



Living by GIVING STUDY GUIDE



Week 2: “Let’s Make a Deal”

1. READ

Pastor Watley’s Selected Scripture: Matthew 7 : 13 – 20 New International Version (NIV)

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

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Further Reading: John 10 : 7 – 10 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Matthew 16 : 13 – 20 New King James Version (NIV)

¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

¹⁴ So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

²⁰ Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.





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2. REFLECT

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As we continue on our journey through Pastor Watley’s sermon series entitled “Living by Giving,” we are learning how to be better stewards of our resources through object lessons. If you tuned in last week, you will remember that an *object lesson* is a teaching technique frequently employed by Jesus, where he takes something familiar and uses it to explain or describe something that is unfamiliar. This week, our object lesson includes two doors that represent an important choice each of us must make:

Will we go through Door #1 or Door #2?

In our lesson for week two entitled, “Let’s Make a Deal,” Pastor Watley presents us with a binary choice. A *binary choice* is when we must make a decision between two alternatives. Either we choose option number one, or option number two. Just this past week, many of us participated in a national binary choice between two presidential candidates. (A choice that resulted in a favorable outcome!) And yet, as Pastor Watley notes, what we engaged in as a nation is what we must engage in as individuals on a daily basis. We must consistently ask ourselves, which door will we go through? How will we choose to live our lives as believers?





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This brings us to our scripture for this week (Matthew 7:13-14), where Jesus presents us with a binary choice. He says, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” To represent the “gates” that Jesus is speaking of, Pastor Watley uses a wide door and a narrow door as symbols of this vital decision. To better understand this choice, we must note that “gates” are important in scripture because they are usually associated with the Kingdom of God. In fact, Jesus himself declares in John 10:9, “I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.” This correlation in scripture suggest to us, that one of the gates we can choose brings us closer to Jesus!

On the other hand, when faced with a binary choice there is always an alternative. In this case, the alternative is the gate that “leads to destruction.” As noted in scripture, this destruction is also characterized as the gates of hell. Although some of us may be hesitant to talk about the realities of hell, as Pastor Watley notes, Jesus talked about hell 70 times in the Bible. If Jesus took the time to warn us about hell 70 times, then we probably should pay attention! Jesus describes the gates of hell as “wide,” and tells us that “many enter through it.” Not only does this suggest that the wide gate is usually the easier choice to make, but it also teaches us that when we follow the crowd, we are more likely to follow the path of destruction. And yet, Jesus teaches us that the ideal gate for us to walk through is the smaller and more difficult one that leads to ultimate reward. Not many people find it, but those that do are able to enjoy their keys to the Kingdom of God.

As Jesus details the ramifications of choosing either one of these gates, we are reminded that this is not just a decision about heaven or hell, this is also a decision about our daily lives. How many times do we make “wide door choices” instead of choosing the option that may not immediately benefit us? In what ways have we allowed those around us to influence our principles, morals, and behaviors? The fact of the matter is, we are faced with the binary choice every day to either choose life or to choose immediate comfort. In the same way we witnessed Pastor Watley adjust himself in order to go through the narrow door, when we choose life, we often have to make necessary adjustments. For example, verse 14 tells us that “only a few” find the road that leads to life. This suggests to us that when we choose the path towards life, there are some people, places, and things that will not come down the road with us. However, we serve a God that honors our obedience and sacrifice. And as Pastor Watley mentions, even though it may seem like a difficult decision at first, “*it is better to go through the door where God is on the other side!*”

3. RESPOND (Binary Choice Response Question)

- Take a moment to reflect on some of the decisions you’ve made in your life. How have you made “wide door choices?” How did your choices affect your time, talent, and treasure? If you had to go back, what would you have done differently?

