were? If you’re comfortable sharing, briefly tell your story to your group.
2. Read Matthew 7:13-23. Why does Jesus give a warning about false prophets immediately after talking about narrow and broad roads?
3. There is great difficulty in recognizing false prophets because they disguise themselves like sheep. Read the following passages and list the ways you may be able to identify a false prophet:

Matthew 7:16 _____

Romans 16:17-18 _____

2 Timothy 4:3-4 _____

I John 4:3 _____

Jude 1:4,8,10,16,19 _____

4. What is the fruit of false prophet (1 Timothy 6:3-5, 10, Deuteronomy 13:1-5)?
5. What is the fruit of obedience (Galatians 5:22-23)?

Study Questions for Community Groups

6. One of the most sobering statements Jesus makes is in Matthew 7:21: “*Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.*” According to the verse, what is the difference between those who will and those who will not enter heaven?
7. When Jesus says, “*the will of my Father*”, what do you think He is referring to?

APPLICATION

Do you know the fundamentals of the faith...those beliefs that are non-negotiable for Christ-followers? These are essential if you are to watch out for false prophets. If you don't know what you believe, read through the Apostles' Creed below. Study any of the doctrines contained in it that you don't understand.

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

If you are firm in your beliefs, check the road that you are on. Ask the Spirit for wisdom in discerning true doctrine from false doctrine. Use a spiritual compass -who is at your North, South, East, and West? Your North is someone who is speaking God's truth into your life. Your East and West are those you do with, who hold you accountable to live a life obedient to Christ. Your South is someone who is either a new believer or not yet a believer to whom you can speak truth.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read the Book of Jude (one chapter), an urgent letter written to expose false teachers (prophets) and encourage believers to fight for truth. In verses 4 and 8, what were the false teachers doing?
2. Jude describes the false teachers in a number of ways. Beside the phrases below, use your own words to describe these people.

“blemishes at your love feasts”

“shepherds who feed only themselves”

“clouds without rain, blown along by the wind”

“autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted”

“wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame”

“wandering stars”

“grumblers and faultfinders”

3. What is the end result for these false teachers (verses 14-15; see also 2 Peter 2:1-9)?
4. In light of the fact that there **are** false teachers in the Church, what does Jude tell believers to do in verses 20-23? What does it mean to “*keep yourselves in God's love*”? List some specific ways you can do this.