
Dreams, a vital way to hear from God

According to Hebrews 1:1-2, in Old Testament times God spoke to His people through the prophets. In New Testament times God spoke to His people through His son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. When Jesus returned to the right hand of God, He promised to pour out the Holy Spirit. The promise of the Father is that He would send the Holy Spirit who would be in us and would make God's words known to us (Prov. 1:23; John 14:16-17).

Holy Spirit to bring dreams in the last days

The prophet Joel tells us that a time will come when the Holy Spirit is poured forth, and ordinary people will receive dreams, visions and prophecies (Joel 2:28). At Pentecost it happened. St. Peter reminds them that the coming of the Holy Spirit results in God speaking through prophecies, visions, and dreams to all flesh (Acts 2:14-17).

Dreams, the language of the Holy Spirit

Some Christian writers go so far as to say that dreams are "God's language."¹ According to the Korean pastor, P. Youngi Cho, the language of the Holy Spirit is dreams, visions and prophecies.² Episcopalian pastor, Rev. John A. Sanford, seems to agree with this – he titled his book, *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language!* If we long to hear what God is saying to us, we have found that dreams are one of the ways He uses.

The dream is the voice of God speaking to us in the night while our conscious mind is stilled – the late, Rev. Herman Riffel.

The visual word of God

The messages God brings us in the Bible are presented in part as rational propositional truth and part as story, vision, symbol and narrative – that is, *image*. Both of these are necessary to God's revelation, and most of the time they are integrated with each other. However, Godawa estimates conservatively that 30 percent of the Bible is rational propositional truth and laws, while 70 percent of it is presented as image.³

When we look at how God communicated with His prophets, we see that the very concept of "God's Word" is not an exclusively word-oriented concept. As Godawa says so colorfully, "God did not float Hebrew words in the air like ancient sky-writing."⁴ God defines image-based *visions* as His *Word*.

- Isaiah reported his visionary experiences this way: "the word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw" (Is 2:1; also see Is 1:1 & 13:1).
- Jeremiah described what he saw as the word of the Lord (Jer 1:11, 13; 24:3).
- Micah said "the word of the Lord which came to Micah...which he saw" (Micah 1:1).
- Ezekiel tells us that the visions of God he saw are "the word of the Lord" (Ez 1:1-3).

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- Zechariah says that the “Word of the Lord” came to him, and then he recounts the vision he had (Zech 1:7-8).
 - Amos says of God’s revelation to him in several places, “the Lord God showed me” (Amos 7:1,4,7; 8:1).

Apparently God doesn’t regard imagery as an inferior method for communicating truth as compared with words, or He would not have used so much imagery described *as His word*. So, are dreams and visions really all that different from words?

The direct or indirect voice of God

According to Numbers 12:6-8, Moses heard God’s voice speaking directly to him, face-to-face, while others experienced God’s voice indirectly, through dreams and visions. This establishes the idea that God’s voice can be encountered either directly or indirectly. However, most dreams seem to belong to the category of the indirect voice of God because they use symbolic language.

When we accept that God speaks to us through dreams, it does not mean that we are going to take them as *literally* being His voice. Never-the-less, there are times when dreams (such as Shayda’s) seem to contain direct messages meant to be taken literally. In these rare dreams, we sense we are encountering the voice of God very directly. We never forget these dreams; they stay alive for us throughout our lives.

¹ Len Sperry, *Spirituality In Clinical Practice, Incorporating the Spiritual Dimension in Psychotherapy and Counseling* (Philadelphia, PA: Brummer-Routledge, 2001).

² Paul Youngi Cho. *The Fourth Dimension*, (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1979).

³ Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 53.

⁴ Brian Godawa, *Hollywood Worldviews: Watching Films with Wisdom and Discernment* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 56.