



## OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, we thank you for this gathering of our small group and the ways in which you are working through us. As we settle into our time together this week, we ask you to guide our conversations, our thoughts, and relationships. We offer up to you everything that feels weighty or distracting. We ask that you pour out on us your deep peace, which you offer freely. Multiply our time together and help us to pursue you daily. Amen.

## COMMUNITY

### Time to build relationships: mix + mingle!

- + Did something specific resonate with you from the sermon or worship service?
  
- + If you couldn't attend, ask others in your group what stood out to them.  
(Note: Links to both video and audio versions of previous sermons can be found at [www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts](http://www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts).)
  
- + Where did you see God's presence in your past weekend?

## WATCH THE VIDEO | The Narrow Path

We encourage you to take notes

### SCRIPTURE

**A great starting place is always God's word.**

#### **Matthew 7:13-14**

*<sup>13</sup> "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup> But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

#### **John 10:1-10**

*"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. <sup>2</sup> The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." <sup>6</sup> Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. <sup>7</sup> Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. <sup>9</sup> I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

## SITUATION

This week our scriptures include excerpts of Jesus' preaching that are less than clear. Have you ever wondered why many of these Biblical teachings include everyday objects, settings, or items? In Jesus' day, a speaker needed to have oratory skills in conveying a message with enough interest and relatability that it can be remembered, so to then be passed down orally to the next person. When Jesus is on the mount, preaching his famous sermon documented in Matthew 5-7, he speaks about ordinary settings and items, like a gate on a road. There are times in scripture when it is important for us to take the Bible seriously, but not literally. This is one of them. Jesus' preaching of the narrow gate and the road that leads to life, is attractive. The phrase of "life" in this sense, is to highlight the abundant life (John 10:10) that is Jesus. This is referring to the flourishing, sustaining, growing, and nourishing life that is found when we have faith in Christ. The narrow gate addresses the reality that we have a choice to make when living day to day... we can choose to follow Jesus or not. It is not a promise that the decision will always be easy, but for those who do choose God, it will always be worth it.

## BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

- + In the Sermon on the Mount context, the "Narrow Path" preaching is succinct (only two verses long) yet is quite meaningful. Why do you think it isn't a more in-depth explanation?
  
- + Who does it say is the audience of the John 10 scripture? Why is noticing this important for context?
  
- + In John 10, Jesus describes sheep entering the pen and a gatekeeper. Why does Jesus incorporate figure of speech elements (stories and metaphors) into his preaching?
  
- + There are a lot of "I am" statements in scripture, as God first told Moses that God's name means "I am". Why does Jesus in his preaching say: "I am...the gate"?
  
- + Does Jesus' preaching of the "narrow gate" seem attractive? How do you imagine the people hearing that in real time felt?
  - Do you think they connected the dots?
  
  - Do you think they were: excited? Skeptical? Confused?

## PRACTICAL LIFE QUESTIONS

- + We have a choice every day to make decisions that help us seek Christ. Where in your daily routine can things be added or adjusted to pursue the narrow gate, which leads to “life”?
- + Scripture is drenched in the theme of shepherds & sheep. With whom in your life does this theme of leadership feel relevant?
- + Jesus says the sheep follow their shepherd’s voice. Who is a “familiar voice” in your life?
- + Jesus knows that it is hard for us to go against the grain of norms, popularity, and expectations, when needed. In what parts of life do you see the difference between the “wide” and “narrow” gate?

## GROWTH

### *Journal Prompt*

Jesus, I want to bear fruit this week so that your light within me can be evident in a world that so desperately needs your Spirit. Help me to be aware of the fruitfulness of this next week. You are the True Vine and I commit to remaining rooted in you, Jesus.

### *Calling Prompt*

God is inviting you to participate in his ministry by answering the unique call on your life. How can you actively respond to scripture and God’s presence this week?

### *Closing Prayer*

**Let’s prepare for the week ahead, shaped by our time together today.**

Gracious God, we trust that you go with us in the week ahead. We are changed each time we gather to learn more about you and your Word. Please give us boldness to proclaim your good news in the coming week and bring us back safely together again in this community. Amen.