

How to Know if Your Dream Is From God, the Enemy or Your Own Soul

How do you know if your dream is from God?

I've been studying dreams and teaching people how to interpret them for nearly 20 years, and that is the question I am asked most often: "How do I know if a dream is from God?"

I'll do my best to answer that question in this post and the next. The full teaching on this topic would take an entire book, so we'll just be scratching the surface here. Let's start off by looking at the possible sources of dreams.

3 Different Sources of Dreams

Tertullian (AD 160–225) taught that dreams come from three sources. Some dreams are demonically inspired. Some come from our souls with the soul actually causing the dream to be dreamed, and some are dreams from God. He linked this understanding to the promise of Acts 2—that dreams, visions and prophetic encounters would be the norm for the church.

Whether you know Jesus personally or not, your dreams will emanate from one of those three sources: the enemy, your soul or God. How can you tell which source the dream is coming from?

Dreams From the Enemy

Dreams from the enemy are often nightmares. The enemy desires to produce fear in us so we will not walk in faith. He frequently aims this kind of attack at young children, and when this occurs, the answer is not to tell them to ignore their dreams because they "aren't real"—but to teach them their authority in Christ. Help your children trust in God

instead of running in fear.

Sometimes dreams from the enemy are actually demonic visitations. For instance, sleep paralysis is a common phenomenon people talk about both in and outside the church. It most often occurs when a demonic entity visits someone as they sleep. Dreams from the enemy tend to linger even after we awake, along with the intense sense of fear or evil presence we felt during the dream.

Another kind of dream from the enemy is called a dark dream. The Bible often contrasts God and Satan by using words like light and dark, day and night. When God's throne or heaven is mentioned, the most common features are radiant colors and bright light. Similar descriptions are often true of dreams from God, while dreams from the enemy are usually set at night, have low light or are in black and white.

How to Deal With Dreams From the Enemy

The key to dealing with a dream from the enemy is to ask God a simple question: "Is there an open door in my life the enemy is accessing?"

This open door can come in three ways: your past, your media choices or your spiritual activity. Once you find the door the enemy is using, you can close it, and these dreams will often stop. I have seen many people set free from dreams from the enemy as they closed these doors—myself included.

Dreams From the Soul

A young lady once told me a dream in which her boyfriend proposed to her. I felt something was "off" in the dream and knew it wasn't from God, but I also knew it wasn't from the enemy. I asked her if they had been together for a while and if she thought it was past time for them to be engaged. She confirmed both of these things were true. The source of the dream became apparent to me, and I gently told her she wanted

to be married so much that she had caused herself to dream about it.

The most common soul dreams involve a coming marriage, promotion, ministry or season of popularity. When we interpret dreams at film and music festivals, it is amazing how many musicians tell us dreams in which they are finally discovered!

The prophet Jeremiah warned about dreamers who dreamed dreams they caused themselves to dream (Jer. 29:8–9). Not all soul dreams come because someone is a false prophet, like the people Jeremiah was condemning, sometimes we just desire something so strongly that we dream about it.

How to Deal With Dreams From the Soul

The key to recognizing most soul dreams is another simple question: “Does it feel familiar?” Did you already know that, expect that, feel that or think that? The familiarity of the dream’s story or concept is often a clue to its source. Not always, but often.

You can also test the dream’s fruit. A dream from God will produce good fruit in your life, while a dream filled with earthly wisdom will produce bad fruit:

“But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, do not boast and do not lie against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, and devilish. For where there is envying and strife, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy ” (James 3:14–17).

Those are the three sources of dreams: the enemy, the soul and God. Now that we’ve laid a foundation for recognizing dreams from the enemy and the soul, we’ll take a look at recognizing dreams from God in my next post. {eoa}

John E. Thomas is the president of Streams Ministries and the co-author of *The Art of Praying the Scriptures: A Fresh Look at Lectio Divina* with John Paul Jackson. Teaching on prophetic ministry, dream interpretation and the kingdom of God, he travels internationally and works to help restore the awe of God to a world that has lost its wonder. John and his wife, Dawna, live outside of Dallas, Texas.

To learn more about dreams and dream interpretation, check out *Dream Foundations* as well as other resources from John E. Thomas and John Paul Jackson at [.](#)