

LESSON ESSENTIALS

GOD AND THE SPIRITUAL REALM

LESSON 5: DREAMS AND VISIONS

Have you ever had a particularly powerful dream or vision? While these are not common occurrences they are still one means that God can use to call to people to come and follow Him.

In every corner of the world people are reporting dreams and visions that are leading them to belief in Jesus Christ. We as Christians should rejoice in the miraculous ways that God saves people and brings them to faith.

Have you ever wondered if God still uses dreams to speak to His people? The purpose of this lesson is to understand how God uses dreams and visions to communicate truth to His people and also how to discern whether a dream is spiritual in nature.

REFLECT

The Bible tells us that where God's Spirit is moving, people will have spiritual dreams and He may choose to reveal Himself this way :“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”
Acts 2:17 says

Around the world many people are hearing about the love of God and the forgiveness that can be found through Jesus Christ – this may be through missionaries, growing churches, radio programs or distributed Christian literature or many other means. We can rejoice together that God equips and empowers us to take His message – the Gospel – to others! But God Himself is using miraculous means to reach out to some in places where the church is still growing and access to the Gospel is poor. Read the following true account of a man who came to faith only a few years ago through God's miraculous power written in his own words:

I was born into a very religious family. I attended every religious ceremony and was faithful to do everything instructed of me, and yet as a child I did not find answers to my questions about God, eternity or salvation. I believed that I needed only to perform more rituals, to pray more, to memorize the holy book of my religion and then I would find answers. During fasts, I attended ceremonies every morning hoping that God would reveal himself to me. I sought out teachers who could instruct me and memorized all I could. Still, I had no peace in my heart.

I went away to school to study my religion further, and began to realize I was wasting my time. No one would admit they did not have answers to the questions I was asking. I became depressed. I concluded that this religion I had learned from birth had been created by man and only deceived people. I even began to question the existence of God.

My questions were left unanswered. Who is God? Where is He? Why can I not feel His presence? If He exists, why is there no sign of Him in my life? Why have none of my prayers been answered? Why does God not speak to us? How can we eradicate sin by reading some verses from our holy book? How can people become pure and go to heaven just by repeating a few words? Is it possible that God loves and does not merely seek revenge?

I moved away from my family and left my religion. I studied at a University and became friends with others who thought as I did. I wanted to be free from loneliness. So I surrounded myself with people who I thought were my friends. They only took advantage of me. Nothing in the world – not alcohol, women or my possessions – satisfied me. I tried to kill myself, and miraculously survived the attempt.

I left this situation also and travelled abroad. I began to hate people and believe they were all trying to take advantage of me. Late at night I would argue with God, and blame Him. Deep down in my heart there

was still a love for God. I so badly wanted to know Him, if He was there at all.

One day, as I was travelling I was feeling particularly lost. Then suddenly I heard a voice tell me that I was not alone in the desert but that He was with me, and willing to save me! I had never experienced anything like this before! The voice stayed with me in the next days and accompanying the voice was a vision of the cross! I did not know anything about Christianity or Jesus, but I knew that this voice was the voice of Jesus because of the cross.

After my vision, I felt like I belonged to Jesus and I owed Him my very being. I knew in my heart that Jesus died on the cross for me and suffered for my sake. I decided to forget about myself and allowed Jesus love to overtake me. Even though I had never read a Bible, I decided to call upon the name of Jesus. After this I decided to search for information about Christianity. I was able to find people who were believers, and was given a Bible. The God I found in the Gospels was very different than the one of my parents religion. God does not use a sword – but is a God of love and kindness who gives freedom and grace.

Now I am in a part of my country where there are no churches, but I continue to talk to God, and read His word. I now have a wife who loves God and has given her life to Jesus. We live for Him together. I have chosen Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour, and I have been sharing the Gospel with my family and a few friends. I know God called me to Himself in a special way, and that I am precious to Him. Please pray that God would open a door to us to share the Good News more and more.

There are more stories just like this one being told every day. In the Bible, God used dreams and visions to communicate to His people some very specific things. Today, God uses dreams to prepare people to receive the Gospel, to encourage believers in times of great trial and persecution and even occasionally to give instruction for the future.

We must show discernment with dreams – as we can confuse our regular night-time visions with messages from God, and even receive visions from demonic sources. God uses dreams only as a special method of revelation – that is not everyone receives spiritual dreams, and they are rare occurrences in a person's life. However dreams and visions from God can be discerned. A dream from God will always agree with the Bible. They will always build

The Bible recounts over 100 instances of God speaking with people in visions and dreams. Numbers 12:6 says “...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.”

LOOKING DEEPER

To read more accounts of God using dreams in the Bible, look up the following New Testament passages:

Acts 9:3-9

Acts 10

Acts 18:9-11

Acts 16:9-10

faith, encourage and strengthen the church, and they will always reveal the identity of Jesus Christ as Messiah.

God uses people whenever possible to spread the Gospel, and He will use people to confirm spiritual dreams to people who have received them. Dreams may be used by God to prepare a person to receive the Gospel, or to confirm what they have once heard. We are not told in the Bible to pray for dreams or visions – but we are told that the Word of God is sufficient for any answer we need from our Heavenly Father. But we can rejoice that nothing can stop God from bringing people to faith in Him! And for the miraculous ways He works in every one of our lives.

IN REVIEW

- God sometimes uses dreams and visions to communicate the Gospel and to call people to Himself
- These dreams and visions can take place while awake or sleeping
- Dreams from God will always build faith, strengthen the Church, agree with the Bible, and reveal the identity of Jesus Christ as Messiah
- God uses people whenever possible to spread the Gospel but He can sometimes use dreams in places where there are few Christians and no presence of the Word of God

HAVE YOUR SAY

- What would you tell someone who felt they had a dream from God? How would you counsel them?
- Why do you think God uses dreams as only a special means of revelation, not a regular everyday occurrence?
- What is your response to the true accounts you read about? Were you aware of dreams of this nature occurring? How can you pray for people in similar situations around the world?

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