

Deep Discipleship: True Discipleship ▪ Matthew 7:13-23

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Intro: If someone came up to you and asked: “How do I know if I’m a true Christian?” How would you answer?

Tell them to believe in the Lord Jesus.

Tell them it’s important to confess and repent.

- That very question— “how do I know if I’m a true Christian”, gets at the very heart of this concluding section.
- As the Sermon on the Mount (SOM) closes, we get some tests of *true discipleship*.

Just for clarity’s sake: deep discipleship is true discipleship.

There is no option there to remain shallow.

Deep discipleship is true discipleship.

Everything else is false and counterfeit.

The 3 examples that Jesus gives to flesh out discipleship are in true/false categories:

True/False Paths

True/False Prophets

True/False Professions

Through these we also hear an evangelistic call—eternal life and death are the core issues.

TRUE AND FALSE PATHS (13-14)

- This comes in the form of an invitation—Jesus is inviting his disciples to enter one particular gate, and travel one particular path.
- The word used for gate could describe either a gate at the entrance of a city, or a gate at the temple. Either way, what stands out is that both the gate and path are narrow—*not the ones one would naturally choose*.

The takeaways: Not many travel it.

All we have to do is look around our community to get it. What's going on down I26—expanding the interstate. Get more cars.

More people are moving into the Midlands, meaning more roads and infrastructure.

- How do I know if I'm a true Christian? Am I traveling the road that the masses are on?

A path is a common wisdom metaphor.

Proverbs 10:17 ESV

Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life,
but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.

- Second, the path is a difficult one

There is only one road of true discipleship —and it's not an easy road.

Matthew 16:24 ESV

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Acts 14:22 ESV

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Here is the difficulty—

We have a powerful draw toward what makes us comfortable.

Add to that, for many, feelings are king.

That means we are going to resist a hard road.

The narrow path is the less comfortable path.

We need to ask—is my Christian life marked out by what is most comfortable? Is the path I'm on really easy?

If so, ask if it's really true discipleship.

When I lived in the Midwest there were two types of roads: blacktop, and gravel. That's how people in the church talked. You either lived in town, or on a blacktop outside of town, or on a gravel road.

I hated driving on gravel roads...they dirtied your vehicle, when it rained you had mud splashed, when it didn't rain there was a cloud of dust—if you were following a person, you had to stay a half mile back just to see clearly.

But if you lived on a gravel road—it was the *only way home*.

- Jesus tells us that there is one way home.
- First, there is only one way to God; one way of being reconciled: Faith in the Lord Jesus. Trusting in his atoning death on the cross. Nothing else.

› *This makes the gate of salvation very narrow.*

- Second, the one way is a hard way

In our high spiritual therapeutic world, so often the message is: Come to Jesus and all will be smooth. It's all about healing your brokenness.

—The same Jesus who said, “Come to me, I am gentle and lowly in heart”, also says... “If you are my disciple you must deny yourself, grab your cross, and follow me on the difficult path.”

For some, the main point of application in the SOM is this: Get off the broad road.

Stop following the crowd. Start taking following Jesus seriously.

Martin Lloyd Jones— “Being a Christian is becoming something exceptional and unusual”.

....It’s because the path of discipleship is exceptional and unusual—it’s narrow and hard....yet *eternally rewarding!*

TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS (15-20)

- Now in a broad sense, false teaching usually goes in one of 4 directions:

1) Getting the doctrine of Trinity wrong

2) Distorting teachings about person and work of Christ

3) Adding to the gospel (in an early church saying you had to add all of Mosaic law)

4) Downplaying the doctrine of sin and personal holiness (becoming the MO in our day, I believe)

- First, note their approach; (v15) they “come to you”

Just like Satan disguised himself as a snake (God’s Creation) and entered in the sacred and holy space of the Garden—the false prophets have the same design: they disguise themselves as sheep’s pelt— and enter into the sacred space of the church.

- Since they are disguised, they often use familiar language and just twist it.

In the book *Another Gospel?* The author, Alisa Childers tells of her experience of sitting under a progressive pastor at a church in CA. When she asked him pointed questions: Do you believe the Bible to be inspired. He said, of course. But later found out he meant something radically different. Not divinely inspired, but “humanly inspired”

The prophet Jeremiah warned of the sages who cried out. “Peace. Peace”

Jeremiah 8:11 ESV

They have healed the wound of my people lightly,
saying, ‘Peace, peace,’
when there is no peace.

- Second, they are “ravenous wolves”

A wolf does not play with sheep—they kill sheep.

A wolf is a predator; they seek out victims, typically the weak and vulnerable ones.

—The prophet Ezekiel paints a graphic picture:

Ezekiel 22:27 ESV

Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain.

The way the false prophets kill the sheep is by calling them to follow on the broad path that leads to destruction.

- Now we could have a list: how to spot a false teacher—but Jesus only gives one...
[lifestyle/fruit.](#)

I also think that there is a strong appeal, and argument for who should be the primary teachers in our lives—the teachers inside of your local church.

No matter how good a public teacher of the Word may be on YouTube or a Conference, you will never be able to verify the *actual fruit* of his life from afar.

A recent example would be Mars Hill Church, Mark Driscoll. Had a following of tens of thousands because he was such an engaging communicator—but behind the scenes had massive character issues, extreme narcissism and abusive behavior.

TRUE AND FALSE PROFESSIONS (21-23)

- There may be a loose connection at least—false prophets can lead astray to the point of creating false professions.
- That’s especially true if the false teacher’s lives are marked by casual attitudes toward sin, following the broad way!!
- It’s a warning in the sense that some will be surprised on the Day of Judgment.

- “On that day” has in mind the future judgment. The interesting thing is that in both of the teachings on judgment day, there is an element of *surprise*.

In Mt 27 the righteous are surprised at the small deeds that get noticed.

- Here it’s just the opposite: some will be in for a big surprise at what does *not* get noticed.
- Jesus mentions a few things that are noticeable and catch the eye: prophecy, exorcisms, and miracles (v22).
- All these on the surface look like amazing ways that God is working and moving.

We can say these are all *extraordinary works*.

- Regardless of where you stand on modern charismatic issues, we can all agree that these are things that the early church saw...they were done in service and proclamation of the Word of God, recorded in the NT.
- So here is the sobering part of the warning: Many (using the same word Jesus does) in the church, may be surprised to find out one day that they were not true disciples....even though they had the appearance of being extraordinary gifted people. In other words: don’t let gifts fool you.

—Again, many will prove that they are not true disciples at all.

Q: How do I know if I’m a true Christian?

Look at two things Jesus says:

--A true Christian is one who does the will of the Father (v21)—which is a sum of all we’ve heard in the SOM.

--A true Christian does not continue to practice lawlessness (v23); they “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Mt 3:8).

1 John 2:29 ESV

If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

Jas. 2—Faith without works is dead.

LBC1689— 16:2 These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruit and evidence of a true and living faith.

Stan Reeves, *Confessing the Faith: The 1689 Baptist Confession for the 21st Century* (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2012), 34–35.

At the end of the day, it's not just that you believe differently...do you *live differently*?

Is your life changed?

Fruit will always reveal the *true nature*.

Conclusion

What ties all this together, and really in the SOM, is the difference between external appearance and inward reality.

—On the outside, the broad road seems good. Many travel. It's that way everyone goes.

—On the outside, false teachers look like sheep.

—On the outside, a profession of faith along with powerful exercise of gifts are attractive.

- › In all the examples Jesus gives, *initial appearance can be really deceptive*.
- › In other words, these are all final warnings against religious hypocrisy...and a call to spiritual discernment that starts with...ourselves.

To answer the question: How do I know if I'm a true Christian?

- Examine yourself: What's on the inside? What's in your heart? Does it match what's on the outside? Is there just sham and veneer?
- Or does the inside reflect a genuine love for the Lord Jesus, a desire to grow in him, to know him, honor him. Is there a growing hatred of sin and love of what is good, holy, and pure?

This brings us full circle:

I said at the beginning of this series—the material in the SOM—the raw material of deep discipleship is not something human-produced.

It's not by our self-effort or will.

- › It all has to be the Work of the Spirit.

Everything good inside of us—all true discipleship...will be by the Spirit.

For all who have the work of the Spirit inside: the words of Jesus on judgment day will not be depart, but:

“Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master.”