

The Gate

Matthew 7:7-14

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When you were a child, did you ever dream about other worlds?
And did you dream of a gate whereby you entered the other world?

- Alice enters Wonderland through a rabbit hole and a gate.
- Jack has a magic bean and a beanstalk.
- In The Chronicles of Narnia, the kids enter through a wardrobe, a picture, and a stable.
- In The Matrix, Neo takes a colored pill and enters the real world.
- In science fiction movies, they go through black holes and star gates, and use time machines.

Adults call those stories fairy tales. “The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things,” writes G. K. Chesterton.

Madeleine L’Engle wrote, “The world of fairy tale, fantasy, myth, is inimical to the secular world, and in total opposition to it, for it is interested not in limited laboratory proofs but in truth.”

Fairy tale is not interested in things of this world but things *beyond* this world, like truth.

J. R. R. Tolkien was asked if his fantasies were “escapist” in that they shifted attention away from the “real world.” Tolkien replied, “Everything depends on that from which one is escaping.”

Perhaps we’re trying to escape
From the unreal *dead* world
Into the real *living* world;
We’re looking for a door.

Jesus came preaching, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Here in the Sermon on the Mount He’s been telling us about hidden treasure and pearls, and now He mentions a gate: a gate and way that leads to eternal life.

Matthew 7:13-14: “*Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.*”

“The gate is narrow” . . . *How* narrow?
“Those who find it are few” . . . *How* few?

The gate is narrow . . .

At the start of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets,” and then He expounds saying, “You must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.”

God made a covenant with Israel. He gave the law and the prophets. If Israel obeyed, He would bless them, and they would enter the land. If Israel *didn’t* obey, they would face death and exile.

As Joshua and Israel cross the Jordan (the gateway into the Promised Land), they are met by an angel—a God-man—with a sword (the Lord of Hosts). Well, you know the story: Israel breaks the covenant time and time again. There are sacrifices to atone for sins, but none are sufficient.

In Jesus' day, the group that appears to have obeyed the law most fully was the Pharisees and their scribes. Jesus has just said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

That's a pretty narrow door! And we're pretty lax around here. Obviously we must need . . .

- . . . more classes and better discipleship programs . . .
- . . . classes on how to find God's will and how to guard your marriage and play it safe . . .
- . . . ethics classes — instructions on right and wrong . . .
- . . . lists of what's good and what's bad, what TV shows to watch, and what TV shows you *can't* watch.

We need more knowledge of good and evil!

You know, in the Garden of Eden there was a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was next to the tree of life. God told Adam, "The day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will die." Adam and Eve take the fruit from the tree and see that they are dead.

Genesis 3:24: "So God drove out the man [the adam]; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

How narrow is the gate?
 How narrow is the entrance for life?
 Well, it's so narrow it's *shut*, I guess.

"No one is righteous, no not one."
 "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."
 "The wages of sin is death." *You* know that.

"Narrow," and "few are those who find this gate." There's something like 3 billion Christians in the world, but "few are those who find the gate." How do you measure up?

Jeremiah 29:13: "You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart . . ." Are you seeking with all your heart? Have you ever met someone who sought God with all their heart; that is, someone without sin?

In Romans 3 Paul quotes the Psalmist: "As it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God.'"

- How narrow is the door? It appears to be *closed*.
- How few find it? It appears to be *none*.
- How could we find it? According to Scripture, we're dead. And more than that, there is an angel-cherub, God-man kind of figure with a flaming sword guarding the way to the tree of life, just to make sure no zombies get in. It looks impossible!

And Jesus says, "Enter by the narrow gate that leads to life."
 Well, gosh, Jesus. What kind of gate *is* this?

[Alice in Wonderland movie clip]

Alice: My, what a peculiar place to have a party.

Dinah: Meow!

Alice: You know, Dinah, we really shouldn't...uhh...uhh...be doing this... After all, we haven't been invited! And curiosity often leads to trouble – l – l – e – e – e! Goodbye, Dinah! Goodbye! ... Oh! Well, after this I shall think nothing of falling downstairs! ... Oh! Ahhh... Oh, Goodness! What if I should fall right through the center of the earth... oh, and come out the other side, where people walk upside down. Oh, but that's silly. Nobody... oh! Oh, ha ha. Oh, mister Rabbit! Wait! Please! ... Curiouser and curiouser!

[Alice falls for a long time, passing a variety of objects. She follows the White Rabbit into a room where she spots a small door behind a drawn curtain.]

Doorknob: Ohhhhh!!

Alice: OH! Oh, I beg your pardon.

Doorknob: Oh, oh, it's quite all right. But you did give me quite a turn!

Alice: You see, I was following...

Doorknob: Rather good, what? Doorknob, turn?

Alice: Please, sir.

Doorknob: Well, one good turn deserves another! What can I do for you?

Alice: Well, I'm looking for a white rabbit. So, um, if you don't mind...

Doorknob: Uh? Oh!

Alice: There he is! I simply must get through!

Doorknob: Sorry, you're much too big. Simply impassible.

Alice: You mean impossible?

Doorknob: No, impassible. Nothing's impossible! Why don't you try the bottle on the table?

Alice: Table? Oh!

Doorknob: Read the directions, and directly you'll be directed in the right direction. He he he!

Alice: "Drink me." Hmmm, better look first. For if one drinks much from a bottle marked "poison," it's almost certain to disagree with one, sooner or later.

Doorknob: Beg your pardon!

Alice: I was just giving myself some good advice. But...
hmm, tastes like oh... cherry tart... custard... pineapple... roast turkey... goodness! What did I do?

Doorknob: Ho ho ho ho! You almost went out like a candle!

Alice: But look! I'm just the right size!

Doorknob: Oh, no use! Ha ha ha ha. I forgot to tell you, ho ho ho ho! I'm locked!

Alice: Oh no!

Doorknob: Ha ha ha, but of course, uh, you've got the key, so...

Alice: What key?

Doorknob: Now, don't tell me you've left it up there!

Alice: Oh, dear! What ever will I do?

Doorknob: Try the box, naturally.

Alice: Oh! "Eat me." All right. But goodness knows what this will do... wow, wow, wow, wow, wow!

Doorknob: whtwhsthswwdthdwd!

Alice: What did you say?

Doorknob: I said: "a little of that went a long way"! Ha ha ha ha!

Alice: Well, I don't think it's so funny! Now- now I do never get ou-out!

Doorknob: Oh, come on now. Crying won't help.

Alice: I know, but I- I- I just can't stop!

Doorknob: Hey, hey you! Bwbwlwbbwlwbl! Say, this won't do at all! You, you up there, stop! Stop, I say! Oh look! The bottle, the bottle...

Alice: Oh dear, I do wish I hadn't cried so much.

Doorknob: glpglpglp...

[And Alice floats through the keyhole in the bottle on a river of tears.]

Well, Alice is looking for a party . . . “Curiosity can lead to trouble.” And curiosity can also lead to a party . . . a kingdom party.

She falls into the rabbit hole, and while she’s falling . . .

She turns on a light.
Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.”

She looks in a mirror.
We look in the mirror of the law of liberty and persevere.

She reads a book.
Jesus is the Word who fulfills the law and prophets.

She hears a clock.
Jesus offers eternal life.

She lands in a rocking chair.
We strive to enter His rest.

She passes a fire, her world is turned upside down, and she exits through a drawn curtain. She spies a little gate—a little door—and she thinks it’s *impossible*, but it’s only *impassible*, for she is too large, there’s too much of her. There’s a table and a bottle labeled “Drink me.”

When we drink from the Lord’s table, we drink blood and wine. To some it’s poison, yet to us it’s life. It burns away what’s bad and exposes what’s good. It makes us small.

Alice takes a bite of a wafer labeled “Eat me.”

When we eat of His body broken, we become large enough to see we broke the body of Jesus. We crucify our Lord, and we weep over our sin. Alice weeps saying, “Look what I’ve done. I’ll never get home!” But the door *tells* her what to do. She drinks from the bottle, and having become large, she becomes small again—a child. She grows small and floats through the door on a river of tears.

(In the book, Alice sees a garden through the keyhole in the door. But I don’t think she actually goes through. In the movie, it turns out she was only sleeping and only dreamed.)

Well, Alice in Wonderland is a fairy tale full of all kinds of weird things, and I certainly don’t know what it all means. But whatever the case, perhaps the gate (the gate Jesus is talking about) is like *this* one:

1. A gate to another world, not of this world, not comprehended by this world
2. A gate that requires you to become small in one way and large in another.

G. K. Chesterton wrote, “One can hardly think too little of one’s self. One can hardly think too much of one’s soul.” We crucified the Savior, yet for us He died.

Well, finally Alice must grow small to enter Wonderland where everything is big, including Alice. Perhaps we must become like a child and grow down rather than up in order to enter.

3. Perhaps the gate Jesus is talking about is *alive* and tells us how to enter. Jesus says, “Enter by the narrow gate”— (“the narrow door,” as He puts it in

Luke). “Narrow is the gate and few are those who find it.”

In John 10 Jesus says, “He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.” (Jesus finds the door and leads others through.) In verse 7 He says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. . . . I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” (Jesus *finds* the door, and Jesus *is* the door.)

So how narrow is the gate?
About as narrow as your standard, Judean
manger; about as wide as a Roman cross.

And how few are those who find it?
About *one* . . . just *one*.

Jesus finds the gate and *is* the gate. Jesus enters the gate. Jesus has just said He came to fulfill the law and prophets. He perfectly obeyed all the old covenant law. He passed through that narrow gate, and He didn’t inherit our sin. He didn’t carry the sin of Adam with Him, yet He made Himself the sacrifice for *our* sin — the Lamb that is slain — the new covenant.

“He who knew no sin became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.” He is the second Adam — the new man. So He found and entered the old gate, and He has become *our* gate, as narrow as a manger and as wide as a cross.

John 14 says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me” — the door, the way, the life. He is a living door, a living gate. In just a few more verses Jesus says, “On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, did we not cast

out demons, prophesy, and do many mighty works in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘Depart from me. I never knew you.’”

You need to *know* Him, not just *about* Him. You can know *about* a person in the past or future, but you can only *know* a person *now*. You can only encounter a spirit *now*. “All actual life is encounter,” said Martin Buber. Jesus is a living door leading to life *now*. How do we know Him? How can we find such a narrow gate?

Matthew 7:7-14:

“Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

In verse 7, without qualification Jesus says, “Seek and you will find.” That’s thrilling! . . . and also horrifying. In The Chronicles of Narnia, a witch wants the fruit from the tree. She sneaks into the garden, climbing over the wall rather than

entering through the gate. She eats what she wants. Aslan the lion tells the children:

“That is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The fruit is good, but they loathe it ever after. . . . Things always work according to their nature. She has won her heart's desire; she has unwearying strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want: they do not always like it. . . .”

All get what they want, but they do not always like what they get. So the Serpent said, “Eve, eat the fruit and you’ll become like God, knowing good and evil.” That sounded good, but it tasted like hell.

Maybe we seek to *be* like God rather than *know* God. Maybe what we seek is ourselves, and what we’ve been getting is ourselves. Maybe God has allowed us to taste hell . . . but in mercy barred the way to the tree of life so we wouldn’t stay in hell forever.

Jesus says, “Seek and you will find.” Yet none so far had found the gate. I guess they aren’t *seeking* the gate. Jesus says, “Therefore, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. That is the law and the prophets.” That is what love looks like. So far no one has seen it or sought it—the gate—that is, Jesus. Jesus is the love of God, and He will be poured out on a cross. There Jesus fulfills and reveals the law and the prophets.

But now they can’t see the gate. If they *could*, they’d have only to ask. But they can’t. They’re evil and blind. Jesus says, “If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give good things to

those that ask?” In the parallel passage in Luke, He says, “How much more will the father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?”

God is a very good Father.

In Matthew 18, Jesus says, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom.” You know, children are born trusting. They really have no choice, for they are “poor in spirit” and “meek.” They can’t control their world. By necessity they must receive everything in their reality by grace.

They’re large in that they believe they’re important to someone. But they’re small in that they know they’re dependent on someone. They themselves are small, and so their world is large and filled with wonder—hidden meaning. They seek and keep seeking, and they’re curious about everything.

They pay attention to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. They’re fascinated by things like an old manger and can easily believe it might just be a door to another world, its inside bigger than all the outside!

Jesus said, “Become like children to enter.” *Grow down.*

Alice must grow small to enter Wonderland. She must lose control. Jesus said you must become like a child. We idolize children but spend our whole lives trying not to *be* one; that is, dependent and vulnerable. It’s too frightening. So we constantly eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, trying to grow up, trying to find the gate—capture the gate—control the gate. We try to become professionals and experts of the gate, that is, scribes and Pharisees.

In Matthew 23, Jesus says, “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in.”

- They try to control the gate, regulate the gate, monitor the gate.
- They make all kinds of rules but don’t enter themselves—don’t confess their sins and surrender to God’s grace. It’s not impossible but *impassible* (like a camel through the eye of a needle.)
- They don’t fit and won’t get small.
- They don’t seek because that means they don’t know.
- They don’t ask because that means they don’t have.
- They don’t knock because that means they’re on the outside.

C. S. Lewis said, “You *can* get a camel through the eye of a needle. It’s just very hard on the camel.” Maybe you can get a Pharisee through the narrow door; it’s just hard on the Pharisee. It’s like you have to *die* to self and be born again.

Well, Jesus says “seek.” It’s present active imperative. “Seek and keep seeking . . . Don’t stop seeking.” That is, there is always more wonder in Wonderland. Books, degrees, classes, and knowledge are wonderful as long as they help you seek and are not the thing you’re seeking. Jesus is who you seek, and there is always more of Him. He is the meaning of all things.

Keep seeking.

Sometimes we’re born again and then think we’ve arrived . . . grown up.

“Seek and you will find.” What a promise! That entirely undercuts the monopoly of the religion industry.

- He doesn’t say you need some scribes and Pharisees.
- He doesn’t say you need an accredited Presbyterian seminary.
- He doesn’t say you need a workbook or tape series or some special knowledge.
- He doesn’t even say you have to be a Christian. These folks on the hill aren’t Christians.

Just “seek and you will find.”

So if some little abused girl in some far away country seeks love, she’ll find Him. God is love. And if some Iraqi soldier lies dying in a field this day and cries, “Allah! God! Jesus! Whatever your name is, I want the truth!” . . . if he seeks truth, he’ll find it. And the truth is Jesus (not Allah, but Jesus — they are different). If you seek truth, seek the way, seek real life, you are seeking the gate, you are seeking Jesus. And you will find Him.

How can that be?

Jesus said, “Whatever you do to the least of these you do to me.”

Perhaps the gate is in the last and least of these.

Perhaps the true gate is in Lazarus lying by the rich man’s gate.

Perhaps the gate is in every pearl surrounding the eternal city (in every confession of every believer).

Perhaps the gate is all around us, like doorways to the kingdom — narrow yet everywhere — as narrow as Jesus and as present as Jesus. After all, every particle in our universe is upheld by His Word of power. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the gate will never leave us or forsake us.

So we should never go anywhere or any-when in fear and trepidation, but always “curiouser and curiouser” seeking in faith, hope, and love.

“There is a way into my country from all the worlds,” said the Lamb; but as he spoke his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane.

“Oh, Aslan,” said Lucy. “Will you tell us how to get into your country from our world?”

“I shall be telling you all the time,” said Aslan.

So “seek and you will find.” But there’s still a problem. Paul said it. “No one seeks after God.” *No one* seeks. Jesus says “seek,” but “few find the gate.” And “many are called but few are chosen” (Matthew 22). Actually, *one* is chosen. Ephesians 1:4: “We have been chosen in Christ Jesus,” the second Adam. And “just as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,” said Paul.

We enter in Christ. We enter “by the new and living way which He opened for us through the curtain,” that is, through His flesh (Hebrews 10). No one seeks God, but Jesus does. If we seek God, it’s Jesus in us.

No one seeks God, but *God seeks us . . .* in Jesus.

God seeks little abused girls in far away lands as they long for love.

He seeks Iraqi soldiers dying in the desert as they long for truth.

He seeks you and He seeks me.

He seeks worshippers who will worship in spirit and truth.

Jesus found the narrow gate, and Jesus *is* the narrow gate. I suspect Jesus is that cherubim with the flaming sword east of Eden. I suspect Jesus is the Lord of Hosts with the drawn sword at the River Jordan.

I'm convinced Jesus is the gate to the eternal city. He appears to John in the Revelation, shining and brilliant, and a two-edged sword issues from His mouth. He says, "Come up here," and John goes through a doorway in heaven. He sees the city and the gate. Jesus says, "Blessed are those who wash their robes [Remember that they're washed in blood], that they may have the right to the tree of life, and that they may enter the city by the gates."

Jesus is the gate.

How are we to find a gate so narrow? We don't. He finds us. Romans 10: "I have been found by those who did not seek me. I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." The Lion and Lamb—the God-man with the double-edged sword—the Gate—sits on a hillside saying, "Children, seek. The kingdom is at hand. Time to come home." But they don't see Him truly or seek Him truly. Soon they'll abandon Him and crucify Him. And then they'll seek Him.

On the night before He was crucified, Jesus says to His disciples, “You will seek me and you will see me. And if I go, I will send the Spirit of truth. He will be in you . . . and he will convince the world.”

Jesus sends His Spirit into our hearts crying, “Abba Father!” He seeks us and makes us seek Him.

Always and everywhere seek the Gate, for He has sought you. Stop fearing, hiding, running, controlling, manipulating. Stop playing it safe and surrender to the Seeker *now*. Live in faith, hope, and love *now*, always “curiouser and curiouser.” For wherever you go, there is this God-man, the Lord of hosts, with a bright, flaming sword, Jesus the Word—the Meaning—the Narrow Door leading to life. Always look through the Door.

Come to this table, and you’re beginning to live in Wonderland.

For on the night He was betrayed, having given thanks, He took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, “This is the cup of the New Covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. As often as you drink of it, do it in remembrance of me.”

“Drink me.” “Eat me.” Enter life.

“Father, thank you that you love us so much and you give us good gifts. Thank you that you even help dead people believe and live. In Jesus, amen.”

In his vision John said, “The New Jerusalem is coming down.” That means it has been coming down for 2000 years now,

according to the way we look at the calendar. And that means the New Jerusalem is not like an old fortress that we run and hide in, in fear. I think that's what the scribes and Pharisees would like to tell us.

But the New Jerusalem is more like a mobile assault party vehicle. According to Scripture, it's invading this world. And the doors of the eternal city are always open. And that means the city is not afraid of anything. Outside are the dogs and the evil workers, but they don't *want* to enter. They can't even see it. But it's advancing.

If you came to this table, you're part of it. You may have sin, but He's with you and is going to burn all that garbage away. He's going to make you in His image. If you came to this table, you came to the door.

And the Door is with you. I believe He would say this to you: Stop building fortresses and hiding in them in fear. Start walking in faith, hope, and love, because walking with you is a Gate—the Lord of Hosts—with a flaming sword. Wherever you go, look through Him.

I studied geology at the University of Colorado. So many Christians said, "You can't do that. It's Godless!" I said, "Jesus, help me," and what wonders I found!

I was afraid to read the book of Genesis. I asked, "Jesus, help me," and what wonders I found! I got married. "Help me, Jesus." What wonders I found! In the pastorate I run into weird, difficult situations and want to run and hide . . . say the "proper thing." Jesus goes with me and says, "Peter, just go." And what wonders I've found!

There will come a day when it will be freaky and scary: the day you die. But He'll be there. Look to the Door, and *wow!* — Nothing but eternal city.

Don't play it safe, or you'll never end up on a cross, where we get small with Jesus and then really large with Jesus. In Jesus' name, may you walk out into the world and, in the words of Alice, get "curiouser and curiouser." For you're just beginning to walk into Wonderland.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Further Reading

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:20

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 7:21

And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? One there is who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.”

Matthew 19:17

“Oh – Aslan, sir,” said Digory, turning red, “I forgot to tell you. The Witch has already eaten one of those apples, one of the same kind that Tree grew from. . . .” “Child,” he replied, “that is why all the rest are now a horror to her. That is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The fruit is good, but they loathe it ever after.” “Oh, I see,” said Polly. “And I suppose because she took it in the wrong way it won’t work with her. I mean it won’t make her always young and all that?” “Alas,” said Aslan, shaking his head. “It will. Things always work according to their nature. She has won her heart’s desire; she has unwearying strength and endless days like a goddess. But length of days with an evil heart is only length of misery and already she begins to know it. All get what they want; they do not always like it. . . .”

C.S. Lewis, The Magician’s Nephew

“You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart”

Jeremiah 29:13

The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any that act wisely, that seek after God. They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt; there is none that does good, no, not one.

Psalms 14:2-3

As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands, no one seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have gone wrong; no one does good, not even one.”

Romans 3:10-12

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.” Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:22-24

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass. . . and its gates shall never be shut by day — and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life. . . . Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the

gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.

Revelation 21:21, 25-27; 22:14-15

“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ But he will reply, ‘I do not know you where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’”

Luke 13:24-27

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber; but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.”

John 10:1-9

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.”

John 14:6

“Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 18:3-4

For murdering his brother, God sentences Cain to the life of a restless wanderer; five verses later Cain is building a city (Gen. 4:12, 17). That sort of commitment – the refusal to trust God and the reach for control – runs deep in every man. Whyte talks about the difference between the false self’s desire “to have power *over* experience, to control all events and consequences, and the soul’s wish to have power *through* experience, *no matter what that may be*.” You literally sacrifice your soul and your true power when you insist on controlling things, like the guy Jesus talked about who thought he finally pulled it all off, built himself some really nice barns and died the same night. “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his own soul?” (Mark 8:36 NKJV). You can lose your soul, by the way, long before you die.

John Eldredge, Wild at Heart

“Alice must grow small to enter Wonderland.”

G.K. Chesterton

“I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am,’ to a nation that was not called by My name.”

Isaiah 65:1

I would not seek you, if I had not found you already in the depth of my heart.

St. Augustine

And this vision instructed my understanding that it pleases God a great deal if the soul never ceases to search; for the soul can do no more than seek, suffer and trust, and souls that do this are moved by the Holy Ghost; and the splendor of having found God comes by his special grace when it is his will. Seeking with faith, hope and love pleases our Lord, and finding pleases the soul and fills it with joy. And thus my understanding was taught that seeking is as good as finding for the time that our soul is allowed to labour. It is God's wish that we seek to behold him, for then he will graciously show himself to us when he wills.

Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love

“For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few. . . . For many are called, but few are chosen.”

Matthew 7:14, 22:14

He [God] chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

Ephesians 1:4

In this function this man is the object of the eternal divine decision and foreordination. Jesus Christ, then, is not merely one of the elect, but *the* elect of God. . . . His election is the original and all-inclusive election; the election which is absolutely unique, but which in this very uniqueness is universally meaningful and efficacious, because it is the election of Him who Himself elects. Of none other of the elect can it be said that his election carries in it and with it the election of the rest.

Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same

time to love the enemies of that truth, His enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way. To believe the promise of Jesus that His followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenseless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves, is indeed a narrow way. To see the weakness and wrong in others, and at the same time refrain from judging them; to deliver the gospel message without casting pearls before swine, is indeed a narrow way. The way is unutterably hard, and at every moment we are in danger of straying from it. If we regard this way as one we follow in obedience to an external command, if we are afraid of ourselves all the time, it is indeed an impossible way. But if we behold Jesus Christ going on before, step by step, if we only look to Him and follow Him, step by step, we shall not go astray. But if we worry about the dangers that beset us, if we gaze at the road instead of at Him who goes before, we are already straying from the path. For He is Himself the way, the narrow way and the strait gate. He, and He alone, is our journey's end. When we know that, we are able to proceed along the narrow way through the strait gate of the cross, and on to eternal life, and the very narrowness of the road will increase our certainty.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship