

## *Dreaming with God*

Bear with me this morning because I want to share a story that is highly insignificant but in a small way sets up what I want to share this morning. A few days ago, I had a dream about going to see my favorite football team (Tennessee Titans) in their home stadium in Nashville. In the dream Nikki and I travel and step into the stadium. It was not what you see on TV. It had this apocalyptic, dirty vibe to it. The stadium was tiny and dark even though it was an outdoor stadium. In the dream, I tried to make the best of it since it was my first time going to a game. I decided I was going to go buy some merchandise since I can't find Titans gear in Dallas. When I walked around it was like a poor flea market with all kinds of useless things that had nothing to do with football. People were selling blankets, garage sale items, candles. I know it was a stupid dream and was probably the result of the sandwich I had before bed, but I still remember it vividly to this day. I normally forget my dreams before lunch time. This dream happened maybe Wednesday night. So, there I am on my couch this past Sunday watching football and resting like a good boy. I am still bothered by this dream. My Titans in real life are the second worst team in the league. They are hot dog water. Absolute trash. As I was watching their game, I noticed the stadium was half empty. I thought, "I wonder how cheap actual tickets to Nissan Stadium are right now since the teams stinks so bad." I went online and found lower-level tickets at \$24 each. I texted Nikki and said, "Babe, I am really tempted to actually do this." Like a wonderful gift from God, my wife said, "Let's do it!" So, December 28<sup>th</sup> we are taking an extended weekend road trip to Nashville to see my Titans for the first time.

Why do I share this story about a weird dream? Because sometimes our literal dreams can lead to something very physical. Sometimes it is not a dream about something as silly as football. Sometimes it is the Lord Himself wanting to communicate to you through a dream. Two weeks ago, I shared a message about hope. The more I thought about hope the more I thought that hope actually inspires dreaming. Hope inspires us to dream with God. If you have lost the ability to dream with God, you may have lost sight of His promise. Today I want to share a message with you titled, "Dreaming with God." I am going to use the word "dream" as both the literal dreams we have at night and the dream God has for your life interchangeably. Let me just say that I went online to start researching and see what's out there regarding dreaming with God. Holy buckets there is some weird stuff out there. Everything from poor dream interpretation to "apostles" prophesying Trump leading us to Armageddon. Many Christians are fascinated with dreams and dream interpretation. I remember when I published my first book the publisher said, "Are you writing anything about dream interpretation because those books are flying off the shelf." That was back in 2012! It is still the case today.

The truth is that we cannot neglect what God may want to do in your life through a dream. Dreams and God's communication through dreams are so overwhelmingly abundant in both the Old and New Testaments that it is worthy of exploration. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I believe He is still speaking through dreams.

I was listening to a Messianic Pastor teach on dreams and he said a stat that was pretty interesting. He said, "If you live to be 75 years old and sleep an average of 8 hours a night, that means you would have spent 25 full years sleeping. Of those 25 years of sleeping, you are

getting about 6 years' worth of dreams. Did you hear me? In your lifetime you are getting over 6, 365-day *years* of dreams."

This past Thursday Midweek Service I had a friend come and share (who is a missionary to Paraguay). When she turned 70 years old, she "aged out" of the missionary organization she was in. Essentially, she was forced to retire. This didn't stop her because God was still speaking to her about missions. So, she joined another organization that doesn't have an age limit. Now, she is dreaming about the little day care she is a director of in Paraguay turning into a full-on K-12 school. When she was done teaching last Thursday, I took the mic and said, "Mary, I am so glad you said that. I am teaching on dreaming this Sunday and your heart echoes what I want to communicate." Acts 2:17 says, "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophecy, your young men will see visions, your OLD men will DREAM dreams." I will let you decide what age you think "old" is. One pastor said, "You are only as old as your last dream." Think about it. Why do we stop dreaming? Kids dream all the time in their innocence, and you know what? They don't dream of insignificant things. They dream of being presidents, pop stars, astronauts, and doctors. It's as if we almost need to be taught and trained to give up on our dreams.

There are countless examples of dreaming with God I can use in the Scripture but none of them speak louder to me than the story of Joseph in Genesis. Joseph's story, which revolved around dreams takes up a significant portion of the book of Genesis. We are talking about chapter 37 to the end of Genesis in chapter 50...all about the story of Joseph. I would encourage to read the story in its entirety this week but today I am going to take three snapshots of the story of Joseph beginning in Genesis Chapter 37 verse 2:

***Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. 3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. 4 His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms. 5 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.***

***-Genesis 37:2-5 NASB1995***

Joseph was the favorite. Growing up I used to tell Gabriel, "You're my favorite son." He would say, "Dad, I'm you're only son." Parents don't have favorites. All our kids are our favorite. But Jacob had a favorite. So much so, he made a special robe of many colors for Joseph. I'm sorry but this reminds me of a recent trip Nikki and I took. Last week we got to meet her parents half way from Georgia in Mississippi and spend two nights in a hotel on the beach. Her parents booked the hotel for us. It was the Hard Rock Hotel. In the massive lobby were autographed guitars and outfits from stars who wore them in concerts. We walked by Dolly Parton's dress, Elton John's whatever you call it, and Steven Tyler Moore's...uh I don't know what you would call it. All I know is I wanted to cover Nikki's eyes and say to the mannequin, "You should be ashamed of yourself!" Rock Stars wear insane outfits to fit their persona. Joseph had a fancy robe because he had *favor from his father*. You and I as New Covenant Christians have favor, grace, and mercy from the Father in Heaven. I say that to say, we have the freedom to dream

with God. You are God's favorite. And because of the freedom we have in Christ, we can dream with God. The first thing we need to understand about dreams is point number one in your notes:

**POINT #1 – God speaks through dreams; the devil wants to lie through them.**

I don't have to go through all the examples in the Scripture about God speaking to people through a dream. But I will tell you that the more aware of God's presence you are in your life, the more you will be able to discern God in the dream. Think about Jacob who was running for his life in Genesis. At night he rested his head and slept. Then he had a dream of angels ascending and descending. It was in that dream that God spoke to him and said his descendant would possess the land. Jacob woke up and said the scariest thing a believer could say, "This was the house of God, and I was *unaware* of it." Fast forward to 1 Samuel 3 and little Samuel is laying down in the house of God before the Ark and God calls out to him. What's the point? Both Jacob and Samuel *rested* near the presence of God and the result was a dream about their destiny.

When you have a dream, you want to immediately discern if it is just a simple dream or if it is God trying to communicate to you. I am going to make dream interpretation the shortest and easiest thing to understand. Interpreting a dream is the same thing as interpreting the voice of God in your life. In your head you only hear about four voices and they all sound like you. You hear God's voice, your voice, the devil's voice, and potentially angelic voices. The way you discern what voice is God's is by lining what you heard up to the Word of God. If what you hear is Biblical, void of fear/doubt, selfless, then more than likely it is the Lord. In the same way if your *dream* is Biblical, void of fear/doubt, selfless more than likely it is the Lord. Now, Jesus spoke in parables while on earth and many people didn't understand it. That's why with dreams, which are often symbolic, you need to take it to the Spirit and also trusted friends. If you have a dream and feel it is from the Lord, the first thing you need to do is write it down. You want to write it down or make a voice memo in your phone to get as much detail as possible. You haven't had your coffee yet, do not rely on your memory...write it down. Then take what you wrote down to the Lord and to trusted Christian friends.

God speaks through dreams and the enemy will attempt to use counterfeit dreams to deceive you. This is why proper dream interpretation is vital. Many places in the Scriptures we are commanded to guard our hearts and minds. **Proverbs 4:23 says**, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." God wants to speak through dreams, but the enemy wants to use a nightmare to bring fear, doubt, and deception into your life. When you wake up from a dream you need to immediately discern if this is from God or the enemy? Listen, the devil wants to manipulate you through dreams. If you have a dream in your life, there are going to be problems from the enemy. Let me encourage you though. You are going to have problems in your life *period*. But dream problems are good problems to have. When a church has too many people coming to service there is a problem...there's not enough room for everyone. It's a problem because you have to strategize or build a bigger building. That is a problem, but it's a good problem. Dream problems are good problems. The other thing to be encouraged about is that if the enemy is attacking you because of a dream take heart because it means that dream will produce something powerful in your life. If the enemy knows that a dream has the potential to turn your life around, he will try to discourage you. So, if you are discouraged be encouraged because something great is about to happen.

Why should we go through all that trouble over a simple dream? Because if God is trying to communicate something to you through a dream, you want to do everything possible to receive it. Also keep in mind that you may be too prideful or distracted for God to speak to you in the daytime that He has to speak to you while you are unconscious. Part of hearing from God through dreams is stewarding the dream well.

Let's go to the next snapshot of Joseph's life in Genesis 41 beginning in verse 14. I'm confident everyone in this room knows the story of Joseph well. He had a dream and then his brothers hated him so much they sold him into slavery in Egypt. He was faithful to the Lord and didn't sin through all he endured, even when he was falsely accused and thrown in a dungeon. It was in that dungeon that Joseph interpreted dreams through the Spirit of God. Pharaoh heard about that gift and needed Joseph when all his other workers couldn't figure out a troubling dream. Here is what happened beginning in verse 14:

***14 Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. 15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." 16 Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer." 17 So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph... 38 Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" 39 So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you." 41 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. 43 He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. – Genesis 41:14-17; 38-43 NASB1995***

A dream led Joseph to be sold into slavery then prison. But it was an interpretation of a dream that led to Joseph being second in command of all Egypt. I want you to notice that Joseph was promoted not for prosperity but for a purpose. If Joseph was not in that position as second in command *with* the wisdom of God...all of Egypt and Israel would not have been saved. Where did the answer to a horrific famine come from? A dream. A dream in which someone submitted to the Lord could interpret and then answer accordingly. Why are dreams important? I'm so glad you asked. Fill in point number two:

## **POINT #2 – God Gives Wisdom, Direction, and Warning through dreams.**

I have an evangelist friend who was bothered by a very bad dream. In the dream his friend was acting crazy and very suicidal. The evangelist wanted to shrug the dream off since it had fear and death involved, but there was a holy unction and urge he couldn't shake. It sounded absolutely crazy but this evangelist in the middle of the night called the friend who was in the dream. The friend actually picked the phone up and the evangelist said, "Hey bro, I know this sounds crazy, but I had a really bad dream about you right now and I can't shake it." The friend started crying

and explained to the evangelist that he had a gun to his head at that very moment. The call was confirmation from God that he wasn't alone, and his friend's life was saved that night. By a dream. A dream attached to a surrendered heart.

All throughout the Scripture God has instructed and warned people in a dream. Pilate's wife was troubled in a dream about Jesus being arrested and told her husband not to have another to do with Jesus. Let's look at another Joseph in the Bible, Mary's husband. His wife says, "I'm gonna have a baby and it's not yours. In fact, I am pregnant through God." Doesn't add up in the natural. But an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him this was the Messiah and that he should take the child to Egypt and remain there until the Lord said. Dreams are so powerful because they give strength to endure something that may even sound crazy.

Let's finish this morning by looking at nine more verses. Joseph's brothers are starving in Israel and because of Joseph's wisdom, there is food in the land of Egypt. They have come to buy food and didn't expect to see their brother Joseph as the prince of Egypt. Let's look at Genesis 42:1-9:

*Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" 2 He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die." 3 Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. 4 But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him." 5 So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. 6 Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. 7 When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." 8 But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. 9 Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them..." – Genesis 42:1-9 NASB1995*

Joseph *remembered* the dream he had years ago. Back in Genesis 37 when Joseph was 17 and shared this crazy dream with his brothers, we all thought he was a hothead. We thought, "Joseph, your brothers already hate you. Keep your mouth shut about a dream in which they would all bow before you." But verse 9 here says that Joseph *remembered* the dream. Sometimes you need to keep your dream to yourself and other times it needs to be declared so that when God fulfills it, all glory goes to Him and not you. Please fill out the final point:

### **POINT #3 – Your Purpose is Prophesied through dreams.**

Matthew Barnett is the current pastor of Angelus Temple, where our denomination began. He is also an Assemblies of God Pastor and founder of the Dream Center in Los Angeles. The Dream Center is a miracle story about a vacant hospital that this ministry turned into a rehabilitation center for all kinds of things. The Dream Center helps drug addicts, victims of abuse, the homeless and so many other things. At the interview when they are doing the intake evaluation the first thing the staff will ask is "what is your dream?" Not "why do you want to get off drugs?" or "What can we help you with?" No, what is your dream. It's a question that has been

asked for centuries. If you had 10 million dollars given to you right now and you no longer had to worry about bills or working, what would you do? What you naturally dream about may be insight to what your purpose is. Now, everyone's purpose here is to love the Lord and make disciples. That is a foundation for every believer. But is there something unique about you that the Lord wants to use? Is there a unique assignment that only you can do in the Lord?