

Putting Practical Feet to Your End-of-Winter Dreams

I love the winding down of another year. Spring is the time when you think of for new beginnings and fresh starts, but for me, winter is the time for dreams. Winter is the time to curl up with a comfy blanket and think, *What if?*

If you are anything like me, you know the Lord has placed dreams on your heart. It may be your college or career choice; it could be a new project or idea. Or maybe it's not even that specific, just a feeling that God is doing something in your life. And, again, if you're anything like me, you're sitting here thinking, *Yes—yes—yes! So what do I do now?*

That is a question I get asked all the time. "I know the Lord is calling me to something; I know He's put this dream on my heart. So, what now? What's the first step? What's my action plan? What's the step-by-step road to success?"

And isn't that the hardest part about having a dream? We get so excited for this dream the Lord has given us, and we just want to go, go, go and do, do, do. But we don't always know where to go or what to do.

If you have a dream the Lord has placed on your heart, whatever it is, here are three steps that will help you kick-start that dream.

1. Pray

The first step we should take in any situation is to pray. Many times I have felt a pull on my heart and I've thought, *God, is that you or just the pizza I had for lunch?* Sometimes the ideas are so insanely out of my comfort zone that I've thought, *Yeah, that definitely had to be the pizza.*

If you feel like the Lord is placing a dream on your heart, begin to pray now for wisdom and discernment. Pray for confirmation through leaders and friends whom you trust. Many times the Lord will use those around us to confirm something for us. Think about Joseph interpreting the dream for the Pharaoh (Genesis 41).

Ask the Lord for the wisdom to understand if the dream you have is a God-dream. Then ask for the Lord to give you direction as you look for opportunities to make His dream a reality.

Action Step: Start a prayer journal. Write down the dreams the Lord has given you. Write prayers specifically over those dreams and wait for the Lord to respond. Write down any responses He gives you. I love writing in a prayer journal because it gives me a physical reminder of what God has brought me through and how far He has taken me.

2. Prepare

Whatever your dream may be, once you feel confirmation that this is a God-dream, you need to prepare yourself to make that dream come true. For some, that may mean preparing physically such as moving locations, changing your eating habits or starting a workout routine. For some, it may mean preparing mentally by pursuing a degree or starting an e-course. But for all of us, whatever your dream may be, you must prepare yourself spiritually.

I cannot stress this enough. If you want to follow a God-dream, then you need to know the God who gave it to you. You will not make it if you don't pursue a relationship with your Father even more than you pursue the dream He gave you. Dreams are good, but they are secondary. Don't ever let your dream become more important than the One who gave it to you.

One final thought on preparation: You are not the one in control of the prep time. This isn't a microwave dinner; this

is a God-dream. And that means you are in it for the long haul. God may place a dream on your heart that takes years to come to fruition. Don't lose focus; don't lose heart. His ways are higher than our ways, and His plan is so much bigger and more forward-thinking than we can imagine. Think of Abraham and Sarah. They knew God was going to give them a child, but they wanted to be in control of the time frame. Because of their lack of faith in God's timing and a lack of patience, they tried to take things into their own hands and caused a lot of pain and suffering.

Action Step: Write goals for yourself each month, and find a friend to hold you accountable. It can be as simple as reading your Bible more often. It doesn't matter what the goal is, just that it's keeping you in the right mindset.

3. Protect

Dreams are precious. They are unique to each person on this earth. Protect that dream. Place it deep within your heart; carry it with you always. Take it out and inspect it; remember how you felt when you first received it; think about how exciting it will be when it happens, as it happens, after it's happened. Don't ever let someone take your dream from you. Remember Who gave you that dream. Remember you are not the one in control; you are the one who has been called. It's not your job to figure out all of the how's and the what if's and the but's. It's your job to listen and obey.

When I'm praying over a dream God has given me, I'm reminded of the promise God gave the Israelites of a Savior in Jesus. How long did they keep that dream alive? How often must they have relied on the hope of that promise? Even when all signs pointed to defeat, they continued to hold steadfastly to the dream of a Redeemer for hundreds of years, through darkness, silence and slavery.

Action Step: At the end of each month, read over your prayer

journal and your goal list. Find time to celebrate the small moments. Get away from your everyday schedule to be alone and reflect on the journey you are on. Give yourself time to renew your faith in your Father and the promises He has given you.

I love this time of year. It's the perfect time to reflect and to dream. I pray the Lord will strengthen your spirit, that you will have the courage to wait for Him and that He will direct you in the dream He has given you. {eoa}

*Reprinted with permission from © International Pentecostal Holiness Churches. **Kaleigh Bishop** is a graduate of Southwestern Christian University and a born-and-bred Oklahoman. She serves at her local church on the Creative Team and leads a community group for young adults. Since 2011, Kaleigh has worked in the Discipleship Ministries Department of the IPHC, specifically in Student Ministries. Her areas of expertise include graphic design, marketing, social media management, creative writing, promotional design, typography and event planning. Kaleigh currently occupies the Logistics and Communications Portfolio under the Student Ministries Advisory Team. Kaleigh and her husband, Jared, have started several businesses together and enjoy working together on creative projects when the opportunity arises. Kaleigh is an avid reader, a compulsive list-maker, and has a deep love for office supplies, the color pink and her rescue dog, Joey.*