

Dreams

The most famous soliloquy in literature is probably Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech. He is contemplating death and if this cessation of temporal life this side of the grave described as "a sea of troubles" will bring to pass sweet dreams or nightmares. Here are Shakespeare's words from Hamlet: "To die, to sleep – to sleep, perchance to dream. Ah, there's the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come...?" Here Hamlet contemplates dreams that await us in "the undiscovered country...." In August 9, 2004 Newsweek's article, *The Mystery of Dreams*, Barbara Kantrowitz and Karen Springden say "...it's (researching our dreams) the closest we've come to recording the soul," Rosalind Cartwright, a chairman of psychology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago says, "If you're going to understand human behavior, here's a big piece of it. Dreaming is our own storytelling time - to help us know who we are, where we're going and how we're going to get there."

In the Book of Acts God repeats a promise from Joel concerning the last days, "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams*" (Acts 2:17). God has a lot to say about dreams. You will find sixty-one verses that mention "dream," twenty-one verses that mention the plural form "dreams," four verses that mention "dreamers," seventeen verses using the word "dreamed," seventy-three usages of "vision," and twenty-four times "visions" is mentioned.

People of all ages have wondered and gone beyond wondering to believe that dreams can be a way of communicating ideas and affecting our waking world. In ancient Greece, sick people slept at the temples of Asclepius, the god of medicine, in order to receive dreams that would heal them. Freud thought our hidden drives, repressed during waking life, bubble to the surface in dreams. Jung thought symbols in dreams are shared and understood by all humanity. We certainly do not embrace all that these secular men hold to, but I am trying to convey what even the world thinks about dreams. In the Bible, we see that Joseph was known for his dreams: "...*Behold, this dreamer cometh.*" (Genesis 37:19). The amazing thing is that the dreams of Joseph came to pass! "*And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed...*" (Genesis 42:9). Joseph's ability to interpret dreams assured him a role in history as second only to Pharaoh (Genesis 40). His ability to interpret dreams also saved the world from hunger (Genesis 41). When we study the book of Daniel, we see that dreams and interpreting dreams saved lives, advanced honor, and spelled out future prophecy: "...*Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters*" (Daniel 7:1). When Solomon was granted the greatest wisdom in the world it came through a dream, "*In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee*" (I Kings 3:5). God gave Joseph, the espoused husband of Mary the assurance that everything was going to be okay: "...*behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost*" (Matthew 1:20). We see that God warned the magi and Joseph of the dangers planned for Jesus and through the dreams directed them to take action that ultimately protected the Christ child. "*And being warned of God in a dream that they should not*

return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him" (Matthew 2:12,13). Pilate's wife had a prophetic dream during the trials of Jesus, "When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Matthew 27:19). We see Simon Peter is shown through the vision of a dream that the Gentiles were to be accepted in the one Body, the Church (Acts 10:9-21).

The canon of the Scripture is complete. We are not to add or take away from God's revealed Word in the sixty-six books of the Bible. And if any dream or extra-biblical revelation contradicts the written Word, always accept the Bible as the last word and reject anything and everything that does not merge with the inspired Word. Would God or can God still speak through dreams? When we consider that in the last days He promised young men would see visions and old men would have dreams (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:17), we would ask you to be open to what God would tell you. In the dark ages many religious leaders downplayed dreams as messages from God. Some went so far as to blame them on the workings of the devil. Formal religion apart from God is threatened by the personal priesthood of the believer. We believe that God desires to talk to all of His children. *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). Whether you interpret the biblical definition of dreams as an actual dream or a strong belief, hope, or aspiration of the path God would have you take, it is definitely worth considering, "what dreams may come" or what may become of my dreams.*

I. Dreams are often birthed by intense desire.

"For a dream cometh through the multitude of business..." (Ecclesiastes 5:3). In this Scripture Solomon is telling us that our daily activity, what we do and want to do becomes the seed-bed of our dreams. I love to hear how Wilbur and Orville Wright dreamed of flying before the birth of a whole new era that eventually took man from the beach at Kitty Hawk to the surface of the moon.

It is not unusual for young mothers to dream of harm coming to their babies. Sometimes these dreams disturb the moms, but it has now been speculated by researchers that a mother is rehearsing what to do in case of a crisis, so that she can eliminate or minimize the actual trouble when and if it comes.

II. Dreams feed faith.

"When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psalm 126:1-3). Get the picture. When the seventy years of captivity is over for Israel, they picture themselves in the land of promise. Their joy is returned, (Psalm 51:12). And their song is given back (Psalm 137:3, 4). Their reality was fed by the dreams that spurred their faith on to the subsequent victory!

III. Dreams may help clarify.

"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed" (Job 33:14, 15).

There is a beautiful little song in *Sleeping Beauty* that says, "A dream is a wish the heart makes." Dreams, like "wishes of the heart," activate us to prayer - and God answers prayer. The great key to getting prayers answered may mean dreaming the dreams God gives you! Have you ever said, "Let me sleep on it"? Dierdre Barrett, assistant professor at Harvard Medical School describes in her book, *The Committee of Sleep*, how artists found inspiration in their dreams. In her own research on problem solving through dreams, Barrett has found even ordinary people can solve simple problems in their lives (like how to fit old furniture into a new apartment) if they focus on it before they fall asleep.

God's Word says, *"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:28, 29).* Compound the Word of God with a dream or personal word God says upon your heart. This has the effect of fire burning the unnecessary and "in the way" chaff of mental remuneration into a well-defined and focused plan of action. Dreaming the dreams God gives you, coupled with His Word is powerful like a hammer that breaks apart the hard and difficult things to discern. God is speaking; may we listen. And may we say with the Apostle, *"...I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).*

- Pastor Pope -