



# The Narrow Door: A Guided Meditation

## OVERVIEW

In their mind's eye, the young teens investigate the closets of their own bedroom, gather their possessions, and carry those belongings through a series of narrow doors. This guided meditation communicates the Gospel message of simple living in a way that engages the imagination and inspires the young people to actively simplify their lives.

### Suggested Time

30 to 45 minutes

### Group Size

Given adequate space and a proper environment, this strategy can be done with any size group.

### Special Considerations

As a prayer technique, guided meditation requires specific attention to the environment. Above all, the participants need to be encouraged to relax and focus, avoiding any disturbance or distraction. Ideally, the young people should be able to lie on a carpeted floor with their head on a pillow or cushion. In a classroom setting, they may put their head on their desk. It also helps to light a candle, dim the lights, and use quiet background music.

## PROCEDURE

### Materials Needed

- ☀️ candles and matches
- ☀️ pillows, one for each person (optional)
- ☀️ a tape or CD player, and a recording of reflective music (optional)
- ☀️ one copy of resource 5, "The Narrow Door" (**found at the end of this activity**)
- ☀️ a flashlight (optional)
- ☀️ a blanket or sheet

1. Light a candle and dim the lights in the meeting room. If possible gather the young people in a circle and ask them to lie on their back with their head facing in to the center of the circle. Provide a pillow for each person if you can. Be sure that the participants leave adequate space between themselves and the next person so that distractions will be minimized. Tell them that they will be experiencing a form of prayer that uses their imagination.

If you have reflective music available, begin playing it at this time. Request silence and invite the young people to close their eyes, listen to the music, and become aware of their own breathing. When they are silent, invite them to listen closely to your voice as you read them a meditation.

2. Read the meditation from resource 5. If the room is dark, you may need another candle or a small flashlight.

3. After the meditation lead the young people back to the present moment by inviting them to listen to their breathing once again, be aware of the sounds around them, and slowly open their eyes. Ask them to sit up and gather their thoughts. Use the following questions as guides to engage them in a brief discussion of the experience and implications of the meditation:



How well were you able to envision your room and all the things that you keep there?

Were you surprised, or shocked, at the amount of stuff in your room, or were you already aware of how much you have?

What were some of the items that you were able to carry out of your room?

What were some of the most precious things that you did not want to part with?

Which of the four doors was most difficult for you to pass through?

How might the words of Jesus apply to your life right now?

How can you begin to live more simply right now?

What do you have to do to unburden yourself and become more available to God and God's people?

## ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

4. Place a blanket or sheet on the floor and invite people to carefully place on it one item they have with them, such as a purse, pencil, key, ring, watch, or cap. Note that these items are symbols of the belongings we use every day as well as of larger possessions—such as jewelry and property—that many people spend their lives acquiring and protecting.

Read Luke 18:24–25. Reflect with the group on how Jesus addressed those words to a young man who was unable or unwilling to follow Jesus because of his attachment to possessions. Invite the young people to share a prayer for the gift to live lighter and let go of the desire for unnecessary material things.

⊙ Instead of asking the young people to place personal things on a blanket or sheet, set up a display on a blanket or sheet yourself. Include symbols such as these:

- ⊙ a watch, symbolic of the wealth of time that can be shared or hoarded
- ⊙ a gold chain, symbolic of how wealth and possessions can imprison us
- ⊙ a candy bar, symbolic of the excesses of eating and dieting
- ⊙ a wallet, symbolic of the energy dedicated to the acquisition of wealth
- ⊙ a music CD, symbolic of creativity that is put at the service of consumption
- ⊙ a baseball cap, symbolic of the commercial image of sports entertainment
- ⊙ a popular magazine, symbolic of the influences of advertising

Include any other articles that symbolize the pressures and influences that complicate the lives of young adolescents. In closing the activity, invite the young people to take one object they feel drawn to and share why they chose it and what it symbolizes for them. Then ask each person to return their chosen object and share a prayer or a commitment to living more simply.

⊙ Send the message from this activity home by directing the young people each to make a recipe-for-simplicity card. Give everyone an index card and direct them to copy the following quotations on one side of it:

- ⊙ “When someone steals another’s clothes, we call them a thief. Should we not give the same name to one who could clothe the naked and does not?” (Saint Basil the Great).
- ⊙ “The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry; the coat hanging unused in your closet belongs to the one who needs it; the shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes; the money which you hoard up belongs to the poor” (Saint Basil the Great).
- ⊙ “Give to everyone who asks you, and do not ask for your property back from someone who takes it. Treat others as you would like people to treat you” (Luke 6:30–31, NJB).

Direct them to write on the opposite side of the card the heading, “A home-style recipe for simple living,” and list the numbers 1 to 6. Tell them to take their card home and ask their family to commit to six concrete ways to live more simply. Encourage them to bring their family’s ideas to the next meeting.

**SCRIPTURAL  
CONNECTIONS**

- ⊙ Matt. 11:28–30 (Come to me all you who are tired from carrying heavy burdens.)
- ⊙ Mark 8:36–37 (Does a person gain anything by winning the whole world but losing sight of life?)
- ⊙ Luke 6:24–26 (Those who are rich now will be poor later.)
- ⊙ Luke 12:13–21 (A person's true life is made up of more than material possessions.)

# The Narrow Door

Jesus went through towns and villages on his way to Jerusalem, and this is what he told the people: “Do your best to go in through the narrow door.” (Adapted from Luke 13:22–24)

The gate to life is narrow, and the way that leads up to it is hard.” (Adapted from Matthew 7:13–14)

In your mind place yourself in the center of your bedroom. . . . Look around at all the familiar things—your furniture . . . your bed . . . pictures and books . . . stuff on the floor . . . your closet and its contents. . . . Open your closet. . . . Now open all the drawers in your room—one by one. . . . Take note of how much you have acquired in your short life. . . . Begin to collect all the things that you treasure, things that are meaningful and items that are necessary to you. . . .  
*[Pause for a few seconds.]*

Place these important things on your bed and look at the stuff of your life. . . . Have you included photographs? . . . music? . . . souvenirs? . . . books? . . . shoes and clothes? . . . jewelry? . . . a computer? . . . sports equipment? . . . a cassette or CD player? . . . Gather up the corners of the blanket on your bed and try to make a bundle that you can carry. Remove any objects that will not fit inside the blanket or cannot be carried. . . .  
*[Pause for a few seconds.]*

While holding your bundle, try to pass through your bedroom door. If the bundle is too large, too awkward, or too heavy, take a moment to lighten

your load. . . . Now, with your bundle on your back, walk up or down stairs and through rooms and hallways until you reach the front door of your home. . . . If the bundle is still too large, stop and remove some more of its contents until you can pass through your front door and out to the street. . . .  
*[Pause for a few seconds.]*

You find a small car outside with its passenger door open. . . . Sit inside the car with your bundle on your lap. . . . If you cannot get your bundle into the car, open the blanket and remove more things until you can. . . .  
*[Pause for a few seconds.]*

The car takes you to your school. . . . Carry your bundle into your school building and through the halls until you reach your locker. . . . Open your locker and remove the things that are stored there. . . . Open your bundle and, one by one, place inside the locker the items you have been carrying . . . the things that are most important and necessary to you. . . . Close the locker door. . . . If everything does not fit inside the locker, decide what is most crucial or significant to you. . . .  
*[Pause for a few seconds.]*

And Jesus said to the people: “Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth. . . . Instead store up riches for yourselves in heaven. . . . For your heart will always be where your riches are.” (Verses 19–21)

“Be concerned above everything else with the Reign of God.” (Adapted from Matthew 6:33)