

God Uses Dreams For Inner Healing

I. Introduction

When Father Kocher offered me a monthly radio program in 2002, he said that there is a great need in the Catholic Church for inner healing. I see this need everywhere. Many of God's people are struggling with painful issues locked in their hearts. So I have focused many of our programs on this theme.

Last month, we completed a series on "Healing The Wounded Heart". In this series, I identified some root causes that hold our hearts in darkness and presented an integrated ministry approach that enables you to deal with them. We talked about generational family sins and curses; ungodly soul ties; ungodly beliefs, negative expectations & bitter root judgments; inner vows; unhealed traumas; negative spiritual or demonic energies, and chronic personal sins.

We also talked about the problem of a broken heart, often occurring as a result of the sins of the father. (Note: Many of the ideas in this series were drawn from the work of John & Paula Sandford; Mark & Patti Virkler; Chester & Betsy Kylstra; Matthew & Dennis Linn & Sheila Fabricant; Bill & Sue Banks; El El Ministries; Ed Smith's Theophostic Ministry; Derek Prince; Frances & Judith MacNutt; & Ralph Nault.)

Dreams, a source of wisdom and healing

This month, I want to talk about the value of the dream as a powerful resource in our journey toward wholeness in Christ Jesus. In our journey to know God and become more spiritually alive and whole, my husband and I have benefited greatly from our dreams. In fact, I can't imagine what our lives would have been like without them. It is clear to us, that God is involved in our dreaming.

I believe the capacity to dream has been given to us by God, the One who gives us life, and who continues to be the eternal source and ground of our very existence. Both the scriptures and the early church Fathers valued the divine origins of the dream. However several hundred years ago, during the rise of rationalism and science, Christianity lost touch with the divine purpose of the dream.

Do not write me your dreams, asking for their meaning!

Research recovers the value of the dream

In the early part of the last century, research by Freud and Jung brought new understanding on the value of the dream. They verified the dream as a source of wisdom and healing. Using reliable scientific research methods they proved the existence of a hidden place within us that we cannot access with our conscious ego. They called this place the "unconscious", simply for lack of any other name. Further findings of depth psychology have given us a greater understanding of the unconscious and its relationship to wholeness, as well as fresh ways to work with dreams.

Sleep labs verify the value of dreaming

Sleep takes up approximately one-third of our lives, and about a fourth of that involves dreaming. Apparently we experience several periods of dreaming throughout the night. Research shows that we typically dream about five times during an ordinary night's sleep.

Sleep lab researchers have observed that during sleep, our brain cycles through periods of heightened activity and periods of quiet sleep. While we participate in the night-time drama of our dreams, our mind is very much alive, showing intense activity. In a particular stage of sleep known as REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, our eyes move back and forth rapidly beneath our eyelids, like we are watching an action movie!

Each period of dreaming gets longer as sleep progresses. Early on, they may be less than a minute, and our final dreaming session may last as long as an hour. It all adds up to about one to two hours of dreams every night— about five years of dreaming in a life time.

Researchers discovered that if a person is awakened every time they enter a dreaming phase, after about three nights they will begin to show signs of having a nervous breakdown. From this study, we can infer that the process of dreaming is vital to our sense of well-being. Essential to our mental stability, dreaming helps to balance us emotionally and keep us sane.

Importance of dreaming

These findings from sleep lab research and depth psychology add great weight to the importance of dreaming. Yet, few of God's people have the information necessary to take their dreams seriously or know how to benefit from the wisdom in the dream. They are ignorant of how to use God's gift to us. In this teaching today I want to make you aware of the powerful resource that your dreams can be to you in your journey toward healing and wholeness.

Here are some areas of learning that will help you to benefit from your dreams:

1. The Basis for the Christian Use of Dreams: biblical & historical church record on dreams; Holy Spirit communicates through dreams; Divine purpose of the dream; biblical importance; how dreams help us relate to God.
2. Foundational Understanding of the Dream: key characteristics; premises of the Christian use of dreams; origin of the dream; ; biblical principles of interpretation; direct or indirect communication from God; contains Divine energy & healing).
3. The Language of the Dream; the language of symbolism; its basis; ruling categories; origin of symbols; "figures of speech" (puns, parable, metaphor, personification, simile, hyperbole, allegory) and poetic amplification, two halves of the brain, imagination and intuition; the language often used by Jesus.
4. Fundamentals of Dream Work; types of dreams; typical dream structure; common dream themes; recognizing valuable dreams; basic principles, approaching a dream; context of dreamer's life; mirror of the soul; diagnostic value; inner dynamics (feelings, attitudes, conflicts, opposites; projections, ego-self; inner personalities (persona & shadow figures); repetitive dreams, repeated themes; nightmares; death and sexual themes.
5. Basic Techniques & Exploratory Principles: getting started (recording & recalling); processing questions; the purpose of the dream; the because factor; subjective or objective; drawing the dream; common dream images (teeth, falling, flying, people, animals, reptiles, birds, buildings, objects).

6. **Advanced Techniques & Dream Work Principles:** contemplative methods; taking the dream inwardly; amplifying the symbol; staying with the symbol; making personal associations; dialoguing with dream figures; re-entering the dream; completing a dream; role playing; transformational motifs and archetypal figures; death and rebirth; prophetic dreams.
7. **Principles of Dream Interpretation:** the interpretation belongs to God; the art of applying the heart; the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the witness of the Holy Spirit; the "aha" moment; the meaning of the dream belongs to the dreamer; i.e., no one can tell others what it means, they can only suggest.

II. What The Bible Says About Dreams

Approximately one-third of the Bible involves dreams and visions. Riffel (1981) says his review of *Strong's Concordance* yielded 224 direct references to dreams and visions, with approximately 50 dreams specifically mentioned. God's people need a thoughtful examination of both the Old and New Testament records about the value of the dream. Start with these:

- The Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the doorway of the tent, and He called Aaron and Miriam. When they had both come forward, He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord, shall make myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream, not so with My servant Moses...with him I speak mouth to mouth...and not in "dark sayings" (Num. 12:6-8).
- Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. That He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol (Job 33:14-18).
- When King Saul inquired of the Lord, he expected God to answer him, either by dreams, by prophets, or by Urim. When God didn't, Saul believed that he had lost his guidance and went to a medium (I Sam. 28:5-15).
- There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries...what will take place in the latter days... this was your dream and the visions in your mind while on the bed...that you may understand your inmost thoughts (Dan. 2:28-30).
- It will come about..."that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28).
- And it shall come to pass in the last days, says 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 2:16-18).

A. God Used the Dream and Vision in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and many others saw visions, dreamed, and had discourse with angels. God used the dream and vision...

1. To establish God's covenant with Abraham. God assured Abraham of a great future, and that his own offspring would be the ones to share it (*Gen. 15:1-21*).
2. To warn the heathen king Abimelech of danger, and to protect Sara (*Gen. 20:1-18*).
3. To reaffirm a covenant with Jacob, to give him a promise of God's presence and his safe return, as he was fleeing from home (*Gen. 28:10-16*).
4. To Jacob, to give him wisdom in his relationship with Laban, telling him what to do with the flock (*Gen. 31:10-29*).
5. To Jacob, to direct him to return home (*Gen. 31:10-13*).
6. To Laban, to warn him to be careful how he spoke to Jacob (*Gen. 31:24*).
7. To Joseph as a child, working in the fields, revealing God's plan for his life and preparing him for the future. He dreamed of binding sheaves in a field, and his sheaf stood erect and the others bowed to his. In verse 9, a second dream where sun, moon, stars bowed down to him (*Gen. 37:1-11*).
8. To an evil king, Pharaoh, in order to save Israel and Egypt. He dreamed of standing by the Nile River and seven fat cows came up, followed by seven lean cows, which ate up the fat cows (*Gen. 40:1-49*).
9. To the butler and baker, in prison, telling them of their immediate future (*Gen. 40:1-23*). Joseph was able to open up the meaning of the dreams of the cupbearer and baker, to give him favor with Pharaoh and save his nation (*Gen. 40:1-23*).
10. To Jacob/Israel, guiding him to take his family to Egypt, and telling him about the future (*Gen. 46:1-7*).
11. To Balaam and his donkey. Through vision, God opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel of the Lord who was standing in front of the donkey (animals are sometimes more aware of spiritual realities than their more rationally conscious masters) (*Num. 22:20-31*).
12. To Gideon, an angel of the Lord spoke to him, at the wine press, giving him a vision and purpose for his life (*Judges 6:11*).
13. To Gideon, directing him in the night, to go down by the enemy camp....(the sword of Gideon) (*Judges 7:9-18*).
14. To an enemy soldier of Gideon, in the battle field camp, telling him of God's protection over Israel. He dreamed of a loaf of barley bread tumbling into the camp (*Judges 7:9-18*).
15. To the child Samuel, in an auditory vision, preparing him for what the Lord was going to do. All Israel understood that the Lord had confirmed Samuel as a prophet of the Lord (*I Samuel 3:1-21*).
16. To give Solomon wisdom to follow in steps of David and impart gifts to him (*I Kings 3:5-28*).

17. To Elisha's servant, a vision, helping the servant to not fear; saw horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (II Kings 6:17).
18. The prophet Isaiah received visions from the Lord that contained prophetic warnings, future events, the last days, encouragement, correction, promises, and the coming kingdom of God, for the benefit of his people, nation, and Babylon (Isaiah 1:1; 2:1; 6:1; 13:1; 21:2).
19. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of receiving visions, dreams, and prophecies. His prophecies seemed to come from his visions (Jeremiah 1:11-19).
20. The prophet Ezekiel received visions through which the Lord spoke to him about the future of the house of Israel (Ezekiel 1:1,3; 8:1-18; 37:1-21).
21. God gave Daniel the ability to understand all kinds of visions and dreams—in order to save the nation (Daniel 1:17).
22. To Nebuchadnezzar to reveal the future and the thoughts of his heart: "...Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him"...and the king gave orders to find someone who could tell him the meaning of the dream: "I had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream" (Daniel 2:1-49).
23. Under pressure to interpret the king's dream, Daniel sought the Lord: "Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision..." (Daniel 2:19).
24. After interpreting the king's dreams, Daniel rejoiced, saying that the Lord "reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness"...(Dan. 2: 22).
25. Daniel brought into the king's presence said: "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries...He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions of your head while on the bed...He who reveals mysteries had made known to you what will take place"...(Daniel 2:25-28)
26. "...this mystery has been known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your heart" (Daniel 2:30).
27. Later, when King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great statue made of various metals, Daniel knew both the dream (which the king had forgotten) and its interpretation. Daniel again rightly interpreted the king's dream of the tree in the middle of the world, reaching the sky, which was cut down at the command of a holy one from heaven (Daniel 4:5-27).
28. Daniel interpreted King Belshazzar's vision of fingers writing on a wall, telling him that because he had not humbled his heart and exalted himself against the Lord (even though he knew what had happened to his father, King Nebuchadnezzar) his days were numbered (Daniel 5:1-30).
29. Daniel had several great dreams & visions of his own: 1). He saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; he wrote the dream down and related a summary of it (Dan. 7:1-28). 2). "And I looked in the vision, and it came about while I was looking, that I was in the citadel of Susa...and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal...and behold a ram which had two horns and a male goat that fought". The angel Gabriel interpreted the vision after Daniel sought the Lord for understanding (Dan. 8:1-27). 3). Vision of the man dressed in linen (Dan. 10:1-19; 12:5-6).

B. God Used the Dream and Vision in the New Testament

Similarly, God used the dream and vision in the New Testament to communicate. People experienced direct communication from God via dreams and visions: from Joseph & Mary, to the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, to Paul, Cornelius, Peter, and St. John in the apocalyptic revelations.

1. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, telling him to not be afraid to take Mary as his wife and reveals the future of the Christ child (Mt. 1:20).
2. The Lord God protects the Christ Child by warning the Magi in a dream, telling them not to return to Herod (Mt. 2:12).
3. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, telling him to flee to Egypt and stay there until he is told otherwise (Mt. 2:13).
4. Angel appears to Joseph in a dream, telling him to go back to Israel (Mt. 2:19,20).
5. Joseph receives another dream, warning him of danger; he goes to Nazareth (Mt. 2:22).
6. Zacharias encounters angel in a vision, who tells him that God will answer their prayer (Luke 1:11-22).
7. Wife of Pilate received a dream that warned not to have anything to do with that righteous man (Mt. 27:19).
8. The women at Jesus' tomb saw a vision of angels, telling them Jesus was alive (Luke 24:4,5,22-24).
9. As he was dying, Stephen saw the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55).
10. Saul encounters the Lord in an auditory vision, receiving revelation & direction (Acts 9:1-6).
11. The Lord spoke to Ananias, a disciple of God, in a vision, telling him where to go, what to say and do (Acts 9:10-18).
12. An angel of God came to Cornelius in a vision, telling him that his prayers have been heard and what he was to do: find Peter (Acts 10:1-8).
13. Peter falls into a trance, seeing the sky open up and something like a great sheet being lowered to the ground by four corners. As Peter reflects on the vision, the Spirit tells him to go with the men downstairs. Cornelius helps Peter understand the radical meaning of the vision (Acts 10:9-20). The Lord confirmed the meaning of this iconoclastic dream in a supernatural way.
14. Peter says of his prison escape that he did not know whether what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision (Acts 12:9).
15. Paul sees a vision in the night in which a man of Macedonia was asking him to come to Macedonia and help (Acts 16:9,10). Paul took action immediately, and changed his direction.
16. The Lord speaks to Paul in the night by a vision, telling him to not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent for the Lord was with him. The Lord tells him he will not be harmed...(Acts 18:9,10).

17. Paul falls into a trance as he was praying, and sees Jesus telling him that his life is in danger, his testimony won't be received, and to get out Jerusalem quickly. He also told Paul where to go—far away to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17).
18. (John) heard behind him a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, saying, "Write in a book what you see and send it to the 12 churches (Rev. 1:10,11).

C. God Will Use the Dream and Vision in the Last Days

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. Both the book of Joel in the Old Testament and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament assert that God will speak through dreams and visions—when the Holy Spirit is poured out.

The prophet Joel prophecies of the Lord's intent to keep communicating with people through these means:

It will come about...that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days (Joel 2:28).

Upon his return to the right hand of God, the Lord Jesus received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit which was poured forth at Pentecost (Acts 2:33). At Pentecost, when the people are bewildered and amazed and are asking for an explanation of the meaning of this experience, Peter quiets their hearts by reminding them that they are witnessing what the prophet Joel had foretold.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, says 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 2:16-18).

D. Comment

The weight of the biblical record alone provides overwhelming evidence that dreams and visions were a vital part of God's communication with His people. It also verifies that God planned to continue to use dreams and visions in the last days—when the Holy Spirit was poured out. We can only conclude that God stills communicates with His people through the dream and vision. Dr. Mark Virkler says, "Dreams are a central way God has chosen to communicate with us, and thus they *must* be given great weight!" (Virkler & Virkler, 2004).

If you need further convincing, examine the writings of the Early Church Fathers who also validate the dream and vision as a way for God to communicate with mankind.

III. The Biblical Purpose of Dreams

From a biblical standpoint, the dream provides a channel of communication for God to speak to His people through. Through dreams we can connect with God, hear His voice speaking to us, and receive His wisdom, guidance and direction. The dream also allows God to impart gifts and

healing to us. Moreover, the dream offers spiritual revelation and insight, helping us discover God's purpose and direction for our lives. In some cases a dream may even reveal future events.

In our dreams, God will convey to us exactly what we need for our lives.

☞ **Review the above scriptures and list biblical purposes of the dream and vision.**

1. To reveal God to us.
2. To reveal God's truths.
3. To reveal divine revelation of the spiritual realms.
4. To receive an answer from the Lord about some question we are asking Him.
5. To reveal what will take place in the future.
6. To reveal our inmost thoughts.
7. To counsel us.
8. To instruct us.
9. To reveal our problems.
10. To reveal our inner condition.
11. To warn us.
12. To give us promises.
13. To prepare us.
14. To guide us.
15. To give us direction.
16. To impart a spiritual gift or blessing.
17. To reveal our life purpose, giftedness, calling, or anointing.

Here are some more purposes of dreams:

- To reveal secret motivations buried in our heart.
- To show us the things we are hiding from.
- To reveal direct attack of demonic spirits.
- To release creative and inspired ideas to us.
- To show us how to pray.
- To impart Divine energy and faith.
- To show us our personality problems like inferiority, shame, fears and anxieties, self-rejection, self-hatred, anger, abandonment.
- To express our inner divisions and conflicts.
- To reveal capabilities and aspects of our self that we do not know.
- To reveal our blind spots.

A. Counsel And Instruct Us In The Night

The following scriptures claim that God counsels and instructs His people in the night. Based upon my experience and observation of others, I suggest that God does this through the night-dream and waking vision. He uses both of them. The question to ponder is why does He do this? Why does He want to counsel and instruct us? Because He desires good things for us—not the bad! (Examine the scriptures in my Program Notes: *Healing Traumas*, 7 February, 2007.)

I will bless the Lord who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind (inner man) instructs me in the night (Ps. 16:7 NASB).

He awakeneth my ear, morning by morning...He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple" (Is 50:4).

Indeed God speaks once, or twice...In a dream, in a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. That He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol (Job 33:14-18). (Job 33:14-18).

Reflection Point

One purpose of the indwelling Holy Spirit is to reveal truth to us (Gospel of John). The question is how does the Holy Spirit reveal truth to us? According to St. Peter, it is the Holy Spirit who bring us dreams, visions, and prophecies (Acts). Does the Holy Spirit use these methods to reveal truth to us. YES!

B. Reveal Our Inmost Thoughts

As mentioned earlier, Daniel acknowledged 2000 years ago that the dream wants to make known to us our innermost thoughts.

...that you may understand your inmost thoughts (Dan. 2:26-30).

In other words, we have thoughts that we may be unaware of, thoughts held deep inside us, far from our conscious self. The dream is given to make these unknown thoughts known to us.

We see in King Belshazzar experience that he was unaware of the pride he carried in his heart (Daniel 5:1-30). He an inner world in which he kept hidden unacceptable thoughts, attitudes, and values..

The inner world of man

The biblical view of man makes it clear that we have an inner world, a psychic world of non-material reality, deep within us. The Scriptures affirm that man has a deep inner part, a hidden part, which is concealed from him:

1. Thou does desire truth in the "innermost" being, and in the "hidden part" (*Catha*, to close up, a hidden shut up part) thou shalt make me to know wisdom (Ps. 51:6).
2. For the "inward part" and heart of man are deep (Ps. 64:6).

3. Let it be the "hidden" (*kruptos*, concealed, hid, inward) person of the heart (I Pet. 3:4).
4. The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the "innermost parts of his being" (lit. "chambers of the belly" (Prov. 20:27).
5. Go down into the "innermost parts of the body" (lit. deep into the chambers of the belly) (Prov. 18:8).
6. Our "outer man" is decaying, yet our "inner man" (point where motion or action proceeds from) is being renewed day by day (II Cor. 4:16).
7. I will put my law "within" them (their inward parts) (Jer. 31:33).
8. The word of God is living and active...and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the "heart" (the center of something) (Heb. 4:12).
9. For Thou dost light my lamp, the Lord my God illumines my "darkness" (Ps. 18:28).

The Early Church Fathers also recognized the existence of another reality, an inner reality, that we could be in touch with. We have both a visible, *seen* side of our personality as well as an *unseen* side. This *unseen* part belongs to the spiritual realm and influences our lives through dreams, visions, and other supernatural phenomena.

A few relevant biblical concepts

- We are blind. (Who is so blind as my servant; Whatever is hidden and covered over must be brought into the light)
- We are rotten ... whole head is sick, *the whole heart faint*. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it: but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your land is desolate (Is 1:4-7).
- The Pharisees looked good on the outside, but had not cleaned up on the inside.
- My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...Hosea 4:6).
- We must be sanctified in every part of our being. (Sanctify them in Thy truth)
- Our heart must be purified (cleansed) so we can see God (who is within us) (Matt. 5:8)

1. Dreams make us aware of something we are blind to

From the following scripture it is clear that God wants to make us aware of something that we are not aware of, that we are blind to. He sends the dream or vision in the night so He can instruct us in godly righteousness and turn us away from ungodly conduct.

Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction. That He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride. He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol (Job 33:14-18).

Jung saw the dream as a mirror, revealing things that we are not conscious or aware of. Dreams express the fears and problems we face, mirroring the outward circumstances of our lives in

symbols and metaphors. Through personification they reveal the thoughts, values, emotions, and motivations that we are not allowed ourselves to become aware of.

2. Dreams can show us what's wrong inside

Since the dream can reveal what is wrong in our lives, it can be a big help to enable us to see what we don't/can't/won't see consciously. Dreams often provide us clear directives about what we need to do to restore balance in our lives. If we have difficulty relating our feelings or connecting to internal thoughts, our dreams can help us work on this issue.

Dr. Carl Jung felt that dreams acted like a mirror for the ego, showing what is missing in the dreamer's consciousness. The dream thus becomes our teacher and guide on the road toward wholeness.

3. Dreams make us aware of our inner attitudes, beliefs, and values

In our journey toward wholeness, it is essential that we come to know the quality and direction of our own attitudes, beliefs, and values. Attitudes are the ruling power, determining our view of ourselves and the world around us. We live the existence our attitudes determine and experience what part of life our attitudes permit. Attitudes, anchored beneath the surface of consciousness, in the non-dormant side of the brain, are comprised of feelings as well as thoughts. They must be examined and deliberately challenged. If they are loaded with lies and illusions, they must be replaced with healing, life-giving words from God.

We do not just decide what attitudes and beliefs we will have, because they are formed and branded into our psyche in the crucible of our life experience; they are deeply imbedded in the memories of yesterday. We believe according to the way we interpreted our experiences. Whatever happened to us when we were a child sets the stage for what happens in us today.

We hold our attitudes as "truths" which are not up for discussion or dispute. We say, "That's just the way I am! And, that's the way things are!" As we grow into adulthood our attitudes and beliefs are loaded with negativity, falsehoods, lies, illusions, delusions, fantasy, false images, hypocrisy, and deception.

However, the ever-present counselor in the night, our dreams, offers us a vital resource in our search to know our attitudes and beliefs. At some point in our journey, our dreams will begin to confront us with our negative and ungodly belief systems.

↳ God wants His righteousness to be established in every fiber of our being. Because of the intensity of the dream images—the evoked emotion, God's divine energy—they are able to bring to the light our inner thoughts and motivations.

4. Dreams make us aware of negative or positive parts of our self

The shadow motif is a common dream symbol that shows us neglected parts of ourselves of which we are unaware that we need to recognize, and allow Christ to transform and integrate into ourselves. The shadow appears in the dream as a person of the same sex as the dreamer.

The shadow often represents the unconscious part of ourselves that we have failed to recognize and own. Often these unknown parts of ourselves are seen as tendencies in other people in the psychological process of *projection*—we see in someone else the characteristics of ourselves that are unconscious.

Usually it presents itself as a negative or inferior personality characteristic. However, it can also be positive, revealing unrealized potential, gifts, and capabilities.

Dream processing questions

- What part of me behaves like that dream person does?
- Do I have this part in me?
- How does this dream present an issue—attitude, behavior, habit, bias—I need to address?

C. Dreams Bring Healing & Release Emotion

Life is full of conflicts, unresolved situations, and because factors. Thus our dreams are also loaded with the same type of things: Something is chasing us, we are trying to finish something, someone is trying to break in, war breaks out, we are missing an airplane flight, we are lost, a loved dog dies, we find a malnourished baby, a monster is staring at us.

The images in our dreams show us what we need to meditate on to discover the approach to our healing. Although we may be full of worries and fears, meditating on the dream images, letting their meaning come to us, touches the inner turmoil and strengthens us inside.

Our dreams contain a healing power because God is at the source of the dream energy. Dr. Jung recognized the natural healing mechanism of the dream. He saw that some dreams acted in such a way as to amend a lop sided or partial perspective on life. Some dreams offer specific help in the healing process or enhance a recovery process already underway within us. They empower us in many different ways.

One way dreams bring healing is by providing us with a way to bring closure to painful losses and say good-bye. Another way is to make us aware of unhealed traumas. The dream can provide a safe forum for catharsis, for discharge of pent up emotions, guilt, fears, and thoughts. In the dream we can tell someone off, when we are afraid to make in outer life. We find courage in the dream by role playing actions we need to take in real life.

Other healing dreams can bring some type of truth like an experience with God's love, bring you out of fear, heal your self image, release you from a lie, etc.

Examples

Saying goodbye

Many people report dreaming of loved ones who recently died—or even long ago, like this one:

Go live your life

A teenager was driving behind his brother, late one night, coming home from a club. He watched his brother's car go off the road and hit a tree. He runs over and sees his brother as he is dying from a cut in his artery in the neck.

He dreamed of talking with his recently deceased brother, who tells him to go and live his life, and that he (the deceased brother) was just fine—in heaven. "I am okay. Go live your life."

Nightmares

A nightmare is a type of dream that causes us to wake up feeling frightened or terrified. We may experience being chased, attacked, drowning, falling, dying, or fighting our way out of a war zone. With sweaty palms and pounding heart, we are relieved to realize it was only a dream! It is usually never completed in the dream.

Nightmares may be revealing our fears, our torments. They may be replaying traumatic experiences—veterans often relive their war experiences this way. Other factors such as drugs, illness, and stress may also provoke nightmares.

Here's a key point: recurring, severe nightmares are sending signals that something is unhealed in our hearts. Most nightmares do not just go away. We must view the nightmare as an invitation to come to our Heavenly Father for healing and deliverance. We may need to be set free from a demonic spirit of fear or an unclean spirit. Jesus was very comfortable dealing with this kind of thing—and He told us to do what he did.

Example

A monster is staring at me

IV. Fundamentals of Dream Work

Dream work focuses our attention on a particular dream, giving it a conscious, intentional response. Using a variety of techniques, we engage the material in the dream. Through interacting with the images, symbols, metaphors, and puns, we enter into a kind of dialogue with God and makes the dream come alive to us.

A. Dreams Are Like Parables

We can think of dreams like we do parables. Like parables, dreams are not direct statements we can grasp with our conscious ego—they're riddles. A dream asks questions instead of providing canned answers, teasing us into searching for the meaning of the dream and of ourselves.

Here are some general guidelines:

- Don't take dreams literally because most dreams speak symbolically.
- Dreams show us what we need to deal with to fulfill God's purpose for our lives.
- Dreams don't provide direct answers—they ask questions, raise issues, suggest possibilities, present alternatives, invite further inquiry.
- Meaning of a dream belongs to the dreamer—don't try to force understanding.

B. The Language of the Dream

God tells us that in the dream, He will speak in "dark sayings". What does He mean by that expression?

I shall speak with him in a dream, not so with My servant Moses...with him I speak mouth to mouth...and not in "dark sayings" (Num. 12:6-8).

According to the concordance by Strong (1978), the Hebrew word for “dark sayings” is *chiydah*, which means a puzzle; i.e., a trick, a conundrum, some type of message that is tied in a knot, like a proverb or a riddle.

If we want to understand our dreams, we must understand the symbols, and that is almost like learning a new language. In this language, our inner feelings, thoughts, and experiences express themselves like they were actual external events. We might say that the outer world is a symbol for the inner world. With symbolic language, we think in metaphors, images, and pictures. This is the language of poetry, imagination, art, the language our dreams.

In symbolic thinking, we don't think rationally, but instead are led along by our images and how we feel. We let the symbols and images suggest emotions, feelings and associations for us.

The basis of symbolism is analogy

Since we cannot address a symbol from a rational, conscious viewpoint, often we use an analogy to describe something we can't quite otherwise portray. Analogy is the basis of symbolism—something difficult to perceive is understood by association with something concrete.

This is because objects in our external world are related in some vague way to the stuff we can't describe that's inside us. We draw upon some common element of our experience that is similar to that indescribable something we see symbolically.

C. God Gives The Understanding

The Scriptures make it very clear that it is God who gives the interpretation—the understanding of the dream comes from Him.

Joseph said to them, 'Do not interpretations belong to God?' (Gen. 40:8).

The Lord 'reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness' (Dan. 2:22).

God gave the four youths knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel even had understanding in all visions and dreams (Dan. 1:17).

We approach dream work with prayerful reflection, asking God to give us the understanding and interpretation of our dreams. We cultivate faith that God will illumine the significance of the dream message in the right time. Jesus taught us the principle of asking, seeking, and knocking, and the door shall be opened (Luke 11:8-14)!

St. James tells us, if we lack wisdom, to ask for it—and to ask without doubting (Js. 1:5). It was the Lord God who gave understanding and wisdom to Daniel. Will He not do so for us?

D. Trust The Witness Of The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, is here on earth and dwells within the believer. His work is to lead us into all truth and bring to our remembrance all that the Lord has said. The Holy Spirit is also responsible to bear “witness” in our spirit—that we are children of God.

He also bears witness to the *truth* of something. In dream work, when we hear the right interpretation, our heart will leap (aha!) in agreement. This is the witness (*intuitive knowing*) of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak...(John 16:13).

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit...(Rom. 8:15,16).

...Gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge (II Cor. 1:21).

E. Core Concepts

1. Objective versus subjective dreams

Dream experts have outlined for us two ways to view the figures/images in our dreams: subjectively and objectively. When we look at a dream from an *objective* approach, the dream images/figures refer to people, places, objects, and events in the *external*, waking world; the dream refers to the dreamer's relationship to those dream figures. From a *subjective* viewpoint, the images/figures in a dream represent some qualities or parts of the dreamer's personality held by the image; the dream refers to dynamic processes taking place within the dreamer's own psyche.

Objective dreams

An *objective* approach views dream images as referring to objects in the external world of the dreamer—figures may refer to our relationship with them or be about them. In an objective dream, the figures represent themselves, and the dream tells me something about those figures that is actually true.

Some ideas for identifying an objective dream are:

- Details of the dream are nearly exactly as they are in my waking life.
- I simply can't make the dream fit subjectively.
- I am usually an observer, not a participant in the action.
- I am emotionally related to the person in my dream.

Subjective dreams

Using the *subjective* approach, each dream symbol and each character points to some dimension of the dreamer's psyche, psychic processes, or an archetype. Images in a subjective dream are personified elements of my own personality—the external people, objects or places actually represent my own internal feelings and thinking structure.

Some questions I can ask to help identify a subjective dream are:

- What part of me could that be?
- When do I behave that way?
- Where can I find that in me?
- Where else do I feel that way?

According to the Bible, subjective dreams may come to us to reveal the intentions of the heart, reveal our innermost thoughts (Daniel 2: 30). The content and meaning of King Neb's dream was revealed to Daniel at night in a vision (a dream?).

2. My dreams are all about me

Once we understand how dreams work, we will notice that they speak most often about the events and circumstances of our own life. Experts tell us that approximately 95% of our dreams are about our own self— concerns and problems we are facing. Because we know these issues better than anyone else, who better than us can identify how our dreams connect to current and past life experiences?

3. Images come out of my life

Most dream images come out of our own life. Whatever we think or feel, even in the depths of our being, is materialized in our dreams. Every element of the dream – each landscape, emotion, object, or character – is an objectification of some aspect of our inner world.

Although most images and symbols come out of our life experiences, some seem to come from sources of which we have no knowledge and to which we have no conscious access. We may observe the dream as simply a single image, as an allegorical or poetic story, or as a seemingly endless saga. We might describe the dream as if it appeared to be like a cartoon, parable, movie, or adventure story.

4. Meaning Must Be Drawn From Our Self

Each person is the interpreter of their own dreams, because the dream belongs to them. By depending upon the Holy Spirit and asking skillful questions, other people can help draw out the meaning of our dream from our own heart. However, the meaning of any dream must be drawn from the dreamer. *We should never accept ideas for understanding our dream that our heart does not respond to.*

V. Basic Techniques of Dream Work

1. Prepare Yourself For Dreaming

There are some very practical ways that we can prepare ourselves to hear God's voice in the night, in our dreams. For instance, get a good night's sleep, setting a going-to-bed time and a waking-up time. This seems to encourage more dream recall.

You can also talk with your spouse or roommate about the possibility that you may have a dream that night. Share your hopes with someone. If you live alone, you can reflect back over any dreams you remember from the past, or meditate on the importance of dreams to you.

Ho, every one who thirsts...come to the waters...; incline your ear and come to me, listen that you may live (Is 55: 1-3).

As you fall asleep, talk with the Lord, telling Him that you believe He wants to speak to you through your dreams and that you are listening. This act signals your heart that you are taking your dream work seriously.

Eli instructed Samuel to say to God during the night, "Speak Lord, for Thy servant is listening (I Samuel 3:9).

2. Recall The Dream Immediately Upon Awakening

When you first awake in the morning, cultivate the habit of asking the Lord if He spoke to you during the night, and to bring it to your remembrance.

The Helper, the Holy Spirit...will...bring to your memory all that I said to you (John 14:26b).

As you come out of your sleep, don't open your eyes. Don't even move, but cast your thoughts back over the night, lingering to see if the memory of a dream begins to float into your consciousness, before becoming fully alert. If only a small fragment floats into your consciousness, latch onto it; don't let it go. More pieces will probably come as you write.

If a dream memory surfaces, thank the Lord, and get up immediately and start logging it. Don't wait!

A dream research lab operated by the U.S. Navy in San Diego found that 95% of the dreams not written down or told within five minutes are forgotten.

3. Write the dream down

There is a biblical precedent for recording a dream:

"Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind (of the head) as he lay on his bed; then wrote the dream down and related the words of it" (Daniel 7:1).

Other people in the Bible were told to write down what they had heard and experienced when God spoke to them:

- I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, and how I may reply when I am reproved. Then the Lord answered me and said, "Record the vision and inscribe it on tablets" (Hab. 2:1-2).
- Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, "Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book" (Jer. 30:2).
- "Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I have spoken to you concerning...from the day I first spoke to you...even to this day" (Jer. 36:2).
- "Take for yourself one stick and write on it" (Ez. 37:16)
- The Lord said to me, "Take for your self a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters" (Is. 8:1).
- Saying, "Write in a book what you see" (Rev. 1:11).

4. Share Your Dreams With Someone

There is a biblical precedent for telling your dream to someone :

"Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind (of the head) as he lay on his bed ; then wrote the dream down and related the words of it" (Daniel 7:1).

Make it a practice to share your dreams with another supportive person—spouse, partner, or roommate—perhaps at breakfast or on weekends. The act of telling the dream fixes it in our memory and makes dream recall easier. It also signals our hearts (and the Lord) that we are taking the dream seriously.

Besides, we may benefit from the insights and ideas of others. Remember that the dream is expressing what is buried deep inside us, and therefore it is largely inaccessible to our thinking mind. We are often blind to the log in our own eye, but the people around us can recognize what our dream symbols mean more easily than we can, especially if they are honest, frank, intuitive, and open to the Holy Spirit.

Caution

Keep your attention on the dream itself. Don't use your dreams to complain about other family members or to try to change them. The dream is about you and for you, not the other!

There is no one right way to work with a dream. Just become familiar with some of the methods you can use, then select the steps or questions you feel drawn toward. Feel free to mix and match, combining them in any way that seems right to you. Here's how we approach the exploration adventure.

V. Take Your Dream Work Seriously

Make a decision to take our dream work seriously. Clearly decide that you want and need God's help and direction for your life, and are willing to seek it by listening to your dreams. Make an act of faith by placing your notebook, dream journal, or recorder near your bed.

If we seriously believe that God lives in the realm of the unseen part of our being and wants to speak to us, then we will begin to give serious attention to our dreams, and they will begin to speak to us. A willingness to write down your dreams demonstrates to God your seriousness about dreams. Make it a part of your personal spiritual journal. This allows you to keep a record of the things God speaks to you personally.

If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for "hid treasures" (a secret storehouse, buried); then shalt thou...find the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:4,5).

➤ Your Response

- Lord I desire to know what You want to tell me. Please speak to me in my dreams.
- Speak Lord, for I am listening.

Pray:

Today Lord, I make a decision that I want to seek your voice and to listen to what You have to say to me through my dreams. I renounce any fear I have of dreams, I ask You to forgive me for being afraid of them, and I come out of agreement with the spirit of fear that wants to keep me from seeking You. I choose to pay attention to my dreams. Lord give me boldness to hear Your voice, every day and night. Amen.

Get some good books by Christians to help you learn more about the language of the dream and dream work. Here are some I recommend:

Kelsey, Dr. Morton. *Dreams, The Dark Speech of the Spirit: A Christian Interpretation*. New York; Doubleday & Co, 1968. Kelsey gives an overview of the history of the interpretation of dreams, tracing the development of Judeo-Christian attitudes about dreams from Old and New Testament times, through the Enlightenment, to the present. This was the first book on the Christian use of dreams in over 300 years. This book was revised and republished in 1991 as: *God, Dreams, And Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams*; Minneapolis; Augsburg Press. ISBN: 0 8066 2543 0. Kelsey is a former professor at the University of Notre Dame, Episcopal clergyman, & psychologist.

Savary, Louis M., Berne, Patricia H. & Strephon Williams. *Dreams and Spiritual Growth: A Judeo-Christian Way of Dreamwork*. Paulist Press, New York. 1984. ISBN 0 8091 2629 X. This book offers a helpful discussion of 37 techniques for dream work and a review of dreams in the Early Church. Savary holds a doctorate in sacred theology and spiritual growth. Berne is a clinical psychologist, & Williams, founder of the Jungian-Senoi Institute doing dream work research. They review some of the ancient Judaeo-Christian dream work traditions and also some of the understanding of dreams and dream work developed by modern psychology, resulting in an integrated psychological and spiritual approach.

Meier, P. & Robert Wise (1995). *Windows Of The Soul: A Look at Dreams and Their Meanings..* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Riffel, Rev. Herman. *Your Dreams: God's Neglected Gift*. Chosen Books, 1981. ISBN 0 912376 77 5. A Baptist minister, Herman studied dreams at the Jungian Institute in Switzerland. He has spoken to Cardinals in Rome and around the world, helping the church recover its heritage of dreams. In the late eighties and early 90s, we worked together with this elder church statesman doing dream seminars. His book was republished as: *Dreams: Wisdom Within*. Shippensburg, PA; Destiny Image, 1990. His method of dream interpretation is based on a Jungian depth psychology approach.

Benner, David. *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture & Counsel*. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI (1998). ISBN: 0 8010 9063 6. This book has a chapter on how dream work can be helpful in spiritual direction and the care of souls, called "Dreams, the Unconscious, and the Language of the Soul." He references Savary, Bern, & Williams for his suggested dream work techniques.

Clift, Wallace & Jean Dalby. *Symbols of Transformation in Dreams*. New York; Crossroad, 1986. ISBN: 0 8245 0653 7. (You can get this from Amazon used). based on insights of Jung, psychology, religion and literature, this practical book deals in depth with some common dream symbols and archetypes that signal transformation in our inner lives. Clift is an Episcopal clergyman.

Crisp, Tony. *Dream Dictionary*. New York; Dell Publishing, 1990. (This book describes a simple process for drawing out the meaning of a dream).

The Herder Symbol Dictionary, 1986.

Johnson, R. (1986). *Inner work: Using dreams & imagination for personal growth*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Sanford, J.A. (1986). *Dreams: God's Forgotten Language*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.

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Sanford, J.A. (1978). *Dreams And Healing: A Succinct and Lively Interpretation of Dreams*. New York: Paulist Press.

Virkler, M. & Virkler, P. (2004). *Principles of Christian Dream Interpretation*, Retrieved April 4, 2006 from the website of Communion with God Ministries,
<http://www.cwgministries.org/Principles-of-Christian-Dream-Interpretation.htm>