

Supernatural Guidance in the Night Season

Think of a moment from a significant dream. When you awoke, did it make you emotional? Did it warn you of a coming event? Did it linger throughout the day and then it suddenly came to mind? Could the dream have been from God?

For the last decade, I have given myself over to the study of dreams as a spiritual discipline. Dreams are a source of fascination to me, and the subject seems to follow me around. I have discussed dreams with people on planes, in taxis and Ubers, at the grocery store, at church events and at wedding receptions. I have learned that most people have hidden lives in which they explore their biggest questions, feelings and fears—a life of dreams. As I share my findings, I hope you will recognize the diverse ways God speaks through dreams—and the impact these dreams have had on our world.

I have yet to meet a person who hasn't experienced at least one powerful dream during their lifetime. For many people, these experiences are difficult to forget.

I have experienced impactful dreams for all of my adult life. I have often prayed about them, wondering if they were from God. What I didn't know, however, is that God has been speaking this way all over the world.

I have found that in the nations, many people are dreaming divine dreams. Many, like Jacob, awaken from strange, heavenly dreams. They wonder, Is God in this place and I didn't even know it? (see Gen. 28:16). Scripture is clear in that God is guiding us more than we realize, and He intends our dreams to be a significant means of His guidance.

Speaking to Nations

The year was 2012. I desperately tried to keep my cool in the back of a metal van bumping over the roads in Beirut, Lebanon. My young child was screaming. It had been a long trip already from Los Angeles International, with multiple layovers, late flights and lost luggage.

My family and I were thrown in the back of a van to meet our group at a popular boardwalk area by the sea. A meal and a nap had sounded nice, but we knew getting on the ground would allow us to reconnect with our team, who was beginning a street outreach.

On the streets, the atmosphere was electric. Youth around the nation were crying out for freedom, as anti-government rebellions from the early 2010s took full effect. Syrian refugees were pouring into the nation, desperate for help. And, in the midst of all this, revival loomed. One could feel the region bursting open in a spiritual awakening.

I closed the door to the van, took three steps on the sidewalk, and a Muslim man approached me. He had an ominous look, as if he wanted answers.

The man pointed out to the sea's dark waves and asked a strange question: "Last night, I had a dream that the Prophet Isa walked upon these waters and invited me to join Him. What does it mean?" (Isa is the Muslim word for Jesus Christ). He seemed to think I had some kind of inside knowledge into the meaning of this dream!

That night, we were able to see dozens of people, for the first time, encounter the freedom Jesus offers. People were healed, touched and changed as they searched for answers amid crisis. I just had one problem: All my luggage was lost in Paris.

Finally, after I spent three days in the same black T-shirt, our bags arrived at the airport. I hopped into a taxi, looking forward to some alone time as the taxi traversed through

traffic. Eventually, the taxi driver, who knew of my interest in dreams, interrupted me with an abrupt question: "I had a dream recently too. Do you mind if I tell you about it?"

He had dreamed of a long journey. While traveling, he chose to stop at a store and purchase some items for his child's birthday and an upcoming holiday. The man then decided he wanted a sandwich, so he went to the grocery store, then down a specific aisle.

Hearing the driver's dream, I felt bored, lost and a tad bit annoyed. Why is this guy sharing this dream with me about grocery shopping? I wondered. Then came the punchline: "In the store ... Jesus was there ... sitting on a bag of beans!"

Through this dream—and my lost luggage—I was able to share with this man the message of Jesus. Through a dream, God changed his life forever.

This dream, and many others like it, have caused me to wonder—is God hiding in our dreams? Do dreams have spiritual keys to life's passages we might be neglecting? How do we know what our dreams mean? My 10-year journey of studying the spiritual impact of dreams moved me to write my book, *The Dream Map*.

Although dreams may seem mystical and esoteric, they have shaped our world more than we realize. When I began to study dreams, I had a hunch. If God is speaking to people through dreams today, what else is He revealing in dreams? What I found was a surprising web of stories about how dreams have impacted history far more than most of us know.

Shaping History

When we have a supernatural encounter or spiritual dream, our first reaction may be to explain it away. We see this in Jesus' ministry. At one point, God spoke from heaven to a large crowd! The people's reaction? "The crowd that stood by

and heard it said that it had thundered" (John 12:29).

Some people could make professions out of ignoring the spiritual aspect of life. Yet I recall housewives, businesspeople, doctors, scientists, laypeople, clergy and government leaders who all report having significant dreams they attributed to divine guidance. I think of the stoner I met in Southern California who, after falling asleep in a drug-induced haze in the parking lot of a 24-hour pharmacy, had a dream of a man he had never seen wearing a crown of thorns.

Dreams from God are possible. We need to acknowledge our skepticism and unbelief in this area. Remember the kinds of people God promised would receive revelation from His Holy Spirit? The young and the old, men and women, the learned and servants (Joel 2:28-29).

I believe one of the ways God has stepped into the course of world history is through dreams. Let's explore some of the disciplines of study transformed through the dreams of great artists, thinkers and innovators. I do not claim every dream listed below to be divinely inspired (that would be impossible to know). After this brief survey, you will find history's connection with dreams closer than you may have first realized. Dreams have, in fact, shaped the course of world history.

Several leaders in history report prophetic dreams that predicted the future. Abraham Lincoln dreamed of being murdered the night before his assassination. New York attorney Isaac Frauenthal dreamed of a shipwreck before he boarded the Titanic.

Perhaps one of the most influential dreamers in world history was Winston Churchill, who, from an early age, dreamed he would save the United Kingdom and the city of London from the invasion of an evil empire. Biographer Martin Gilbert recently

discovered a letter recalling a conversation with Churchill by one of his boyhood friends, Sir Muirland Evans. Evans records Churchill as saying, in part:

“I see further ahead than you do. I see into the future. This country will be subjected somehow, to a tremendous invasion, by what means I do not know, but I tell you I shall be in command of the defences of London and I shall save London and England from disaster.

[After Evans asked if he would be “a general, in command of the troops”]:

“I don’t know; dreams of the future are blurred but the main objective is clear. I repeat—London will be in danger and in the high position I shall occupy, it will fall to me to save the Capital and save the Empire.”

If God spoke to Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar and Pilate’s wife in dreams, we can be sure He is speaking to world leaders today. My question is this: Who will be available to bring a God-inspired interpretation?

Bringing Inspiration

Modern and classical music legends both claim dreams as a source of inspiration for their music.

Sir Paul McCartney received the melody of the hit song “Yesterday” in a dream. The experience totally perplexed the young musician. “For about a month I went round to people in the music business and asked them whether they had ever heard it before,” he said. “Eventually, it became like handing something in to the police. I thought if no one claimed it after a few weeks then I could have it.” To date, “Yesterday” is the most covered song in world history.

McCartney must be a dreamer because he has also said he received the inspiration for the song “Let it Be” in a dream.

Can you think of two more beautiful pop songs than “Yesterday” and “Let it Be”?

Bernard Holland, a national music critic, mentions that Beethoven was known for intense dreams. In The New York Times, Holland reports, “When Beethoven dreamed his piano sonatas, or so one theory goes, he dreamed them on instruments that had not yet been invented.” Amazing! To learn more about how sacred music has been shaped by revelations from God and prophetic dreams, I suggest the book *The Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* by Patrick Kavanaugh (Zondervan, 1996).

Although it may seem hard to believe, scientific discoveries often come to the world through dreams. Here’s a short, documented list of historical discoveries that happened through dreams:

The Periodic Table of Elements came to chemist Dmitri Mendeleev in a dream after he fell asleep, exhausted from his work on an orderly system of classification for the elements.

A Nobel Prize-winning discovery about neurotransmission.

The double helix we now so often associate with DNA came to Dr. James Watson in a dream of two snakes intertwined at their heads.

Albert Einstein’s youthful dream of sledding down a mountain led to the theory of relativity.

If dreams teach us anything, it may be that there is less of a divide between “secular” pursuits such as science and medicine and our spiritual lives than we often think.

In our century, dreams have inspired seismic shifts in the economy. During a 2009 University of Michigan commencement address, Larry Page, then CEO of Google, shared that the inception of Google came to him in a dream. At the time of this writing, Google has a market value of over \$1 trillion.

That was quite a dream!

In the 19th century, Elias Howe had a dream that assisted him in his invention of the sewing machine. This dream also had a significant economic impact as it accelerated the industrialization of America.

Building the Church

With dreams having such an impact throughout world history, it should be no surprise to us that the Holy Spirit has been giving dreams to the church as well. The church throughout the ages has explored the power of dreams.

Dream interpretation, fortune-telling and idolatry were rampant during the expansion of the early church, and many hucksters touted the ability to interpret dreams. But rather than condemning the early Christians for an interest in dreams, the church fathers during the first, second and third centuries took great pains to explain their biblical nature, seek out what dreams from the Holy Spirit might mean for the believer and even record their own dreams for mass circulation.

Nearly every great apologist and theologian of the early church wrote on dreams, including Augustine, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius and St. John Chrysostom.

One church father, Synesius of Cyrene, put it this way: "One man learns ...while awake, another while asleep. But in the waking state man is the teacher, whereas it is God who makes the dreamer fruitful with His own courage."

St. Patrick, St. Francis,

Martin Luther and many other important Christians in history experienced guidance in dreams. Although there have been movements throughout history that have sought to discredit

divinely inspired dreams, God's guidance perseveres amid skepticism.

God has used dreams to bring freedom. Harriet Tubman, the famed American escaped slave and abolitionist, was a dreamer. Tubman had frequent dreams and visions—which she ascribed to God—that guided her on her journey of rescuing the lives of many enslaved people along as a conductor on the Underground Railroad. Dreams allowed Tubman to function as a modern-day Moses, rescuing people from enslavement.

Revealing Mysteries

This brief walk through history reveals the power of dreams. What about today? How do we know if a dream is from God?

Although there will always be charlatans and fakes who claim divine revelation for personal gain, we must not discount God's power to speak in dreams. God is raising up Josephs and Daniels to interpret the dreams of those around them today.

The Holy Spirit will provide us with supernatural intuition as we pray about our dreams. Pharaoh's intuition told him that the original interpretations of his dreams supplied by his advisers were incorrect. His intuition also told him Joseph's was the most accurate interpretation.

"For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets" (1 Cor. 2:10b, NLT).

As I study the Scriptures and shared life experiences, I see the following truths about dreams given by God. They may prove helpful in determining the source of a dream or dreams:

Dreams from God linger. I often hear the phrase from people, "I never remember my dreams, but I had a dream that I think may be from God," or "This dream felt different." Dreams from God have certain, intangible, spiritual qualities. Dr. David Benner writes that the "vividness of these dreams often lasts

a lifetime.”

Dreams from God may have a divine messenger. Scriptural dreams often record a divine messenger sent to the dreamer for a specific purpose.

Dreams from God may have overt scriptural themes or language. The presence of an obvious scriptural theme or symbol indicates a dream is from God, because Scripture will always affirm what God is saying to us.

Dreams from God may cause you to wake up in the presence of God. I think of Paul, who experienced the Lord’s presence and encouragement at night (Acts 23:11). Many people report waking up with a sense of peace, excitement or awe after a prophetic dream from God.

Dreams from God contain predictions that come to pass. In Deuteronomy 18, we learn that true prophets will have predictions and dreams that come to pass. If your dream predicts a personal or world event, and that event comes to pass, there is a high probability the dream has a divine message.

Dreams from God pass the PEACE test. Even in tough circumstances, God promises to lead His people forth in peace (Isa. 55:12). Peace is the indicator that we are receiving divine guidance from God, especially if peace is present in a situation that should not otherwise be peaceful.

I use the acronym PEACE to describe what God’s voice sounds like to me:

Points us to Jesus (Rev. 19:11).

Encourages us with faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 1-14).

Agrees with the Scriptures (John 10:35).

Confirmed by community (1 Cor. 14:29).

Empowers life change (Rom. 12:1-2).

READ MORE: Discern how God may be speaking through dreams today at .

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