

# The Map to Life

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## **From the Preacher's Desk:**

Maps are very useful tools. A map can show a distance between various points, as well as the relation those points hold to other places of interest. A map can aid in locating dangers, as well as help in times of need. It can give an idea of what will be seen when one arrives somewhere, or whether one wants to even go to that place. Maps are quite useful, indeed.

But the interpretation of maps is subjective. One person might look at a map and decide the best way to travel was west, whereas someone else might say north, or south, or east. Even with identical maps, the routes chosen by individuals can and will vary greatly. Some are looking for scenery, wildlife, fauna, or adventure. Others are simply looking for the fastest, easiest way to travel.

The Bible at times has been accurately described as the roadmap to eternal life. The ways to salvation and destruction are described as roads in Matthew 7:13-14. Without doubt, the way unto life is lighted and guided by the Gospel, and if one is obedient to that Gospel, they will arrive at salvation. At some point, however, every analogy breaks down. While it is acceptable for a geographical map to be of subjective interpretation, many try to apply the same principles to the road to salvation.

Some seek the shortest route to salvation. A lot of people want to be like the thief on the cross and wait until death is imminent before obeying. Others are constantly seeking shortcuts which would allow them to circumvent the commands of God they do not wish to have to obey. These are the people who don't take the time to read and study their Bibles, don't take the time to pray, and only come to worship when it is convenient for them. Loving one another is defined by them as not hating one another, and they will not go out of their way for anyone or anything.

Some seek the scenic route to salvation. They are much more concerned with the beauty of the church building than with the beauty of righteousness. These are the people who would say, "Sit here by me..." to the ones in fine clothing while telling the poor to stand over there (James 2:3). They would prefer not to have to edify or otherwise help to remove the impurities from anyone's life, their own included. Forgiveness to them means getting the any "dirty laundry" swept under the rug as quickly as possible. As long as things look good, these people are happy. When they hear the word "hell," they stop their ears and begin humming.

Some seek the smoothest route to salvation. Any doctrine that is viewed as the least bit controversial is taboo to these people. Social and moral issues are secondary to public opinion. There is no right or wrong, so long as everyone can get along. These people do not concern themselves with the "finer points" of religious service, will go out of their way to avoid confrontation, and think the idea of receiving religious persecution is an absolute impossibility. The only time these people are ever outraged is when asked to give.

Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Some people seek the Lord's way to salvation. It is a way which has a burden to bear (Luke 9:23). It is a way that sometimes places family members at odds with one another (Mark 10:35). It is a way where persecution is to be gloried in (Matthew 5:11-12). Yes, it is a way that is sometimes difficult, but also a way of great joy (Philippians 4:4; Luke 15:10). It is also the only way (John 14:6).

On which road are you traveling?