

Dream Interpretation: The One Question You Should Never Ask

The most important thing to understand about dream work is that dreams are symbolic. The second most important thing to realize is that dream symbols are personal. Mine are mine, and yours are yours.

That is why *you* are the best and most qualified person to interpret your dreams. You know what the symbols mean to you, and you know what is going on in your waking life better than anyone. A vital key for dream interpretation is to remember that symbols are specific to your own history and personal experiences; they are not one-size-fits-all.

My Eyes Changed My Dreams

For example, dream symbols may vary not only person to person, but also season to season in our lives. When I was a teenager, I would often dream of either my glasses or my contact lenses. I wore both, so when I dreamed of them, I knew God was usually talking to me about my vision: His vision for my life and my ability to see it clearly.

However, in my early 20s, I had Lasik surgery, so I no longer needed to wear glasses or contact lenses. Interestingly enough, I stopped having dreams with those symbols in them.

The fact that even my personal symbols change over time certainly begs the question: Why would God in His infinite creativity limit Himself to one symbol meaning one thing for everyone at all times? He enjoys using different pictures and varied symbols, and He delights in coming up with new ways of communicating His messages to us in our night visions.

Awesome or Evil?

What if we dream of yeast? A biblical dream symbol dictionary may tell us that represents evil—like the “yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy” or the “yeast of malice and wickedness” about which Paul warns (Luke 12:1; 1 Cor. 5:8). That’s pretty clear: yeast is bad!

But then we have another verse over in Matthew: “He told them another parable, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like yeast...” (Matt. 13:33).

Likewise, in the Bible, a lion is used to represent both Christ as the lion of the tribe of Judah, as well as the devil that prowls around like a roaring lion (Rev. 5:5; 1 Pet. 5:8).

Therefore, we must maintain our dependence upon Holy Spirit to reveal what symbols represent. Since God used the same symbol to mean different things at different times in Scripture, we can be comfortable expecting that He is going to be flexible with His interpretation of our night visions as well.

It’s a Bird! It’s a Plane! It’s...

It’s like those optical illusions where you can see two totally different things depending on how you view the picture. *Is it a duck or is it a rabbit? Is it an old woman or is it a young girl?*

That is how it is with a dream. I see it one way, and you see it another. One picture could mean one thing to me and something entirely different to you. For example, I could dream of a lake, and that would be a picture of a peaceful, relaxing setting to me. But if my grandmother dreamed of the same lake, that symbol would represent something terrifying because when she was a little girl she almost drowned in a lake.

One online dream dictionary says, “To see a dog in your dream symbolizes intuition, loyalty, generosity, protection and fidelity.” Well, if you are an animal lover and have a dog for

a pet, that may very well be an accurate assumption. However, what if at some point in your life you had been viciously attacked by a dog? Do you think you will have the same association with that particular symbol? Of course not. Instead of speaking to friendship, it would speak to fear.

This explains why oftentimes we end up more confused after checking out a dream symbol dictionary than we were to begin with! Dream dictionaries don't take into account our personal histories, our individual experiences or our unique perceptions. The dream symbol dictionary doesn't know our associations, memories and preferences. But God does! And He is the one who not only gives us the dream, but helps us interpret it as well. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (See Gen. 40:8b).

We see, therefore, how the meanings of symbols absolutely change depending on who is dreaming them. We must ask the right question. The question we never want to ask is, "What does this symbol mean?" The question to the dreamer is always, "What does this symbol mean to you?" The interpretation must resonate within the dreamer. It should bear witness in the heart. Therefore, it is always the dreamer's responsibility to say, "That's it! That clicks with me." That is when we know we have the correct understanding and we have captured God's message through the dream. {eo}

This article originally appeared at .