

No More Fantasies

The fairy tales we all read as children taught us to believe that one day a handsome knight in shining armor would come and take us away on his white horse. But reality has left us wondering, “Why hasn’t anyone brought me my glass slipper yet?”

It is the heart cry of every woman to be loved. But if we do not discover and accept the love of God, then we cannot love ourselves. And if we do not love ourselves, then we cannot love others.

Many of us spend our lives suffering from low self-esteem and insecurity because we never come to understand our own personal worth. We do not see ourselves as God sees us—“fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14, NKJV).

Having an improper image of ourselves distorts our views and misaligns us with God’s blessings, rendering us unable to receive all He has for us.

God has good things for you, not just spiritually but in your emotions, body, finances and relationships. God wants you to be complete in every area. It is His will for *you*, not just for Suzy or Jane or Amanda. God’s best for you is attainable; it’s not just a faint and distant hope.

But problems can occur in our lives when the desire for love remains unmet. We often begin to pursue love in the wrong manner.

That is why God told us to “delight [ourselves] also in the Lord” and promised that if we did, He would give us the desires of our hearts (Ps. 37:4). He is saying to put Him first so our desires will be in proper alignment with His will

for our lives.

God knows better than anyone that the more we want something, the more we will go after it. The God-given desire for love, fulfilled by the wrong relationship or pursued in the wrong way, can become disastrous in our lives. Think of all the crazy things you've done in the pursuit of love. Think of the extremes you've gone to. Think of the sacrifices you've made.

Our desire for love is not wrong in itself, but our search for it often takes us in the wrong direction. We live in a culture that bombards us with fantasy living. Romance novels, movies and daytime soap operas hold millions of women captive with their steamy, seductive love plots.

We are fascinated with the lives of movie stars and celebrities and stand in awe of their every move. We don't want to know about their flaws and imperfections, which would taint our images of them and mar the fantasy.

There are some grave dangers, however, in fantasy living. A fantasy is the product of our imaginations or emotional moods. And we ought to know by now how quickly moods can change. Chances are, what you were in the mood for a few years ago or even a week ago doesn't appeal to you right now.

Emotions Are a Poor Compass

Our feelings cannot be the compass that directs our steps in life. If they are, we will remain in a whirlwind of confusion because feelings change constantly. The Bible lets us know in no uncertain terms that our steps are to be ordered by the Lord, not by our emotions (see Ps. 37:23).

Emotions can be deceptive. How can we trust in something that is not truthful? And imagination—though not bad in itself—must have boundaries that prevent our indulging in fantasy.

You see, there is a huge difference between fantasy and God's

dream for our lives. What distinguishes and sets them apart from each other is their source.

A fantasy stems from a desire rooted in the flesh. God's dream for us stems from a desire rooted in His Spirit. We are not instructed to quit imagining, but to destroy every imagination or thought that is contrary to God and His will. We are to take every thought prisoner by seizing it and leading it into captivity to the obedience of Christ (see 2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Obviously, there is a battle going on in our minds. The Bible suggests we are being bombarded with thoughts that will lead us astray and produce destruction in our lives.

Ultimately, it will take imagination to produce the dream of God in our lives. But we are to fight off the imaginations that may lead us into fantasy living and into daydreams that are contrary to God's purpose and plan for our futures.

We fantasize because of a lack, or felt need, in our lives, reasoning that if something is missing, we can live it out in someone else's life—even if in reality the other person is not the individual we have imagined her to be.

Fantasy is much more appealing than reality because, in our minds, satisfaction always comes easy. It is the perfect plot, with the perfect you, the perfect him and the perfect place.

Your life *can* be a fairy tale. But your "happily ever after" is going to take a lot of work and a willingness to go through great opposition to get it. You must be willing to fight to lay hold of God's promises.

Fighting for the Promise

The children of Israel had been given Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. It was their Promised Land—but in order to possess it, they had to fight the giants already living there, who were trying to hinder their attainment of the

promises (see Num. 13).

Many people are discouraged or intimidated by the giants that stand between them and their promises. Sometimes they revert to fantasies instead of fighting the giants.

We need to recognize that the giants are usually signposts that we are getting closer and closer to our lands of promise. To possess the land, we must be willing to deal with the giants—the problems we face. Don't let God's promises pass you by because you are unwilling to confront the opposition!

When we refuse to face our giants, we begin to live vicariously through the lives of others. Whether it is through soap operas, romance novels, movies, our children, or even our spouses, we choose to play a part and live it out.

I once saw a documentary of Princess Diana's life. The producers had interviewed people from all over the world about their reactions to her death. Some were crying with such heartfelt affection for the princess that it was as if it were their own sister or daughter who had died.

One lady concurred with what many others felt—she had lived her own fairy-tale dream through the life of Princess Diana. She said, "I was a princess through her."

It's not only celebrities about whom we fantasize. I have seen parents push their children to extremes in order to live out their own unfulfilled dreams.

My son played football this past year. At the games, I saw mothers attempting to fulfill their childhood dreams by pushing their little girls to be cheerleaders against the children's wishes. I saw men seeking to find a sense of fulfillment through their sons.

It is OK to encourage our children and even to stretch them. But when we try to live through them, we often make demands on

them that they cannot fulfill. The result is misery for them and for us.

We don't always stop with our children. How many women watch some hot love scene in a movie and then carry home an artificially inspired erotic desire into their own bedrooms? Before they realize it, these same women become frustrated and forget why they fell in love and married that man sleeping next to them in the first place.

Fantasy living demands unrealistic expectations, and when expectations are not met, they cause frustration. In a marriage relationship, frustration can lead to isolation, separation, and ultimately, to divorce.

"If Only" Fantasies

Another danger of fantasy living is "if only" thinking, which causes us to put off today's opportunities while we wait for the "right" or "perfect" occasion.

We make excuses:

- * *If only* my kids were grown I could start that important, God-inspired ministry.
- * *If only* I had enough money I would begin that new have that first baby.
- * *If only* I had more time I would write that first book.
- * *If only* he would change I would love my husband.

We say we'll do this or do that when such and such is in order. But the enemy will see to it that we never have a perfect opportunity to pursue the promises of God.

Don't wait until everything is perfect. Go for it in the middle of a mess! Otherwise, your life will pass you by and you won't accomplish God's destiny.

Another danger of fantasy living is that you could spend your whole life trying to be someone else instead of who you were created to be. If you never get an understanding of who you are in Christ—that He loves you for who you are—then you can never fulfill His purpose for you. Instead, you live out your life as an impostor, which is a very unfulfilling role.

It is your uniqueness that separates you and makes you special. Your value is found in your *difference* from everyone else, not in your *similarity*. Understand the value of your uniqueness. Realize that when you get saved, God does not change your personality—He changes your character.

For many years, I lived in a fantasy world, pretending, hoping, comparing, neglecting and even self-destructing—until I came to realize how very much God loves me.

When I finally came to terms with my real self, I had to make the transition into a new life through trust in the God who created me. The real question was very simple: Does God love me, or doesn't He?

God's Word says yes, He really does, and the knowledge of it changed my life forever. It will change yours, too, once you accept it, believe it and begin to live in its wonderful truth. Then there will be no need for fantasy.

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