

The Narrow Gate

Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6

3

October
Week 3



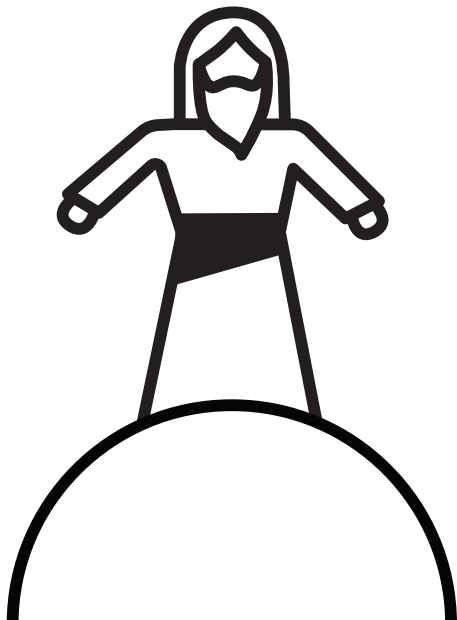
Teacher Background

What Happens: In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says there's a wide path that leads to hell but he's the only way to get to God's Kingdom, heaven. Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life!

Why It Matters: Kids live in a world that's getting ever more confusing when it comes to the Christian faith. With each generation, a higher percentage of Christians thinks evangelism or pushing your beliefs on others is wrong. The world tells kids that Jesus may be *a* way to heaven, and it's fine for *them* to believe in Jesus, but other people can follow other paths to heaven, too. Use this lesson to help cement the absolute truth that Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Think About: Who helped you find the way to Jesus?

Pray for God to help kids in your ministry who haven't yet found Jesus, the narrow path to heaven. Ask him to open those kids' hearts to following him.



Point

Jesus is the only way to heaven.



Key Verse

"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets."

Matthew 7:12

QUICK TIP

Churches approach helping kids begin a friendship with Jesus differently. Some do an altar call every week; others focus on planting the truth of the gospel without an altar call. Some children's ministries encourage kids to talk with their parents about becoming a friend of Jesus so parents can be there for this big moment in kids' lives; other churches want to make sure all kids have the chance to do so in your ministry. Make sure you know how your children's ministry wants you to handle this important decision, and get on the same page.

This Lesson at a Glance



WHAT HAPPENS	KIDS DISCOVER
CHECK IN Connect about the week.	The importance of friendships at church.
SET THE STAGE Share about a topic related to the lesson.	The connection between their world and the Bible.
EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE Follow paths in hopes of finding the prize.	There are a lot of ways that <i>seem</i> good, but only one way leads to a forever friendship with God.
HANDS-ON DISCOVERY Make hand-held mini-golf courses with one way to the hole.	Jesus is the one true way to friendship with God.
PLAY A GAME Try to kick a beach ball through a narrow goal.	What Jesus meant by a “narrow” gate.
PRAY TOGETHER Repeat a prayer.	Many reasons that we can thank Jesus.

EASY SUPPLIES

- Bible
- 5 paper bags
- yarn
- wrapped candy pieces (enough for each child)
- tape
- paper or newspaper
- white card stock
- scissors
- markers
- 3-ounce cups (2 per child)
- bendy straws (1 per child)
- aluminum foil
- construction paper
- stickers
- beach ball
- 2 buckets
- painter’s tape



CHECK IN (5 MINUTES)

- Thank kids for coming and have kids shake hands with one friend using the *back* of their hands.
- Make announcements and collect offering.
- Celebrate any birthdays by having kids sing a birthday song off-key.

ASK: What was the best thing you ate this week? Share your own quick story first, and then let everyone share! For groups of more than six, have kids share in pairs so everyone has a turn to talk.



SET THE STAGE (5 MINUTES)

SAY: We're learning about Jesus' most famous sermon! It's called the Sermon on the Mount because he stood up on a hill to preach. Jesus said ➡ **he's the only way to heaven.** That makes me wonder about the way we go places.

ASK: What route do you take to get to church? What things do you pass? Share your own quick story first, then let everyone share!

SAY: There may be more than one way for you to get to church. But there's only one way to heaven! ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven** Let's find out more about what Jesus said about that.



EXPERIENCE THE BIBLE (10 MINUTES)



SUPPLIES

- Bible
- 5 paper bags
- yarn
- wrapped candy pieces (enough for each child)
- tape
- paper or newspaper

EASY PREP

- Put all the candy in one bag, and fill the other bags with crumpled paper or newspaper. Tape all the bags shut.
- Set the 5 bags in various places along walls or in corners.
- Arrange 5 lengths of yarn in winding paths from one end of the room so that each piece leads to a different bag.

QUICK TIP

Make sure you factor in your preschoolers when choosing candy and select an option that doesn't pose a choking hazard.

CHOOSE A PATH

Have kids gather where all the paths start.

SAY: Only one of these paths leads to a prize. Pick the one you think is right!

Let them each choose a path (multiple kids can choose the same path) and follow that piece of yarn until they reach a bag. Kids will follow the yarn only by stepping on it—not picking it up. Younger kids may want to walk with older kids.

When everyone has arrived at a bag, have kids open the bags. Congratulate those who chose the path to the prize. Let them know they'll be able to enjoy it soon. Then gather in the middle of the room, and sit down.

ASK: How did you decide which path to take?

SAY: In this game, there was only one right path. And Jesus says God's Kingdom is like that, too.



Read Matthew 7:13-14. Explain that *narrow* means thin.

ASK: Why do you think Jesus said the gateway to life is narrow?

SAY: In our game, you could only guess what the right path was. You couldn't know for sure. But the path to God's Kingdom and the path away from God *don't* look the same. In fact, Jesus made it really clear what the narrow path is.



Read John 14:6.

SAY: ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven.** In our game, only one path led to the prize. In the same way, Jesus is the only path to heaven. But we don't have to guess at all! Jesus made it *really* easy to find the right path.

WALK THE PATH

Gather kids at the end of the yarn that leads to the prize.

SAY: None of us can get to heaven on our own, because you have to be perfect to be there. But God *really* wanted us in heaven with him! So he sent Jesus, his only Son, to live on earth as a human and show us the way!

Lead kids along the path, stopping at the prize. Pick up the bag.

SAY: Jesus lived the perfect life that you and I fall short of.

Have each child take a piece of candy but leave it wrapped.

SAY: But then Jesus died on the cross as a punishment for being a criminal... even though he was perfect.

Allow kids to open the candy but not put it in their mouths yet.

SAY: Jesus didn't have to do that. He wasn't taking a punishment *he* deserved; he was taking the punishment *we* deserve.

Have kids smell the candy but not eat it.

SAY: Three days later, Jesus came back to life! That showed he was more powerful than death.

Allow kids to put the candy in their mouths and enjoy it.

SAY: Because of Jesus' death and new life, God can forgive everything we've done wrong...because the punishment has already happened! That means *anyone* who believes in Jesus will go to heaven.

TALK ABOUT IT

SAY: We know that ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven.** But following Jesus isn't always easy. Tell about a time it's been hard for you to live out your faith.

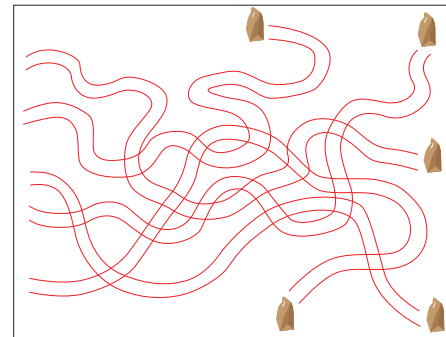
ASK: Tell about a time it's hard for you to be a Christian.

SAY: Sometimes people think Jesus is *one* way to get to God but that a lot of paths can get you there.

Ask kids to share things they've heard people say can get them to God or to heaven, such as being good, going to church, or other religions. Make sure this is a safe space to share and kids aren't judged.

SAY: Those are paths people sometimes choose. But like in our game, just because a path is *there* doesn't mean it leads to anything good. ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven.** Any other path doesn't lead us to God.

Jesus invites *everyone*. So we need to make sure to stick to Jesus' clear message: ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven.**



CELEBRATE SMALL

Fewer than five kids? Awesome! Let kids vote on which path to take together. Or form pairs and let them choose which path to take. Kids will love getting more "voice" in choosing a path.

QUICK TIP

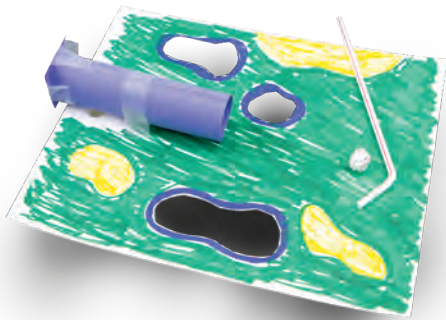
You just presented the Gospel message, and some kids may have questions or may want to become a friend of Jesus. What an exciting day! If you're not sure how to answer questions, that's OK. Enlist the help of others on your ministry team.

**SUPPLIES**

- white card stock
- scissors
- markers
- 3-ounce cups (2 per child)
- bendy straws (1 per child)
- aluminum foil
- tape
- construction paper
- stickers

EASY PREP

- Make a sample craft to show kids.
- For each child, prepare the pieces:
 - Cut a hole about the size of a penny near one end of a piece of card stock.
 - Roll a short piece of construction paper into a tube. Cut a hole in the tube that can line up with the hole you already cut in the card stock.

**MAKE A ONE-WAY GOLF GAME**

Show kids the sample craft you made. Set out the supplies to share, and have kids follow the directions below to make one-way golf games. Have older kids help younger ones with cutting and other fine-motor activities.

- Block one end of the tube with a small piece of construction paper, and then tape the tube over the hole in the card stock so the two holes line up.
- Decorate your card stock to look like a golf course. Older kids can cut “hazards” that are larger holes you need to avoid. Preschoolers can place three to five stickers to avoid hitting.
- Flip your golf course over, and tape two cups to the bottom. One should be directly under the hole, and you’ll want to tape only one side so it’s like a hinge. The other cup should be on the opposite end of the card stock so the golf course stays level.
- Crumple aluminum foil into a small ball.
- Bend a bendy straw, then cut off half the short part to make a miniature golf club.

PLAY GOLF

- Allow time for kids to try out their mini-golf courses.
- The goal is to get the ball into the cup through the tunnel hole.
- Kids should try to avoid any hazards (holes or stickers).
- When kids get the ball in the hole, they can tilt the cup to retrieve the ball.

TALK ABOUT IT

ASK: Tell about a mini-golf course you’ve played. Which hole was the hardest?

ASK: How does this golf course remind you that ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven?**

SAY: This golf course has only one way to get to the hole—through the tunnel. Some golf courses have multiple paths you can take, but not this one! Jesus is kind of like the tunnel in our golf course. ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven**, and there’s no other path you can take to get to heaven.

Have kids take their golf games home and play them with their friends and families.



EXPLORE JOHN 14:6

SAY: From the Sermon on the Mount, we learned that ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven.** Let's read a verse that helps explain why.



Read aloud John 14:6.

SAY: This verse tells us again that the only way to heaven is through a friendship with Jesus. Let's see what it's like to do something only one "right" way.

- At one end of your room, place two buckets as goal markers. Measure and make sure a beach ball can pass between the buckets, but not too easily. It should be a narrow, moderately challenging goal.
- Use the painter's tape to mark a line on the floor where everyone will need to kick from. Start with the line marked about 5 feet from the goal. Adjust the line as needed if it's too easy for kids to kick the ball perfectly between the buckets. You may also make a farther line for older kids and a closer line for younger kids.
- Allow everyone a couple of chances to kick a beach ball from the line through the narrow space between two buckets.
- Remind kids that's the *only* way to get a point.

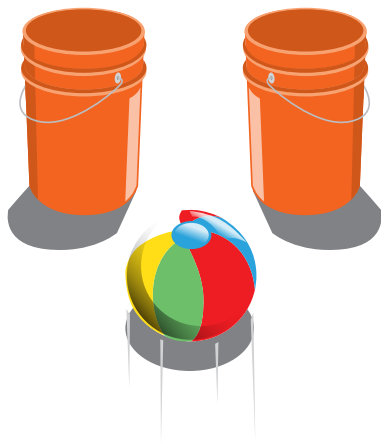
TALK ABOUT IT

ASK: What did it take for you to win in this game?

ASK: Now let's think about the only way to heaven. What do *you* have to do to get to heaven?

SAY: You had to do something really hard, all on your own, to earn a point in our game. Some people think that's how we get to heaven, too. We work really hard to be a good person, and we earn our way to heaven.

But that's not what Jesus said! ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven**, not what we do or don't do. He scored the points for us! When we believe in Jesus, he makes the way for us to spend forever with him in heaven.



SUPPLIES

- Bibles
- beach ball
- 2 buckets
- painter's tape



CELEBRATE SMALL

A benefit of having fewer kids in a class is it's likely that kids will have more chances to play, and more time to work on perfecting their "narrow goals." Use this as a time to encourage kids and affirm each one by name.

ACTIVITY PAGES WITH A PURPOSE (10 MINUTES)



SUPPLIES

- “Sermon on the Mount: The Narrow Gate” Activity Page (1 per child) (page 135)
- “Sermon on the Mount: The Narrow Gate” Coloring Page (1 per younger child) (page 136)
- pencils
- crayons
- highlighters (optional)

QUICK TIP

For younger kids, provide the Coloring Page and crayons as an alternative. They can color the gates with highlighters.

SAY: Today we learned from the Sermon on the Mount that ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven.** Some people might think there are different ways to get there, but there’s only one way. Let’s do some riddles where there’s only one right answer.

Distribute the activity pages and pencils. Kids will try to solve all the riddles.

ASK: Did you have a hard time finding the right answer to any of these? Tell more about that.

ASK: Why do you think it’s hard for some people to know that Jesus is the one and only way to heaven?

SAY: Following Jesus isn’t a riddle or puzzle—Jesus loves and welcomes everyone. But Jesus said not everyone will find him, because the path is narrow. But we can trust that ➡ **Jesus is the only way to heaven**, so we follow him.

ANSWER KEY: 1) Frank; 2) your breath; 3) 14 (count yourself); 4) coin; 5) silence; 6) embarrassing; 7) 11 (mathematical order of operations tells you to multiply first, then add); 8) Your answer!



PRAY TOGETHER (5 MINUTES)



Pray the following prayer, and allow time for kids to repeat each line. Kids will point up when they repeat each line.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you that you are the only way to God. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you that you are the only way to hope. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you that you are the only way to heaven. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you that you are the only way to peace. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you that you are the only way to joy. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you that you are the only way to love. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.

PRAY: Jesus, thank you for making a way. In your name, amen. Pause for kids to repeat the prayer.