

# Introduction to Strategic Prayer

By Carl Townsend

The understanding of watchmen, gatekeepers, gates and walls and their role is very critical in the understanding spiritual warfare and strategic prayer.

Gates, walls gatekeepers, and watchmen can have meaning from a defensive position (protecting something from an enemy) or offensive position (storming the enemies gates or walls). Cities can have these, regions can have them, houses can have them, churches can have them, and people (individuals) can have them. When Peter healed the lame man (Acts 3), it was done at the gate Beautiful and the church grew to 5000 that day. When Luther made his statement, it was placed on the church door, or church gate. This initiated the Reformation. As gatekeeper and watchman of my house, I guard its gates carefully as well as those of my church and city.

## Defensive Gates and Gatekeepers

In the early cities of Biblical times, the cities were walled to protect them. They had gates for entering and leaving the city. The analogy here is defensive. At the gates there would be a high tower with a watchman. Any danger to the city could be detected from a far distance. The watchmen were wise men who had skills in discerning the enemy and protecting the city. If an enemy approached, the warning had to be sounded as early as possible.

*"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest... "*

**Isaiah 62:6 NIV**

If someone approached the city, the message would be sounded to the gatekeepers, who had the responsibility of guarding the gates. The approach could be good news, or it could be bad.

*"Then the watchman saw another man running, and he called down to the gatekeeper, 'Look, another man running alone!'"*

## **2 Samuel 18:28**

Look carefully at this full text and see who does the discernment for who is coming.

These city gates were fortified by bars. The areas near the gates were used for the assembly of people, public deliberations, prophetic declarations, business decisions, trials and judgments carried out, and the dissemination of news. Nehemiah's vision and quest was to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and one of great studies in leadership is to see how Nehemiah led in this rebuilding. The walls and gates that Nehemiah led in rebuilding were defensive walls and gates. In a similar way, we have Christians have the responsibility in our own lives, homes, the lives of others, the church and city to rebuild the walls that have fallen.

## **The Opponents Gates and Gatekeepers**

Now let's look at another type of wall and gate. When Christ spoke to Peter after Peter affirmed Jesus' identify, Christ said:

*"Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it."*

## **Matthew 16:15**

The picture here is of the darkness of hell surrounded by walls and gates. There are many within this darkness: some deceived by false teaching, the poor, the homeless youth, the elderly who live without

hope, frustrated Christians, and more. There are gates into this darkness, and Christ is saying the church, marching on the offense, can storm this citadel and the gates will not be able to resist the attack. It is clearly the role of the church to identify the gatekeepers of this darkness and launch a strike against the citadel.

One example here is the work of Scott Powell in Portland in trying to break the darkness around Hawthorne and 39th. Hawthorne street is named for a Dr. Hawthorne who built the first asylum in Oregon. This street used to be called Asylum Street. In ministry here, Scott followed these steps:

1. He identified the node points, or the critical points of information flow for the deception in the area.
2. Then he identified the key leaders in the area (gatekeepers).
3. Finally, he prayed for the salvation of these gatekeepers.

It was at the third step that the spiritual dynamics really began, even putting him in real physical danger more than once.

Later, in initiating a youth ministry in our church, Scott began by using the same strategy: First identify the youth leaders in the high school, then work to lead them to the Lord. Finally, these become a peer group to win others. Again, Scott identified the gatekeepers and went for their salvation.

## **Gatekeepers and Watchmen**

Concepts about gates, walls, gatekeepers, and watchmen become very important in spiritual warfare. The gatekeepers and watchmen were not the same person in the early cities (2 Samuel 18:26). Watchmen were very wise men that had strong discernment and wisdom capabilities. In today's spiritual dimension, this is an apostolic gift when it concerns the city or larger region. For discerning the watchmen of

Portland, let's look for a minute at the description of this watchman from the research of Roland Hill of Watchman Ministry.

- **A watchman is able to see from the Lord's perspective.** He is able to see the Kingdom of God and its fulfillment. In 1 Samuel 9, we see Samuel meets Saul for the first time and immediately begins telling Saul all the things that would happen to him. Samuel could do this because he rested in the Lord and could see things from the Kingdom perspective.
- **A true watchman prays prophetic prayers.** In Genesis 18, God made a plan that included the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then God tells Abraham what He is going to do and allows Abraham to intercede for the cities (Gen. 18). This interaction between Abraham and God was possible because of Abraham's intimacy with God. A true watchman rests in this intimacy, discerning from God not only what the Lord's agenda is, but is able to intercede with God for what He is about to do. In the same way Moses interceded with God to prevent the destruction of the Israelites (Numbers 14:11ff). God was ready to destroy the nation, but He heard and honored the prayer of Moses. A true watchmen moves into prophetic prayer, not so much praying against as praying something into existence. Notice in the case of both Moses and Abraham, this prophetic praying can move the finger of God.
- **A true watchman is a weapon, striking like an arrow into the heart of the enemy.** He/she is not praying "Lord, if it is your will....", but rather discerning the Will, then praying that Will into existence. Esther moved as a weapon in the hand of God, taking the risk and saving her nation in the process. Deborah acted and destroyed the spirit of Jezebel (control) at Mt. Tabor (Judges 4). We are a people of purpose:

*"Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name.*

*He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver. "*

### **Isaiah 49:1 (NIV)**

The spiritual watchman is able, first, to discern the spiritual battle in the heavenlies. He/she is able to discern this battle in the world, the city, the church, and in personal lives. As man the Apostle Paul talks about (2 Corinthians 12:2), he/she is caught up and sees the past, present, and future. The watchman then is then able to project this Vision to the real world, praying the Kingdom and God's Vision into existence in the world here. The prayer, at that point, becomes *strategic prayer*.

The prophet then lives into the Vision as if it were already accomplished. He/She discerns God's plan prophetically from their intimacy with God. Then the watchman prays that vision into existence striking strategically into the very heart of the enemy, resting in the vision until its completion. Nothing else has any meaning in life until the completion of the Vision.

*"For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"*

### **Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)**

***Once there is a resting in God's Will, God gives the grace and peace (release from frustration, guilt, depression, anger, stress, physical healing, etc.) to complete the Vision.***

God, then, holds a plan and purpose for the city, for churches, and individuals. For the city, this Vision, in turn, is held by the watchmen,

who are really the prophets of the city. Prophecy and vision go together (1 Samuel 3). One of the key tasks, then, of the church is to identify the spiritual watchmen in the city.

The watchmen are the prophets, speaking the Vision in Truth into the city and telling of God's intention for the city. These names are then given to the city intercessors, which pray for the discernment, wisdom, and protection of these watchmen.

*"In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts. "*

### **Isaiah 26:1 (NIV)**

The gatekeepers, in turn, are those that sit at the spiritual portals of the city (or church, family, or region). They control the access to that area, and act on the words of the watchmen. The gatekeepers are the *node points* for the spiritual mapper concerning information on a particular geographic area, group of people (such as an unreached people group), or subject (homelessness, politics, revival history, etc.).

A good starting point for the spiritual mapper in this is the creation of the database of parachurch, churches, and individuals that are shaping the spiritual direction of the city (harvest force). Each entry is then coded with the appropriate keyword. By inverting this database on the keywords, one can identify an initial list for the gatekeepers and watchmen from the contact people for each key word (Figure F.1). This is being done in Portland now.

These spiritual gatekeepers or watchmen (which aren't the same) can be of many types. In Washington, D.C., I saw a regional political watchman act to save a farm used as a retreat center by taking authority over city political leaders. There are financial gatekeepers that guard the financial assets of a church, organization, or even a city.

There are also legal gatekeepers and watchmen, media watchmen and gatekeepers, watchmen and gatekeepers for the pastors, and more.

Another type of watchman is the **geographic watchman** that has the prophetic vision for a region or part of the city. There are also regional gatekeepers that control access to an area. In working with the homeless, I discovered key people act as gatekeepers that control acceptance in their community as well as "watchmen" that look out and care for new homeless in their region.

Sometimes God even uses a "Pharaoh" as gatekeeper to protect a divine initiative. This person may not even be aware God is using him or her in this way. In almost all cases, this watchman person seems to have a large base of knowledge, discernment, and wisdom in the area for which they control access.

## **Fallen Walls**

Sometimes there are areas for which there is no gatekeeper and the walls and gates have fallen. This can be true of a particular area of a church (as the youth in a church), and entire church, a region of the city, or sometimes an entire city. One task of the spiritual mapper is to discern these areas in the city - *find the gaps*.

Nehemiah's task was to reconstruct Jerusalem physically, socially, and spiritually. One priority was to rebuild the walls and gates to the city. As the gates were rebuilt, there was gaps in the walls that Sanballat and Tobiah came with a spirit of accusation and deception (Nehemiah 4:7,8). The first reaction for most of us might be to react against the attack, moving the forces to the gaps against this enemy. Nehemiah, in contrast, did something else. He kept priority on the wall building, asking each builder to wear a sword. In the same way, we as Christians must continue building the walls of the city, wearing our sword, which

is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Our task is to deliver the mail, not chase the dogs.

## The Secular Gates

There are also secular gates and walls that need to be defined. Often these are defined by the city fathers of the area. The gates can be economic, social, political, or geographical.



## Who's Watching The Gates?

