The Gatekeeper's Key

What would you do if you received an invitation?

Exploring the search for opportunity and potential through story and reflection.

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Scripture Study and Journal Prompts Included from Pageant Wagon Publishing
The four head gatekeepers, all Levites, were in an office of great trust, for they were responsible for the rooms and treasuries in the Tabernacle of God. TLB

They were responsible for the security of all supplies and valuables in the house of God. They kept watch all through the night and had the key to open the doors each morning.

The Message

1 Chronicles 9:26-27,

The Living Bible and The Message

Once upon a time there was an artist who lived just outside the gates of a vast Field of Dreams. She was a weaver of words. She loved the texture of words as they swirled about her soul. There, she captured them, taming their fibers in her imagination until they were useful in spilling from her lips with sound, or her fingers to the printed page.

The wonder of letter threads, deftly handled and woven together into connecting cords, formed her words. In this way, the intangible nature of meaning and thought found their highway to understanding and communication. A powerful craft through which to transform lives.

Clutching her words, kneading them, ripping them from one place to another, Weaver worked them like a bird feathering a nest in anticipation for a new creation. Something of herself would be born through the work of her words. She must master excellence in her craft ‘ere her words prove a poor representation of the great things she has thought.

When Weaver takes her threads and cords to the loom, she shuttles them about, lining them up just right, each atop the last. One between, over and under another. In this way, her words weave sentences.
Sentences are strung together with more threads. Stronger threads and three fold cords become yarns—spools of thought spun in the energy of Weaver’s imagination.

Paragraph skeins link like chains, following the pattern of a concept working in Weaver’s mind; in Weaver’s soul and spirit. Thoughts organized into the theme of a tale, hold all things together. Word pictures develop providing the framework of activity for characters, plots, and motives of the heart.

Some days, Weaver sings as she shuttles her words, sentences, and paragraphs to their assigned place. An idea, well fashioned, pours like water from a pitcher into a glass, splashing gleefully onto the recorded page.

But there are days when her words ebb and flow as the tide. A wave wild with bubbling foam washes up, leaving a deposit of colorful word threads and loops of yarn paragraphs. Then, just as swiftly as they formed, they might stall and recede. Weaver knows they will come again to the shore of her understanding, but the wait is prone to frustrate.

In such moments, Weaver bemoans her lack of skill and doubts her efforts. Clumsy fingers drop words. Stitches are missed, making her story uneven. Letters, jots, and tittles fall out of place. An upgrade in tools and training is wanting, but she lacks the means to acquire them, and the wisdom in how to best employ them on her story loom.

To that end, she labors in the paradox of both joy and unrest in her calling. Her tapestries of tales show promise and potential. Yet, her lack of a Master Story-Weaver to mentor her efforts towards greater purposes, stirs bouts of despair in her heart.

She knows where to find him. The Master. He is the Gatekeeper to the Field of Dreams so near her home. The Gatekeeper holds the Key of Opportunity. It is a key she has long desired, but has shrunk back from pursuing it with resolve.

One day, Weaver ventures into the marketplace where words and tapestries are traded. There, in the midst of so many tales, stands the Gatekeeper. The Master Story-Weaver himself! Other eager weavers reach out to him in a flood of their tales. Some limp about, tripping over their words for all the loose threads and yarns, falling flat on the ground before him. Others push and shove, assertively staking a claim by his side, petitioning for a key that they might know the opportunities on the other side of the gate.

But, the treasuries therein are not to be toyed with sloppily, and the gate’s portal not to be opened to mere aggressors. The Gatekeeper knows the worth of each tapestry laid before him and allows only those who would prove themselves worthy of the key to have access. By invitation.

Even so, it is clear to everyone what tribute must be brought in proving oneself. The words are etched distinctly on the gate:

PURPOSE:

Prove purpose to me—that you know your calling; for only the called get the key.
PRODUCT:
Display your passion in what you produce; a product I will have to see.

PERSEVERE:
Show fearless effort! Face your foes to the finish; persevere in the fray, do not flee.

Weaver has spent a lifetime tending her threads and yarns and looms. Her reputation in the village is now inextricably linked to such pursuits. Many have been gifted with her tapestries in one form or another, for she delights to sow her words beyond herself. On occasion, she blesses those in need of warmth, hope, and healing, wrapping them in the tightly woven fibers of her tales. There is always a risk of rejection, to be sure, for baring one’s heart and art through the works of one’s hands opens the door to evaluation. But, as her skills develop, her confidence in such ministries grows—though she remains selective in publishing abroad.

Recipients of her weaving have encouraged her to seek out the Gatekeeper for the Field of Dreams on the other side of the gate, and petition him for an invitation to demonstrate her story. She wears their praise with a smile, half wishing and dreading the thought. Opportunity lay beyond the gate, she knew. But so did a whole new level of risk in evaluations and rejections. Would the benefits of expanding her tapestry’s borders conquer those risks? She could never become a Master Story Weaver apart from crossing the threshold of that portal to potential.

And she so desires to be a Gatekeeper holding keys herself, some day.

Silently, she stands, observing the frenzied activity of the other weavers so boldly attempting to storm the gate. Some with invitations in hand—for the Gatekeeper always seeks those worthy to tell their story and smooths a path for them in due season. But most either fumble or rant about in competitive attempts to force themselves into position before they have honed their skills to prove themselves worthy. This provides sufficient reason for her to tuck away her own ambitions and cower on the sidelines. Watching.

For she fears she might be one of them—poorly skilled and unworthy . . . and she has yet to receive an invitation.

Cheers rise up now and again when the Gatekeeper grants someone a Key of Opportunity. Oh, the wonders they could now own for their tapestries and future word weavings! They have been brave enough to take hold of the invitation, to seize opportunity for themselves, and will have the privilege of going forth into their Field of Dreams. Perhaps their work will be displayed within castle halls and exhibited far and wide in the company of other approving Master Story Weavers.

Weaver is happy for them. But her heart aches all the more for still remaining on this side of the gate with no key in her hand. And no invitation forthcoming. She is easily distracted by the works of the other weavers around her. Some of their tales she admires and gleans from them valuable treasure threads, adding to her crafting tools. But others stir a froth of despair in her heart when measuring her worth by their weavings.
But, today, like every day, the Gatekeeper holds court by his portal while she watches from a safe distance, holding her best tapestry close to her heart. She sees the Key of Opportunity shimmering in the sunlight, hanging from the Gatekeeper’s belt. It seems to beckon her to reach out and try for the prize.

The Gatekeeper slips his hand into a leather pouch, also hanging from his belt, and pulls out a smattering of small envelopes. The invitations! He passes them out to a few that petition him. She eyes the envelopes with desire—and fear. Why does she waver and doubt her Purpose? Her Product is plentiful, the fruit of her loom, woven through years of Perseverance. Still she knows it lacks the polish of what opportunity alone could bring to it in order to grow to its full potential. As much as she desires to hold an invitation in her hand, she doubts she would accept for all her fears. The Gatekeeper’s evaluation might hurt too much.

She might fail.

“Ugh! Is that all there is?” a word weaver grunts from behind her.

“Pardon me?” she says, turning to the voice, thinking she had committed an offense.

“This! THIS!” he brusquely waves a torn envelope and card over his head. “There’s nothing to this! Nothing at all! A word. One word. No use to me.”

Weaver follows the staccato movements of flailing arms and a hand grasping tight to what she discerns is a Gatekeeper’s invitation.

“You have an invitation! Congratulations!” she is truly happy for the disgruntled weaver. But, he will not be cheered.

“You think that, do you? Humph! I’ve waited a long time for this, thinking it would have more to offer than just ONE word. Useless to me.” Arms fling wildly in the air again. “Just useless.”

Weaver is perplexed. “Well, what does it say? What does it invite you to do?”

“Not what I expected, that’s for certain.” The word weaver with the invitation grunts, again. “I can’t commit myself to something so risky. Just not enough here for me to put it all out there on the line. It’s not worth it, I tell you. Not worth it.”

The inconsolable nature of this fellow’s declarations seem an imposing wall, keeping Weaver from venturing forward with any threads of encouragement. Her curiosity is peaked, though, for she has never actually seen an invitation to petition the Gatekeeper with her own eyes. She doesn’t know what the protocol on the invitation could be—only the requirements that everyone knows, as etched on the gate itself.

An awkward silence surrounds them as they stand together, and Weaver can think of no other response than to quietly say, “I’m sorry.”
The word weaver glares at her, then gazes across the square to the Gatekeeper. Then, shaking his head with a roll of his eyes in disgust, he flings the invitation into Weaver’s hands with a growl. “Here then. You take it. No use to you, either, I’m sure.”

And he is gone. Stomping away from the market square, down a side street into the darkness.

Weaver stands alone with the invitation in her hand, frozen with indecision. What an unexpected stroke this is!

Five minutes or more—or perhaps a mere ten seconds—Weaver surveys the blank envelope, torn asunder with hope and vigor, yet disappointed. She looks at the back of a folded card, also blank with no markings on the outside at all. One word is written on the inside. What could it be? Dare she peek to see? The much desired invitation to take possession of the Gatekeeper’s key, and unlock the gate into all the opportunity on the other side, is in Weaver’s hands.

But, someone is watching her. She feels probing eyes and a sense of guilt wash over her. This is not her invitation. It had been given to another. One who did not take advantage of it and despised its worth. One who gave it away. Does she have the right to own it? Should she return it to the Gatekeeper?

Weaver looks toward the gate and sees him—the Gatekeeper—his eyes scrutinizing her. He sees that she is holding an invitation. An invitation that he has not given her. She is convicted in her heart and resolves to return it to him.

His stern expression seems tempered by a flush of tenderness in his eyes as she draws nearer to him. She thinks herself suddenly very brave for doing this noble thing. Perhaps, she will weave a tale about it when she returns home, and tuck it away with so many other records of her life experiences.

“You there!” the Gatekeeper calls to her with command. “Where did you get that invitation?”

Dumbstruck in awe at being so addressed, Weaver owns her answer. “It was given to me by another weaver. He didn’t want it. I’m returning it to you, sir. It’s not mine, I know.”

A warmth in the Gatekeeper’s eyes invites her to smile as she stretches out her hand to him with the invitation. “You did not read it?” he says.

“No, sir.”

“But you had the opportunity to do so. Why did you not seize it?”

Weaver is taken aback by this question. Here she is, displaying a nobility of character to return the invitation that is not hers, and the Gatekeeper seems disappointed in her virtuous act. “I . . . I . . . I was not given the invitation. It belongs to someone else.”
The Gatekeeper’s eyes narrow. He leans forward, speaking slowly, “Don’t you want to be invited into the Field of Dreams? Don’t you want to have the opportunity to realize your full potential as a weaver of words? Don’t you want to own the key that unlocks this gate to possess all those things?”

The questions thunder in her heart. Potential! Opportunity! Her Field of Dreams! These things long desired by her wait beyond the gate—and the Gatekeeper has the key. And here she is standing face to face with him, being challenged to lay hold of it all. Is he testing her?

In that instant, she glances behind him to the etching on the gate: Prove purpose to me, that you know your calling, for only the called get the key. Weaver’s words tumble from her lips before her reason can rein them in. “I have desired the Key of Opportunity ever since I can remember! Weaving is my life—it is breath to me. If I could not do it I could do nothing else.”

Clamping her mouth shut, she presses her lips together so as not to leak anymore revelations of her heart.

The Gatekeeper lifts an eyebrow, regarding her with amusement. She wonders if he is making fun of her; humoring her, perhaps. Why didn’t he just take the invitation back? She has done the honorable thing to return it.

“You know,” muses the Gatekeeper as he slips his thumbs through his belt loops, tapping his fingers on the key by his side, “You appear somewhat confused. Your words say one thing, but your actions prove another.”

Weaver does not respond. The Gatekeeper continues. “What is that tapestry you’re clinging to there? May I see it?”

Weaver steals swift, furtive glances to her left and her right. Is there someone else the Gatekeeper could be addressing? No. None are near. In fact, it seems there is no one in the square at all except for herself and the Gatekeeper.

“May I see it?” the Gatekeeper inquires again, holding his hand out toward her.

“It’s my tapestry. My latest work. A story I’ve woven with many intricate patterns, using quality threads and yarns.” She opens the tapestry before the Gatekeeper. He lowers his head to study the work as she notes more words on the gate behind him: Display your passion in what you produce; a product I have to see.

Silently, Weaver waits while her work is reviewed. By the Gatekeeper!

How did this moment arrive? An instant earlier, she was clinging to the sidelines with her hopes and dreams. Now—could this be truly happening? She is standing face to face in audience with the Gatekeeper—a Master Story Weaver—who is diligently examining her craftsmanship. But, she hadn’t been given an invitation!

Or, had she . . .
Her right hand still held the cast off invitation tight between her fingers. The Gatekeeper did not show an interest in having it returned to him. In fact, he directly challenged her to prove her Purpose and Product as a weaver of words. Isn’t that what happens to those who receive an invitation? This mysterious invitation with only one word on it, is offensive enough for at least one word weaver to have tossed it away as worthless. Now it was in her possession.

This, in itself, presents her with an opportunity. And, a choice.

The Gatekeeper looks up from his examination. “You have an invitation, do you not?”

Weaver looks at the envelope and card in her hand. She makes a choice. “Yes.” she answers plainly.

“But, you have not read it?”

“No.” Weaver stammers, “I . . . I didn’t think I could. It wasn’t mine to read.”

“So, then, you don’t want to read it? You don’t want to know what’s written there? You don’t want an invitation?”

“Yes. Yes, I do!” Weaver realizes she has passed the point of no return. This moment of opportunity, of invitation, of audience with a Master Story Weaver and Gatekeeper, may never come for her again.

“Then,” grins the Gatekeeper, “Read the invitation and follow the direction.”

Slowly, Weaver lifts the card to her view and opens it. There, in golden letters threaded with electricity as though leaping from the page she reads the one word, “GO.” She remembers the disgruntled word weaver who had the invitation, but chose not to “go”. He expected more. He must have thought there would be more details. More provision. More than just a command to “go” with no specific promises.

But, Keys of Opportunity don’t work that way. Opportunity requires response. Opportunity demands to be seized. To be wrestled with. To face fearlessly and hold it fast to the finish. Opportunity expects one to “go” and not to flee.

Weaver’s eyes focus on the third requirement etched into the gate: Persevere—show fearless effort; face your foes to the finish; persevere in the fray; do not flee. In that moment, she realizes that she is on the threshold of her Field of Dreams. Through serendipitous means, she is a breath away from a new chapter in her story tapestry. Words to the purpose must not fail her now.

The Gatekeeper holds the Key of Opportunity before Weaver. Will she . . . GO?
Have you received an invitation from a Gatekeeper?  
Are you seeking a Gatekeeper’s Key?  
Will you GO?

GO.

There are many kinds of Gatekeepers in the world. These are the Masters who guard the doorposts through which opportunity lays. They are the employers interviewing you for a job. Or teachers in a classroom inviting you to open your book to the next chapter and read the lesson. They are mentors who recognize your gifts and come alongside you to escort you through portals to your potential.

Sometimes they are soldiers keeping watch, so no unworthy individual crosses the threshold of a gateway to valuable things. Such things can be tangible, physical places, like a castle, home, bank, village, city, country borders, locked rooms with treasures, and the like. But, sometimes, those Gatekeepers block the entrance to intangibles, like opportunity, freedom, healing, love, provision, power, knowledge, understanding, skill, and wisdom.

They can be heroes or enemies.

Gatekeepers know to whom they may allow an invitation for the privilege of stepping into the next level of a desired thing. All those who would pass by must prove their worth. It may be a token in the slot that one has paid the fare, or paper credentials verifying one’s title, a
diploma or deed of ownership. Perhaps it is a random test to examine the heart or skill-set of an individual to assess readiness for passage through the gate. Or promotion to the next grade level in school.

As a writer and artist, I have honed my craft over the years seeking Gatekeepers at every turn. Teachers. Mentors. These are those who have grown before me and can nurture me to the next level of my strength and calling. These are the peer professionals who can open doors to provision, to jobs, to the next amazing thing I might write that has the power to transform a life.

Because it has transformed my life.

Ultimately, God is the Gatekeeper of our lives—who sets Gatekeepers in our lives. Invitations are forthcoming should we be bold enough to seek them out. Should we pursue with diligence that which is our delight. Should we prove our passion, produce within our craft, and persevere in the marketplace of competition.

For Weaver, her delight in her desire was stifled by a fear of failure. But, perhaps also by a fear of success. Failure might keep her shrinking back from actively petitioning the Gatekeeper, but success is a formidable prize in itself—and often feared. But, if you have received an invitation—you have been called.

Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again. God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Journal:
What does it mean to be “called” to something? Click on this link in Webster’s 1828 Dictionary: http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/call

You will find this a robust definition. Take your time. How do you think “calling” is connected to the response of “confidence”?

Holiness is a formidable thing that God commands us to be. As Christians we are called by a faithful Gatekeeper who invites us to cross the threshold of our potential to be made whole in spirit, soul, and body—and blameless until Jesus comes. God is the Ultimate Gatekeeper. The Faithful Gatekeeper. He would not have called us to this great thing if he was going to leave us alone in it.

He would not have invited us to Himself if he did not intend to be faithful to the call. Therein should be our confidence to accept the invitation and petition Him for the “key”.
Weaver went every day to the square where the trading of tapestries took place in the courtyard of the Gatekeeper. She greatly desired to be invited to own a Gatekeeper’s Key. Why do you think an invitation was not forthcoming to her even though she brought her tapestry to the square?

Is there a gate between you and your own “field of dreams”? What is it? It may be something within your spiritual relationship with God. It may be a goal and desire within your personal relationships. It may be to secure the life and profession you have always imagined but could never accept as open to you. Should you ever receive an invitation . . . an opportunity to possess it. And not shrink back.

It is a daunting invitation. But, when I am invited to GO, by the Gatekeeper of my life, I am invited to seize the treasuries and supplies in God’s house. He invites me to pass through the gate, crossing the threshold of my portal to potential—the field of my hopes and dreams . . . and God’s will for my life.

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart’s desires.
Psalm 37:4

Journal:

What would a response of “delight” look like regarding our attentions to the Lord? Was Weaver given to “delight” regarding the Gatekeeper? Why or why not? What kept her from receiving an invitation from the Gatekeeper? How can “fear” imprison “delight” and what is the outcome?

For my part, this means going forth in my calling as a writer, weaving words with power to transform lives. I produce my works and persevere through the mountains and hills of obstacles that may rise up before me—and they are turned to praise. In all this I can go forth in joy. With peace. The opportunities leading me forward will prove fruitful as I trust in the Lord, choose to make the most of them, and not shrink back.

Do you have a word for 2016? Are there fields of dreams you seek to embrace this year? Are you waiting for an invitation to take possession of the Key of Opportunity to unlock the gateway to the potential you envision for your life? Pray for an invitation to opportunity. Petition the Gatekeeper of your life. He is seeking those whose hearts are turned towards Him as the desire of their heart.
Poetic Reflection:

Weaver didn’t expect opportunity to rise up before her, packaged as a toss away invitation belonging to another. But, when forced to face the fearsome spectre of her dreams actually coming to fruition, the temptation to shrink back is very real. But for the desire—the delight—of her heart.

Will she go and possess the land? The Gatekeeper is offering her the key to unlock the treasuries. What would you do with only one word to be going on with? Especially if it came from an unexpected source?

Edward Sill, a 19th century author and poet, leaves us an inspiring answer in his classic poem titled, Opportunity.

This I beheld, or dreamed it in a dream:—
There spread a cloud of dust along a plain;
And underneath the cloud, or in it, raged
A furious battle, and men yelled, and swords
Shocked upon swords and shields. A prince's banner
Wavered, then staggered backward, hemmed by foes.
A craven hung along the battle's edge,
And thought, "Had I a sword of keener steel—
That blue blade that the king’s son bears,— but this
Blunt thing—!" He snapped and flung it from his hand,
And lowering crept away and left the field.
Then came the king's son, wounded sore bested,
And weaponless, and saw the broken sword
Hilt-buried in the dry and trodden sand,
And ran and snatched it, and with battle-shout
Lifted afresh he hewed his enemy down
And saved a great cause that heroic day.

Close your eyes and imagine the scene painted on this battlefield. What similarities do you notice between it and Weaver’s story? What similarities can you find relating to biblical principles or themes? For instance, did Israel expect their Messiah to be born as a babe in a stable? Did they ever imagine He would have to die to secure salvation? Like a broken sword tossed carelessly away by one looking for something more—but in the hand of another desperate for life, it hews down the enemy and truly saves a great cause that heroic day?

Journal your thoughts and take joy.

Note: To hear the audio dramatization of The Gatekeeper’s Key, listen online::
http://www.thewritersreverie.com/2016/01/podcast-episode-5-the-gatekeepers-key.html
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