

Let God Put a Dream in Your Heart

Do you have a dream you believe is from the Lord that has yet to come to pass? Perhaps you have even lost hope that it will ever happen.

The process involved in dream fulfillment can cause even the stoutest of souls to lose heart at times. But make no mistake, the process begins and ends with God. God is a giver of dreams, and any dream He gives, He will watch over to fulfill as you are obedient to Him. In the process, He refines your character so that you are able to steward the fulfillment in a way that honors Him. This may take longer than you might desire, but hold onto hope.

Today I want to give you three keys that will help you stay strong in the journey: Trust, dwell and commit.

Lessons From the Life of Joseph

“God gave me another dream!” 17-year-old Joseph exclaimed to his 11 brothers as they gathered in the early morning light before heading out to their day’s tasks. “Let me tell you about it.”

The brothers glowered at their youngest brother. Already they disliked him more than ever. “This egotistical kid is getting on my nerves,” muttered Levi. The men shifted restlessly as Joseph told them some farfetched dream about 11 stars, along with the sun and moon, bowing down before him reverently. *It sounds like he thinks he’s not only our father’s favorite son, but God’s favorite too. Just last week he had that other dream about sheaves of grain bowing to him. ...* For the most part, the older brothers kept their resentful thoughts hidden, but they began to consider ways to shut up young Joseph for good.

And by the end of the month, they had eliminated him from the family—or so they thought—and now his arrogance would never trouble them again. *This is what happens to self-aggrandizing dreamers*, they reflected bitterly as they drove the family's flocks home from Shechem, Reuben carrying Joseph's bloody coat to their father Jacob, along with the bad news about his apparent demise from an attack of a wild beast.

From Pit to Pinnacle

The story of the dreamer Joseph has been retold many times (you can review it by reading Genesis 37-43). The direction for Joseph's entire life was determined by God-inspired dreams. He went "from pit to pinnacle," daring to trust that God was in charge of every dream-determined decision.

Those first two dreams were God's way of showing him that someday he would be honored as if he were a patriarch or a pharaoh. His brothers' simmering resentment soon tried to put the lie to such pretentious-sounding predictions when they ganged up on Joseph far from home and threw him into a deep pit. Preparing a lie to tell their father about what had happened, they sold their brother as a slave to a passing caravan of merchants, who took Joseph even farther from home to Egypt, selling him into service in Potiphar's household.

Joseph proved to be such a capable and trustworthy servant that Potiphar promoted him to become his personal assistant. He was also too good-looking for Potiphar's wife to resist, and when the righteous young Hebrew spurned her seductive advances, she had him thrown into the dungeon with no promise of parole.

While confined in the Egyptian prison, Joseph put his dream-interpretation skills to good use, making something of a reputation for himself. In due time, the pharaoh himself had a portentous dream for which he urgently needed an interpreter, and Joseph was summoned. His explicit and accurate

interpretation won him not only his freedom from prison, but a new, high-level assignment in the royal household. As second in command, he now managed the resources of the nation of Egypt, preparing for the famine that had been predicted by the pharaoh's dream. As the crops began to fail in the seventh year and famine ensued, Joseph was ready; Egypt would be saved.

It had been at least 15 years since Joseph's brothers threw him into the pit near Shechem. Once the famine spread as far as Canaan where they still lived with their father, the brothers were forced to travel to prosperous Egypt, where they had heard they could obtain food. To whom must they apply for relief? Unbeknownst to them, the Egyptian official to whom they were bowing (like sheaves of grain!) was none other than their maligned brother, Joseph. Joseph knew who they were. Was he vengeful as he looked down at the tops of their bowed heads?

No, he saw his dream being fulfilled. Fifteen long and eventful years had passed, but Joseph had not let his dream die. He couldn't. His dream had taken hold of him. Now he could see what God had intended all along. Through everything that had happened, God was going to use him to continue the legacy of his family line until more dreams could be fulfilled. Joseph said to his brothers: *"As for you, you meant to harm me, but God intended it for a good purpose, so he could preserve the lives of many people, as you can see this day"* (Gen. 50:20).

Let God Put Desire in Your Heart

The Jewish people are still reaping the blessings of Joseph's dreams today, and so are we, as we learn from his story how God works. And God is still giving dreams to His people, including you and me. He is still making it possible for us to move into the future with hope. The last thing He wants is for

us to live in the past, sorrowing over our yesterdays.

God never lives in the past, and He wants to bring you into the future He has in mind. He wants to put His desires into your heart. He wants to give you His dreams for your life.

Even if you feel that your heart has been deadened by adversity to the point that it can no longer receive anything, be assured that your Father can fix that too. He can increase the capacity of your heart. God is ready to resuscitate your dead heart and plant seeds of hope in it.

Let God Fulfill What He Has Promised

Dare to trust God both to give you a dream and to fulfill it. The Bible is clear: *"Faithful is He who calls you, who also will do it"* (1 Thess. 5:24).¹ You have not been abandoned to your difficult circumstances. Decide to drop your crutches and follow after Him. God's plans for you may well seem impossible, but you will be going forward on *His* strength and wisdom, not your own.

If you get confused or discouraged, review how God has worked in other people, especially your forerunners in the faith in the Bible. Feel the heartbeat of the people who went through daunting—even terrifying—events, tenaciously hanging onto seemingly impossible promises from God. Yes, they made mistakes too (just as we do). Yet God kept taking care of them. They lost hope at times. They took matters into their own hands.

They failed.

But God would not relent. A promise is a promise. When he makes up his mind, he stays the course. He engineers circumstances. He sends encouragement. He revives dreams. He infuses hearts with hope.

He also provides patience. Your dream might take a lifetime;

Joseph's did. Character-building is an inevitable part of the process, and we should welcome it despite the fact that it may not always feel good.

Let God fulfill His particular promises for you—which will differ from His promises for somebody else. We will all be able to learn the same principles from our journeys with God, but our circumstances will not be the same. Some people around you will seem to have it so easy. Don't dwell on the disparity. Instead help yourself to a good dose of truth from the Word, Psalm 37:1-2, for example:

“Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be jealous of those who do injustice. For they will quickly wither like the grass, and fade like the green herbs.”

Steer clear of fretfulness and envy. When you discover that you are starting to get anxious and easily aggravated (or worse), remember that you belong to God. Ask Him to help you understand your reactions. Place yourself in His strong hands and repent of trying to take care of your world without Him. You can recover your footing with three key words from Psalm 37: Trust. Dwell. Commit.

1. Trust in your Lord anew. Don't put the cart before the horse, trying so hard to believe in your expectations regarding God's promise that you pull back from believing in the faithfulness of the Promiser Himself. He will fulfill His promises—in His own time and way.

2. Dwell in God and in His provision for you. Stir up your heart to thank Him for everything. He Himself is your secure dwelling place, and He will always be there for you.

3. Commit yourself to Him all over again. Confess your fears and put them aside in favor of trusting that He will see you through. The God who put the dream in your heart promises to fortify you every step of the way. Do you believe that? OK,

then—that's something you can stand on!

Closing Invitational Prayer

Father, I am grateful for my past, but I need fresh pages to turn. I open my heart to You so that You can rekindle old dreams and put new ones into my heart. I want to be able to follow You into the future You have planned for me, and I need Your help so that I can hear Your directives and persist through hard times. I have a dream of being a source of life for those around me, and I believe You are developing that dream more every day. I find my hope in You alone. Amen.

*This article has been adapted from the book Finding Hope – Rediscovering Life After Tragedy by **James W. Goll**. Deeply personal and intensely practical, Finding Hope will help you or someone you love find fullness of life even in difficulty.*

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