

The Narrow Gate | Weekly Teachings

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“The gate that leads to life is small and the road is narrow, said Jesus. It is narrow because it is the product of concentration, the focusing of our whole being, all our energies and faculties on a single point.” says John Main in *‘Word into Silence’*. We focus on our prayer word, our mantra and leave everything else behind, our daydreaming, our images, our thoughts, including our Christian belief structures and dogmas. But we all know that it is easy to say just *‘say your word’* but that it is not so easy to do. It is very pleasant just to sit and follow your thoughts and daydreams; it requires no effort at all, because our brain is in its usual operating mode. It still can be relaxing in its own way. It truly is *“the gate [that] is wide and the way that is easy that leads to destruction”*. We understand the ease of this path, but why does it lead to destruction? Because this way we will always remain on the surface and never discover the totality of our being that is largely our spiritual being, our connection with the Divine. It is our faith, our trust, which grows with the experience of every meditation session that encourages us to make the effort of paying full and loving attention on our prayer word. We are told it leads to our centre where the spirit of Christ dwells in us, but we

have to take that on trust; it is a leap into the unknown. If we dare, we will be led *“into an experience of liberty that reigns at the centre of our being...by helping us to take our mind off ourselves.”*(*Word into Silence*) The liberty comes from being freed of all our thought structures, all our fears and desires, our need to be well regarded, our need to conform to what other people and our society expects of us. It is wonderful to let go off all those thoughts that circle around in our mind; all of them in one way or the other are concerned with our self-preservation.

Again we are counter-cultural here. The last thing our culture encourages is *“leaving self behind”*. Our society and its mind-set encourage the ego to be firmly in control. Emphasis is laid on self-promotion and self-presentation to ensure that we will not only survive but do that better than anyone else, with the presumed reward of power and esteem. *‘Leaving self behind’* in life and meditation is a concept some people see as an excuse for dropping out, presumably done, because we feel we are not good enough to survive in the rat race. But John Main continues in *‘Word into Silence’* by pointing out that our *“meditation is no running away from, no attempt to evade the responsibility of our own being or the responsibility of our life and relationships.”* We do indeed leave in meditation our conscious self behind, but only so that we can discover in the silence the whole of our being and its centre, our *true self*. Then this essential spiritual part of our being can permeate and influence our surface being by its gift of true insight into the situations we find ourselves and its wisdom. This allows us to accept with wisdom and understanding *“the responsibility of our own being or the responsibility of our life and relationships”*.

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