

# Program Notes: The Christian Use Of Dreams

## God Desires Communion With Us

The Scriptures make it clear that God longs for communion with us and looks for people who will listen to His voice and do what He says. Abraham was called, “the friend of God,” because he recognized God’s voice, believed His words, and obeyed His instructions (James 2:23).

In Genesis 15:1-21, the Lord God appeared to Abraham in a vision and a dream, assuring him of a great future. He gave promises to Abraham and his descendents, establishing a covenant with them. Abraham's experience show us that God speaks to people through the dream and vision, creating a kind of dialogue between us and Him.

Abraham’s descendents—the Israelites—also experienced God speaking to them. Moses reminded them that they had heard the voice of God from the midst of the darkness, but they feared hearing directly from the Lord, handing that responsibility over to Moses. God’s longing for communion with His people is evident as He laments, “Oh that they had such a heart in them...” (Deut. 5:23-31).

## ***God Wants Us To Hear His Voice***

Over and over the Scriptures tell us to see and hear what the Lord is telling us and showing us. Here are just a few examples:

- Morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear...(Is. 50:4).
- I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you (Prov. 1:23).
- Listen carefully to me...incline your ear and come to me...that you may live (Is. 55: 1-3).
- My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me (John 10:27).
- Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart (Heb. 4:7).
- Behold I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with me (Rev. 3:20).
- Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord (Matt. 4:4).
- He who listens to me shall live securely, and shall be at ease from the dread of evil (Prov. 1:33).
- Call to me, and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jer. 33:3).

### ***We can hear the voice of the Father***

God is capable of speaking personal truth into our minds and hearts. And we are blessed by God with the capacity to hear with spiritual ears by faith. Jesus himself followed the Father's leading by doing and saying only what the Father wanted him to do (John 8:28). Apparently it is assumed that we, too, can hear and respond to the voice of our heavenly Father.

Scriptural references to a personal leading by the Holy Spirit are unmistakable. God is not dumb, He has no problem speaking. He speaks to all men everywhere. So, where's the problem? It must be in the hearing and the obeying.

### ***God Spoke In Many Different Ways In Scripture***

God historically spoke through His prophets in the Old Testament to convey His Word to the people who followed Him. We see portrayed there a God who wanted so keenly to communicate with His people that, when they failed to listen, would even use a donkey to reach them (Num. 22:22-31). This donkey not only saw a vision from God, but also spoke the word of life to Balaam. So, if a *donkey* can hear from God, ...

### ***Ways God spoke in the Old Testament***

Surveying the record of God's early dealings with His people, we observe many methods He used to get the message across. Here are just a few of them:

1. Judgment of the Urim (I Sam. 28:5-15; Num. 27:21)
2. Mouth of His prophets (all the prophetic books)
3. Mountain at Sinai (Deut. 5:23,31)
4. The blazing fire (Deut. 5:23,31)
5. Tablets of stone (Deut. 5:23,31)
6. The ear: "He awakeneth my ear, morning by morning...to listen as a disciple (Is. 50:4)
7. Gentle whisper (I Kings 19:12)
8. In the thunder, tornado, nature (Ps. 18:7-13; 19:1-6)
9. In the night (Ps 16:7)
10. Tests "fleeces" we devise (Judges 6:37-40)
11. Through a donkey (Num. 22:22-31)
12. Dreams and visions

### ***Ways God spoke in the New Testament***

- Reference to Old Testament writings, the prophets
- Through what has been made; i.e., creation, nature (Rom. 1:19-20)
- Words and teachings of Jesus Christ
- Life of Jesus Christ, the visible of the invisible God (Col. 1:15-16)
- The Sacraments; the creed
- The 12 Disciples

- Leading of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18)
- Inner witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16)
- Spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10)
- Teachers, evangelists, pastors, apostles, prophets (Eph. 4:11)
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:4-11)
- Circumstances and situations
- Dreams and visions

### ***Warning not to reject God's voice***

Moses' followers rejected the option of hearing directly from God because of fear. The writer of Hebrews warns us not to do the same.

For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched and to a blazing fire ... you have come to Mount Zion ...and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant...See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking (Heb. 12:18-26).

### ***Blessing promised if we respond***

In the parable of the house built on a rock, Jesus taught about the importance and value of hearing his words. He compares those who hear his words and acts upon them to a wise man who built his house upon the rock – when the problems of life hit, the house did not fall.

Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, will be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock (Matt. 7:24-25).

## **Basis of Christian Dream Work**

In attempting to understand our dreams, we need a basis for how we approach the process. As we understand it, contemporary Christian dream work derives its basis from four major dimensions, all of which contribute to our overall comprehension of dreams: 1) Holy Scriptures, 2) historical testimony, 3) Christian spirituality, 4) depth psychology and dream research.

We need to consider all four of these dimensions of dream work to derive maximum benefit from the wisdom and knowledge available to us in our dreams. Each adds its own perspective to help us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, uncover the meaning of our dreams.

### ***1. Holy Scriptures***

In the Old Testament, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and many others saw visions, dreamed, and had discourse with angels. Similarly, key New Testament 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.

Observing how dreams and visions throughout the Scriptures were used by God to speak to His people clearly implies that we should take seriously the messages conveyed to us in our own dreams.

### ***Dreams and Visions in the Old Testament***

In the Old Testament, God clearly declares that He would speak to prophets in dreams and visions:

If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I 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).

Later God reminds His people that He had done as He promised earlier, giving the prophets numerous visions and parables (Hosea 12:10).

### **Major Old Testament events centered on dreams/visions**

The Old Testament is full of stories of Hebrew patriarchs who believed that the dreams and visions they received came from the Almighty. Their exploits changed the course of history for the ancient Israeli people. Obviously the nation's leaders greatly valued dreams and visions as a way to receive revelation from God. Their very approach to life came from the dreams and visions God gave them.

Following are a few examples:

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 reaffirm a covenant with Jacob, to promise safety and his return home, as he was fleeing from home (Gen. 28:10-22).
3. 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).
4. To Jacob/Israel, guiding him to take his family to Egypt, and telling him about the future (Gen. 46:1-7).
5. To give Solomon wisdom to follow in steps of David and impart gifts to him (I Kings 3:5-28).
6. 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 (Is. 1:1; 2:1; 6:1; 13:1; 21:2).
7. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of receiving visions, dreams, and prophecies. His prophecies seemed to come from his visions (Jer. 1:11-19). (basket of figs; what do you see, Jeremiah?)
8. The prophet Ezekiel received visions through which the Lord spoke to him about the future of the house of Israel (Ez. 1:1,3; 8:1-18; 37:1-21).
9. God gave Daniel the ability to understand all kinds of visions and dreams—in order to save the nation (Dan. 1:17).
10. To Nebuchadnezzar, to reveal the future and the thoughts of his heart (Dan. 2:1-49). 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. Later, 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 (Dan. 4:5-27).

11. 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).
12. Daniel had several great dreams/visions of his own: 1). The four beasts, representing four great kingdoms (Dan. 7:1-28). 2). The ram and the he-goat that fought, was interpreted by the angel Gabriel 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).

### **God speaks through dreams in everyday circumstances**

- To the heathen king, Abimelech, warning him of danger, and to protect Sara (Gen. 20:1-18).
- To Jacob, to give him a promise of God's presence and his safe return, as he was fleeing from home (Gen. 28:10-16).
- To Jacob, to give him wisdom in his relationship with Laban, telling him what to do with the flock (Gen. 31:10-29).
- To Jacob, to direct him to return home (Gen. 31:10-13).
- To Laban, warning him to be careful how he spoke to Jacob (Gen. 31:24).
- 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).
- 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).
- 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).
- 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) and directed him in the night, to go down by the enemy camp....(the sword of Gideon) (Judges 7:9-18).
- 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.
- 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 Sam. 3:1-21).
- 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).
- 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).

### ***Dreams and Visions in the New Testament***

Dreams and visions were common in every period of the biblical record—before the birth of Jesus Christ, in events surrounding Christ's birth, during his lifetime, and in the acts of the Apostles—and also in the early church. It has been suggested that not many references to dreams occur in the New Testament (although the record includes some extremely critical dreams!) simply because people already understood the importance of dreams. With their strong Jewish heritage of respect for dreams and visions, people of that period did not need to be informed about the value of the dream—they already knew it.

Evidence from the New Testament shows that God speaks and works through the inner world, using dreams, visions, trances, and appearances of angels. According to the Scriptural record, the story of the most important birth in history weaves together several supernatural experiences, including angel visitations, divinely-inspired knowledge, visions and dreams.

Following is a brief summary of key dreams and visions in the New Testament:

- 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).
- The Lord God protects the Christ Child by warning the Magi in a dream, telling them not to return to Herod (Mt. 2:12).
- 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).
- Angel appears to Joseph in a dream, telling him to go back to Israel (Mt. 2:19,20).
- Joseph receives another dream, warning him of danger; he goes to Nazareth (Mt. 2:22).
- Zacharias encounters angel in a vision, who tells him that God will answer their prayer (Luke 1:11-22) .
- Wife of Pilate received a dream that warned not to have anything to do with that righteous man (Mt. 27:19).
- The women at Jesus' tomb saw a vision of angels, telling them Jesus was alive (Luke 24:4,5,22-24).
- As he was dying, Stephen saw the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55).
- Saul encounters the Lord in an auditory vision, receiving revelations and direction (Acts 9:1-6).
- 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).
- 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).
- 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.

- 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).
- 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.
- 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).
- 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 of Jerusalem quickly. He also told Paul where to go—far away to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17).
- (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).

### ***Even the ungodly had dreams from God***

As we can see from Scripture, we Christians aren't the only ones who can contact spiritual reality in dreams— even idolatrous heathen received dreams from God. Check these out:

- Abimelech, a Canaanite (Gen. 20:3)
- Laban, from Ur of the Chaldea (Gen. 31:24)
- The Pharaoh of Egypt (Gen. 41:7)
- The Midianite soldier (Judges 17:13)
- Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian (Dan. 4:18)
- Pilate's wife, the Roman (Mt. 17:19)

It is important to realize that the dream does not belong exclusively to God's chosen people. Everyone dreams. Even ungodly, idolatrous heathen receive dreams from God. After all, Jesus said that God causes the rain to fall on both the just and the unjust (Mt. 5:45).

Christianity has no exclusive contact with the spiritual realm. Kelsey (1968) says it is the very universality of contact with the spiritual world that makes the power of the Holy Spirit within us so vital to our lives. The important thing for us is that our relationship with Jesus Christ gives us safe way to contact the source of spiritual reality. Whether by dreams, visions, prophecy, or any other spiritual grace, we can find our way through the spiritual realm to the truth that God has for us.

## ***2. Historical Testimony***

Throughout the early church, dreams continued to hold a central place in the lives of God's people. The teaching and practice of the Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory the Great, and many others reveals the conviction that God often speaks through dreams and visions.

Tertullian (A.D. 160-230) Latin jurist and a father of the Christian Church said, "nearly everyone on earth knows that God reveals himself to people most often in dreams. Almost the greater part of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams." He

believed that dreams and visions were promised to people of his own day just as much as they were to the first apostles. He also asserted that “almost the greater part of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams” (Savary, Berne, & Williams, 1984, p. 41).

One of the founders of the Latin Church, Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in 250 A.D., claimed that the “very councils of the Church were guided by God through dreams and ‘many and manifest visions’” (Savary, p. 39). Interestingly, Basil the Great understood that the inner workings of the personality—that our conscious self is not in touch with—is often revealed in dreams.

The early Christian church viewed the dream as one of the most significant and most important ways in which God revealed his will to man. Dreams gave people access to a reality that was difficult to contact any other way. Based on both Biblical tradition and their own experience, the Church Fathers give us a legacy of early Christian belief in dreams and visions.

### **Early Church Fathers**

Let’s examine the viewpoint of some of these giants of the faith on the topic of dreams and visions.

**Justin Martyr** was perhaps the foremost Christian apologist of the second century. Justin said he felt that “dreams had intrinsic meaning and importance because they give hints of man's participation in a more-than-physical world” (p. 104).

**Clement**, widely traveled and highly educated, believed that true dreams come from the depth of the soul, which is always active. Clement argued that dreams reveal spiritual reality, and he viewed sleep as a time of special receptivity to spiritual reality. He said that at night, “the soul, released from the perceptions of sense, turns in on itself, and has a truer hold of intelligence” (p. 106).

**Origen**, who was considered one of the greatest minds of the third century – pagan or Christian – felt that the dream, the waking vision, and divine inspiration were all of one piece. The dream-vision is an essential part of the method of God's revelation – giving people “a symbolic knowledge of the nature of the spiritual world and of heaven” (p. 107).

**Tertullian**, the first great Latin apologist, implied that Christians of the third century generally believed dreaming was considered the normal way to receive visions from God. He went so far as to say, “almost the greater part of mankind get [*sic*] their knowledge of God from dreams (p. 109).” Later, Cyprian and Augustine studied Tertullian’s works, and through them his thinking became one of the foundation stones of our Christian theology.

**Athanasius**, as bishop of Alexandria from 328 to 373, in his writings laid the foundations of for Christian orthodoxy. Most historians admire this brilliant thinker, and Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox theologians all consider his writings to be authoritative. In *Against the Heathen* he showed that he shared the early Christian attitude toward dreams and visions as revelations of an unseen world. “Often when the body is quiet, and at rest and asleep, man moves inwardly...the soul...imagines and beholds things above the earth, and often even holds converse with the saints and angels who are above earthly and bodily existence...” (p. 121).

**Basil the Great** said this about dreams: “The enigmas in dreams have a close affinity to those things which are signified in an allegoric or hidden sense in the Scriptures. Thus both Joseph and Daniel, through the gift of prophecy, used to interpret dreams, since the force of reason by itself is not powerful enough for getting at truth” (p. 125)



**Augustine** is the key link between the early Medieval era and our modern world. Augustine's thinking prepared the intellectual foundation for Western Christian thinking for perhaps the next thousand years. He was *the* Western theologian until Aquinas arrived. Augustine considered that the study of dreams was a significant tool in understanding both the psychology of man and his relations with God and the spiritual world (p. 134).

**Jerome** translated the Bible into Latin, but mistranslated a key verse in Deuteronomy 18:10 as prohibiting dreams. From then onward, dreams were viewed with suspicion throughout much of the Church for many centuries.

### ***A couple of famous saints' dreams***

St. **Francis of Assisi**, at the time the miracle of his stigmata occurred, also experienced a vision, which almost cost him his beatification. **Joan of Arc** was led to fantastic exploits by her visions.

Fascinating story from the Middle Ages: Theophilus of Adana had been tempted and had promised his soul in writing to the devil. But he repented, and when the Virgin appeared to him in a vision, he saw that he wanted no part of the deal. His prayers were answered that night; he received back his bond in a dream, and awoke to find the paper lying on his breast. (*Acta Sanctorum*)

### ***Dreams and visions to continue 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. 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).

Both the book of Joel in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32) and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament (Acts 2:14-18) assert that, when the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be dreams, visions, and prophecy. By means of this unique spiritual language, we are privileged to hear the voice of God speaking to us.

The prophet Joel prophecies of the Lord's intent to keep communicating with people in the future through dreams, visions, and prophecies.

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).

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).

### **3. Christian Spirituality**

The basis for Christian dream work draws upon the Biblical worldview that there is another realm of reality—a spiritual dimension—existing outside the reach of reason and our five senses—something beyond the material world. However, for over 300 years, the church ignored the basis of Christianity, spiritual reality, and relied upon a rationalistic basis for its teaching and theology.

A major difficulty with a rationalistic view of spirituality is that it rejects anything coming from outside our senses and reason. It denies any communication from the supernatural world, including dreams, miracles, visions, dialogue with God, and the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. Much of Christendom has been swept into this dead theology.

Skeptical and fearful of the spiritual life, rationalistic theologians have attempted to contain and institutionalize Christianity, stripping it of all semblance of the supernatural. Dogma and formulas substitute for life and experience, robbing us of any spiritual power. May God give us the courage to believe our dreams, experience visions, hear with spiritual ears the prophetic voice, and learn to follow the Spirit wherever it leads.

#### ***The Kingdom of God is within us***

When Jesus Christ proclaimed that the Kingdom of God is at hand and is *within us*, he obviously was saying that there is a spiritual realm within us, implying that we can function spiritually. A spiritual perspective views the dream as coming from that spiritual place within us, allowing us to directly contact that realm. Dreams allow us to exceed the restrictions of a rational Christianity and enjoy direct communication from our Heavenly Father.

#### ***The biblical purpose of dreams***

From a biblical standpoint, the dream presents a way for God to speak to His people, offering counsel and instruction, nightmarish warnings to shape up our lives, revelation of mysteries and future events, and to instruct us as disciples. Notice in the following Scriptures how these rich blessings are available to us through the dreams that God brings us:

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

For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night ... He may speak into their ears and terrify them with warnings ... to turn man from wrongdoing and keep him from pride, to preserve his life from the pit ... (Job 33:14-18 NIV).

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).

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.

## **4. Depth Psychology And Dream Research**

In the early part of the last century, depth psychologists identified what they called the “unconscious”, a place inside us that can’t be accessed with the conscious ego. 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. From a psychological perspective, dreams enable us to connect to our deeper self and move toward inner transformation and wholeness.

The dream reveals to us the contents in our deep heart (the unconscious). Using symbolic language, the dream describes the current situation in our psyche. By reflecting the movements in our deep heart, the dream provides us a sort of "snapshot" of our psyche.

### **Five years 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.

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.

### **Observing the dream drama**

Researchers have observed that during sleep, our brain cycles through periods of heightened activity and periods of quiet sleep. While we participate in the nighttime 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! Clearly that’s when we are dreaming most intensely.

### **Importance of dreaming**

Findings from dream research and sleep labs add weight to the psychological importance of dreaming. Essential to our mental stability, dreaming helps to balance us emotionally and keep us sane.

Noteworthy is the finding 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.

## **Contemporary Christian Perspective On Dreams**

### **What Is A “Dream”?**

The dictionary defines the dream as “a sequence of images passing through a sleeping person’s mind” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*). Put simply, the dream is a flow of images on the screen of our mind that occurs while we are asleep. Dreams are an inner experience, outside of concepts, logic, and rational thinking.

Most images and symbols come out of our life experiences, but others seem to come from sources of which we have no knowledge or conscious access to. We may observe the dream as

just a single image, as an allegorical or poetic story, or as a seemingly endless saga. From our viewpoint, the dream appears as if it was a cartoon, a movie, or an adventure story book.

### ***Key characteristics of the dream***

1. Speaks personally to the dreamer
2. Reveals what the mind cannot or will not accept
3. Speaks symbolically (most of the time).
4. Reveals, but does not condemn
5. Reliable messenger
6. Comes to everyone, every night
7. Calls for change
8. Needs a response
9. Reveals the truth

## **Ten Christian Dream Principles**

Although so far there is no generally accepted modern theory of Christian dreams and dream work, we offer the following ten principles to guide you in your approach to dreams.

### ***1. God Speaks Through Dreams And Visions***

The most important principle of Christian dream theory asserts that God makes direct contact with people through dreams and visions. It is clearly stated in Scripture that God speaks with man in the dream and vision.

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. No so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings" (Num. 12:6-8).

And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams (Acts 2:17).

### ***Dream is a gift from God***

We view the dream not as merely an interesting but valueless plaything but instead as a gift from God. In the sphere of the dream we are offered a place to connect with God and receive revelation for our lives. Through dreams we can go beyond rational Christianity and experience direct contact with God in our spirit.

From this perspective, dream work is an important spiritual practice that enables us to receive spiritual guidance and wisdom from God. The dream enables us to make a connection between our inner spiritual life and the choices we must make in the outer life.

### ***Direct and indirect dreams***

Dreams can be characterized as either direct or indirect communication from God. Both types can transform our lives.

If a dream is a *direct* communication from the living God, it brings revelation of God and His Kingdom, the unseen spiritual realm, and His plans and purposes for our life. In this encounter, we know we are being addressed directly by the Lord! We never forget these powerful experiences.

If a dream is an *indirect* communication from God, it personalizes God's communication with us in a way that helps us become more whole in our body, soul, and spirit. Experts tell us that most of our dreams come with this purpose of wholeness, demonstrating how committed our Creator is to our wholeness!

## ***2. Dreams Call Us To Relationship With Our Creator***

We may ask what is the purpose of dreams, and wonder what it is that God is trying to accomplish in the world through dreams. Our dreams draw us into closer relationship to God.

Tertullian (A.D. 160-230) Latin jurist and a father of the Christian Church said, "nearly everyone on earth knows that God reveals himself to people most often in dreams. Almost the greater part of mankind get their knowledge of God from dreams" (Savary, et al., p. 41).

The process of engaging our dreams brings us into a kind of personal dialogue with God in which we come to know Him and ourselves better. Dreams are not meant to give us a piece of information, like going to a fortune-teller, but to help us develop a real relationship with our Lord – the very Source of our life.

We can have a knowledge of God and not have God's knowledge. We can have a faith in God and have no consciousness of God. The dream wants to change this. We are made for a vital, relationship with our Heavenly Father. *Without this connection to a loving Heavenly Father, we cannot become whole and healthy.*

In our dream experiences, God will convey to us exactly what we need for our lives. We can trust the Holy Spirit to lead us. Following are just some of the things God may speak to us in our dreams:

- Establish a promise with us
- Impart a spiritual gift or blessing
- Instruct and warn us
- Reveal direct attack of demonic spirits
- Release creative and inspired ideas
- Reveal Himself to us
- Give us guidance and direction
- Reveal our giftedness, calling, anointing
- Reveal divine revelation of the spiritual realms

- Make His truth visible
- Show us how to pray
- Impart Divine energy and faith

Our dream work enables us to develop a personal connection with our Creator, helping us understand the things that He has prepared for us. Our dreams bring us into a relationship with the Lord of our life, and His divine purposes for us. However, please note that no interpretation of a dream is valid if it contradicts with basic principles revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

### ***3. Dreams Are Purposive, Calling Us To Holiness And Wholeness***

God's great purpose is to make us whole. We have been created with an innate desire to grow into a complete, whole and conscious individual. Built into us is the potential for wholeness – to bring together all of the parts of the total person into a complete whole and conscious self.

A fascinating look at the Hebrew for "image," *tseh'lem*, (Gen. 1:27), suggests that "God created us as an unrealized potential, a shadow that has the potential of becoming real" (Larson, 2005).

"Spiritual maturity...necessarily involves the whole person—body, mind, soul, place, relationships... Biblical spirituality encompasses the whole person in the totality of existence in the world, not some fragment or scrap or incident of a person." (Wm Stringfellow, 1984. *The Politics of Spirituality*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, p. 22.)

Behind the dream is God's great purpose of enlarging our personality, increasing the depth and scope of our lives. Dreams are uniquely personal, given to strengthen, warn, heal, and guide us in our journey toward wholeness, fullness, and fulfillment of our destiny.

We call these subjective dreams because they are about some aspect of our own life. They come to help us integrate and mature, bringing about the healing and full development of our soul!

In this indirect type of dream, God may:

- Reveal the condition of our psychic being, soul, personality
- Show the things we are hiding from
- Reveal our inner condition—inside the "cup"
- Reveal personality problems like inferiority, shame, fears and anxieties, self-rejection, self-hatred, anger, abandonment
- Express our inner divisions
- Reveal aspects of our self that we do not know

Because dreams convey what is deep inside us, a dream may be showing us a picture of our psyche as it is now. It may also show us what we potentially can become—the kernel of future development. A dream may show us symbolically what might happen to us consciously some time later. Understanding our dreams helps us appreciate this "big picture" view of what's happening in our lives.

## **4. Dreams 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).

Complex expressions of who we are, dreams reflect what is going on inside in our unconscious. The dream reveals the inner workings of our personalities that the rational part of mind is not in touch with.

Dreams give us an honest and balanced description of ourselves. Reflecting what is happening in our deep heart, dreams express the movements, conflicts, interactions, and developments of the great energy systems within us. They express the fears and problems we face, mirroring the outward circumstances of our lives in symbols and metaphors.

## **5. Dreams Originate From A Deep Place Within Us**

The Christian perspective on dreams recognizes the existence of a level of reality, apart from the physical world. Dreams originate from a source within us, some place other than our conscious ego, which our rational minds cannot penetrate. Coming from an inner realm within us, the dream enables us to make direct, immediate contact with an inner reality.

### ***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. I joyfully concur with the law of God in the "inner man"(Rom. 7:22).
7. 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).
8. I will put my law "within" them (their inward parts) (Jer. 31:33).
9. 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).
10. For Thou dost light my lamp, the Lord my God illumines my "darkness" (Ps. 18:28).

### ***Knowledge of inner world is very ancient***

Daniel's succinct statement about dreams suggests that the knowledge of dreams and the inner world is very ancient. Over 2000 years ago, Daniel recognized the existence of a secret inner life:

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. 2:26-30).

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.

### ***Dreams unlock door to hidden treasure***

We have a vast unconscious life known as "the inner world" that holds riches beyond imagination. Dreams reveal the existence of this vast, but hidden, realm of the mind and the wealth it contains. They provide us a way to unlock the door to the realm of the nonphysical reality and access the treasures hidden within the unconscious.

## ***6. Dreams Contain Hidden Treasure***

The Christian perspective views dreams as offering us an invitation by the Source of our life to seek for treasure buried within this inner realm. The following scriptures refer to a hidden place that contains buried treasure:

1. I will give you the "treasures" (a depository) of "darkness", and "hidden" (secret storehouse; hence a secreted valuable) wealth (buried riches, hidden wealth, treasure, riches) of secret places" (secret storehouse) , in order that you may know that it is I, the Lord,...who calls you by your name (Is. 45:3).
2. Whose belly Thou dost fill with Thy "treasure" (a depository) (Ps. 17:14).
3. We have this "treasure" (deposit) in earthen vessels (II Cor. 4:7).
4. In whom are "hidden" (secret, kept secret) all the "treasures" (a deposit) of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). Where is Christ? St. Paul tells us that Christ is in us (Col. 1:27)!
5. The "hidden" (to conceal away) wisdom which God ordained (I Cor. 2:7).
6. He made "darkness" His "secret place" (a cover) (Ps. 18:11).
7. He reveals the "deep" (profound) and "secret" (concealed) things; He knows what is in the "darkness" (Dan. 2:22).  
I proclaim to you new things from this time, even "hidden" (guarded, or concealed) things which you have not known (Is. 48:6).
8. Lord will discover the "secret (to open; discover) part" (to make bare, to empty, to pour out) (Is. 3:17).
9. If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for "hidden treasures" (a secret storehouse, buried); then you will discern the fear of the Lord, and discover the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:4,5).



10. To him who overcomes...I will give some of the "hidden" (concealed) manna (Rev. 2:17).

From these scriptures we state the following: God has hidden a secret storehouse of riches and wealth in such a way that our rational minds cannot find it. This treasure trove, containing God's wisdom and knowledge and plans for us, lies buried deep within our heart, below consciousness. If we want to find this hidden treasure, we will have to *seek* for it as for silver.

Dreams offer us one way to access this treasure. Dream work is about the search for this *great treasure* that lies hidden in the field of our souls. We must learn how to draw up into our conscious awareness that which is buried in the inner depths of our being. We can dig for the buried treasure, which is meant to be dug up and then given away. This treasure is the living Word of God, Christ, who is the hidden manna, and we can partake of his life!

## ***7. Dreams Communicate In "Dark Sayings"***

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.

Hmmm! What does this mean? Why use a language that we cannot understand? Why make it so difficult? Perhaps if we reflect on the words of Jesus we will find an answer.

I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things "hidden" since the foundation of the world (Matt. 13:35).

I speak to them in parables, because, while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand (Matt. 13:13).

Jesus frequently clothed his most powerful messages in the language of symbolism, not the language of linear thinking and rationalistic thoughts. Relying upon his imaginative faculty, Jesus conveyed his iconoclastic truths (about the kingdom of God) through images, symbols, figures of speech, types, metaphors, similes, hyperbole, metonymy, puns, synecdoche, personification of objects, irony, allegory, and parables. Wow!

### ***Jesus aimed for the heart***

Jesus understood that the message of Christianity was for the *heart* of man, not his intellect. He came to reveal that the reality of the kingdom of God can be experienced within us.

Spiritual reality cannot be understood with only reasoning and intellect; it must be perceived through "the eyes of the heart." By using the language of the heart or spirit, "dark sayings," Jesus hopes to lead people into an encounter with this unseen spiritual reality and the truths hidden within.

## ***Dreams, the language of the heart***

Korean pastor Dr. David Cho describes the language of the Holy Spirit to be dreams, visions, and prophecies. The Spirit of God chooses to use images and symbols, because it is the language of the heart. Our most basic language is picture language. We think first in images and pictures, then ideas and words.

Picture language is the most basic way in which we can grasp something. Some things need to be clothed in symbolic language in order for us to capture a picture of them—to visualize them, to make them clear. Images provide a knowledge that we can interiorize rather than apply. They can reach into the depth of our being—in the place where faith must be. With the "eye" of faith—imagination, visions, dreams—we receive the things hoped for (Unknown).

If we fail to *see* God's truths with the eyes of our heart, our religion is sterile, lacking power and inner reality. We do not enjoy authentic experiences with the living God in His kingdom.

### **Picture this**

Picture language engages the heart at a much deeper level than our intellect and reasoning can ever hope to penetrate. Western man is "starved" for the language of the Spirit. Interestingly, Jesus never encouraged analytical reasoning in the scriptures.

Most of us have had little experience with flowing pictures and thoughts arising from our deep heart. We are more at home with linear, rational reasoning, but like ducks out of water when it comes to the language of "dark sayings".

### **Unravel the knot**

The task of dream work is to learn how to "untie the knot", solve the riddle, open the proverb! We are skilled in the language of logic and reason, but are quite ignorant of how to unravel the language of pictures and symbols.

Since we cannot understand and interpret dreams only by using our rational, analytical capabilities, we must draw upon our imaginative and intuitive capacities in dream work. To tap into our intuition we must learn to quiet our minds. Try music, art, or singing, perhaps singing softly in the Spirit.

## ***8. Dreams Contain Divine Energy***

Dreams contain God's divine energy which can empower, heal, and transform us by creating faith and hope—and energy. We have much more psychic energy within us than we usually realize, and our dreams can help release that energy. The images and symbols in our dreams can transform the psychic energy from our unconscious into our conscious life to re-energize us for everyday living.

What's really exciting about this is that the dream can bring us energy *whether or not we understand the dream at all!*

Although no single dream may be crucial, the sum of all our dreams as a whole can be very helpful in gathering up the tremendous sources of energy within us and bringing it into our daily lives.

Not just preparing us for the ordinary activities of tomorrow, but providing us additional energy to try new activities. Moreover, dreams can release divine creativity within us. Many discoveries and inventions have come through dreams

## **9. Dreams And Visions Have Equal Authority**

Christian dream theory views the dream and vision as having equal spiritual authority. The Old and New Testaments make little distinction between the dream and vision, often speaking of them in the same breath. Old Testament writers sometimes refer to the dream as a vision in the night. So when they talk about visions, we can't be certain whether they are referring to visions or to dreams in the night.

"In a dream, a vision of the night..." (Job 33:15)

"Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision" (Daniel 2:19)

A study of the Hebrew words for dream and vision shows that the dream is the experience whose content comes as a vision. We can say that dreams seem to come while asleep and visions while awake – but they are the same. In the Biblical worldview, angels, visions, and dreams were all part of the same reality.

## **10. Dreams Call Us To Action**

Dreams call us to action. They challenge us to respond, to do something that is important to our personal growth. People in leadership positions in the body of Christ may be asked to take broader action if their dreams indicate a wider sphere of meaning.

Since we believe God speaks to us in dreams, surely we must respond in some way to the message of the dream. When the dream comes, we must acknowledge the Divine Motivator, and respond appropriately. Please note, however, rarely do our dreams literally give us commands to act; rather they pose questions, expand possibilities, offer other choices.

Repeated dreams can occur because we didn't act on the message of the first dream. Yes, God may be the source of our nightmares, if we refuse to listen to a stream of dreams trying to get our attention.

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## Kairos Ministries, Inc. Offers Dream Seminars In United States & Germany

Believing that dreams and visions offer a valuable resource for our spiritual journey, Kairos Ministries offers workshops and seminars focusing on understanding and appreciating our dreams. Our interactive seminars/workshops provide an understanding of dreams and their symbolic language, accessing the hidden treasure within us. A key goal is to help God's people wake up to this neglected, but important, aspect of their Christian and biblical heritage.

In our seminars/workshops, we start by showing that dreams are rooted in Scripture and early Church history. We explain how dreams can be a tool for wholeness and spiritual growth. By realizing the significance and value of dreams in our Christian walk, we see more clearly where God is at work in us.

Kairos Ministries' dream seminars/workshops offer practical experience in working with dreams from a Christian perspective. We present dream work techniques and principles that enable people to interact with dream images and discover their meaning. By understanding the meaning of the dream symbols, we appreciate how our dreams relate to our present day problems, healing of our soul, and the call to holiness. Dreams help point us in the direction of God's purpose for our lives and offer guideposts along our spiritual journey.

To schedule a dream seminar/workshop for your church or group, contact Gerald & Judith Doctor through email: [info@kairosministries.us](mailto:info@kairosministries.us) or [Judydoctor@aol.com](mailto:Judydoctor@aol.com)

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