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Dedicated To

The Dreamer within,
the Holy Spirit,
Who grants every individual direct,
ongoing contact with the living God.

May we learn to hear
His voice and be directed
and adjusted by what we hear.

“Hear my Words; If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream.” (Num. 12:6)

Those skilled in dream interpretation, such as Daniel or Joseph, were revered.

Those who understood the revelations God had given them, such as Abraham or Solomon, became great and wise.

Those who were overcome by their inner experience, such as St. Paul or Ezekiel, became great missionaries and prophets.

*“I will bless the Lord who counsels me; He gives me wisdom in the night.
He tells me what to do.” (Ps. 16:7 LB)*

Note: God counsels us nightly through dreams.

Introduction

The Gift of Dreams:

God graciously brought Rev. Herman Riffel into my life to teach me Christian dream interpretation. This was another area of the Bible I just never took seriously, probably because dreams are outside our culture's scope of rationalism. Therefore, our culture looks down its nose at them and assumes they are leftover, undigested pizza from yesterday. Obviously, this view is nowhere found in Scripture, but the Bible over and over declares unconditionally that it is God Who speaks to us through the dream (Num. 12:6; Acts 2:17) and it is God Who counsels us at night through our dreams (Ps. 16:7).

With such awesome declarations and such a wonderful opportunity to receive God's counsel free of charge on a nightly basis, you would think we would all jump at the opportunity to record our dreams and seek God for the interpretation of them. However, probably not one in 10,000 Christians has ever received any formal training on how to interpret dreams. Absolutely astounding!

Rev. Herman Riffel taught me how to hear God speaking through my dreams. He helped me search Scripture and discover how God handles and interprets the dream, so I could learn how to interpret my own dreams and the dreams of those I counsel. What a blessed gift.

I first met Herman Riffel near Toronto, Ontario. I was doing a weekend Communion with God seminar and Herman was doing a Christian Dream Interpretation seminar in the same city. Since my seminar finished before his, I went over to pick up the end of his seminar and make his acquaintance. From that meeting, a wonderful relationship developed and we were able to invite him to our church-centered Bible school to videotape him teaching twelve hours on the principles of Christian Dream Interpretation. On the videos he actually interviews students and interprets their dreams. Wow! A Daniel in our midst. And we have this statesman on audio and video tape so we can pass on his lifetime knowledge of Christian dream interpretation to the Church. What a blessing to the body of Christ!

Now I can put my journal next to my bed and record my dreams when I awake. Then I can ask God for an interpretation of these dreams. As I quiet myself to hear His voice, I use the same four keys that I had discovered when initially learning to hear God's voice. I become still, picture the dream, tune to spontaneity, and ask God to help me understand the symbols the dream is using to communicate a message to me. Following are a few excellent biblical principles that Herman teaches which assist me greatly in understanding how to view a dream.

Part 1

Principles of Christian Dream Interpretation

Defining Dream and Vision:

1. Dream - "A sequence of images, etc. passing through a sleeping person's mind" (*Webster's Dictionary*)
2. Vision - "A mental image" (*Webster's Dictionary*)
3. "In a dream, a vision of the night..." (Job 33:15)

You will note from this verse the close connection the Hebrews maintained between the dream and the vision. The words are used almost interchangeably.

Both dreams and visions involve the viewing of images on the screen within one's mind. Often we would think of a dream as the flow of these images while sleeping and a vision as the flow of these images while awake.

4. Daydreaming is MAN utilizing the visionary process. This is not encouraged, and may be what is referred to in Ecclesiastes 5:7. It is better to present the eyes of the heart to God and ask Him to fill them with a divine flow of dreams, visions and godly imaginations.

Some Scientific Observations Concerning Dreams

Sleep laboratories have proven that everyone dreams one to two hours each night during a certain period of sleep known as alpha level, which is light sleep. Every 90-minute cycle of sleep begins with alpha, then goes into deeper sleep which is called theta, and finally deepest sleep which is called delta.

At the close of the first 90-minute cycle each night, the individual returns to alpha level sleep, where he has a short, five-minute dream period. The next time he cycles up to alpha, he has a ten-minute dream period. The third time in alpha, the dream period is about 15 min-

utes, and so on. If one sleeps a full eight hours, the entire last hour is essentially spent in alpha level sleep. Thus, the average person sleeping for eight hours a night will dream about one to two hours of that time.

Alpha level sleep is where one has what is called Rapid Eye Movement (REM). Rapid Eye Movement is exactly what it sounds like: the eyes of the dreamer begin moving rapidly. He is actually watching the scenes in the dream, and thus his eyes are literally moving back and forth, observing the action. By observing the alpha level sleep when Rapid Eye Movement occurs, researchers in sleep laboratories have determined when a person is dreaming and how much time is spent dreaming in an average night.

They have discovered that if they awaken a person every time REM begins, preventing him from dreaming, after about three nights the individual will begin to show signs of having a nervous breakdown. Clearly dreams are an inner release mechanism which helps provide us with emotional balance and maintain our sanity. Dreams can be considered guardians of our mental and emotional well-being.

Seven Reasons We Should Listen to Our Dreams

1. God declared that He WOULD speak through dreams and visions in the Old Testament.

And He said, "Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream" (Num. 12:6).

2. God declared that He DID speak through dreams and visions in the Old Testament.

"I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets" (Hos. 12:10).

3. God declares that He WILL communicate through dreams and visions in the New Testament.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days,” saith God, “I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

4. God declares that He WILL COUNSEL us at night through our dreams.

I will bless the Lord who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind (inner man) instructs me in the night (Ps. 16:7 NASB).

5. Rather than our dreams being fatalistic, dreams are calling us to change SO WE WILL NOT PERISH.

*For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, That He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man. He keepeth back his soul from the pit, **and his life from perishing** by the sword (Job 33:14-18, emphasis mine).*

6. God does very significant things WITHIN dreams. For example, He established the Abrahamic Covenant in a dream.

*And when the sun was going down, a **deep sleep** fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him....And God said to Abram....In the same day the LORD **made a covenant** with Abram, saying... (Gen. 15:12,13,18, emphasis mine).*

7. God grants supernatural gifts THROUGH dreams.

In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, “Ask what I shall give thee....”

“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?”

“...Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee....” And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream (I Kings 3:5,9,12,15).

Summarizing the Importance of Our Dreams

God has chosen to communicate with mankind through dreams. He guides and counsels us through our dreams. He establishes covenants with us through our dreams. He grants us gifts in our dreams. He utilized dreams from Genesis to Revelation, and declared that He would continue to use them in the last days. When you total up all dreams and visions in the Bible, and all the stories and actions which come out of these dreams and visions, you have about one-third of the Bible, which is equal to the size of the New Testament! Dreams are a central way God has chosen to communicate with us, and thus they *must* be given great weight!

Five Things You Can Do to Help Recall Your Dreams

1. Say to yourself, “I believe dreams contain a valid message.”

This is a signal to your heart that you are taking it seriously and want to hear what it has to tell you. You are giving it permission, and even asking it to awaken you after each dream. Your heart will do exactly that. You see, if you do not awaken within

five minutes of the dream ending, you will not recall it. If, however, you tell your heart that dreams are leftover undigested pizza, then your heart lets you sleep through the dream and doesn't awaken you after it is over, and thus you do not recall it.

2. Ask God to speak to you through dreams as you fall asleep.

God does answer prayers, especially when prayed in accordance to His will!

3. Put your journal beside your bed and immediately record your dreams upon awakening.

You will forget most of your dreams by the morning, so get up and write them down when you awaken.

4. Get eight hours of sleep, as the entire last hour will be dream-time.
5. Awaken naturally, without the use of an alarm clock, as alarms shatter dream recall and blast tidbits of dreams into oblivion where they are never found.

If you will do the above five things, you will recall dreams every week.

Seven Foundational Principles for Interpreting Dreams

1. Most dreams are symbolic (including biblical dreams), so view them the same way you would view a political cartoon. Throw the switch in your brain that says, "Look at this symbolically."

You can learn the art of communicating symbolically by playing the game "Pictionary" or "Bible Pictionary."

2. The symbols will come from the dreamer's life, so ask, "What does this symbol mean to me?" or, if working on another's dream, ask, "What does this symbol mean to you?"

For example, Joseph was a shepherd, and he dreamed of sheaves and sun, moon and stars bowing down (Gen. 37:1-11). These images surround a shepherd boy who lives in the fields. Nebuchadnezzar, a king, dreamed of statues of gold (Dan 2:31ff), which surround kings who live in palaces.

3. The dream generally speaks of the concerns which your heart is currently facing. So ask, "What issues was I processing the day before I had the dream?"

For example, Paul was wondering where to go next on his missionary journey and had a dream of a Macedonian man motioning for him to come on over (Acts 16:6-11). Nebuchadnezzar was thinking his kingdom would go on forever (Dan. 4:28-33) and he had a dream of a tree being chopped off at the roots (Dan. 4:9-27). Once you know the thoughts that were on the dreamer's heart when he fell asleep, it is much easier to draw out the meaning of the dream.

4. The meaning of the dream must be drawn from the dreamer. Realize you know nothing about the dream, but through dependence upon the Holy Spirit and the skillful use of questions, you can draw the meaning of the dream out from the heart of the dreamer.

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams (Dan. 1:17).

Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out (Prov. 20:5).

5. The dreamer's heart will leap and "witness" and say, "Aha!" when it hears the right interpretation, so never accept an interpretation that does not bear witness in the dreamer's heart.

6. Dreams reveal but do not condemn. Their goal is to preserve life, not to destroy it (Job 33:13-18).
7. Never make a major decision in your life based only on a dream without receiving additional confirmation from the other ways that God speaks to us and guides us (peace in our hearts, the counsel of others, illumined Scriptures, God's still small voice, prophecy, anointed reasoning, etc.).

Discerning Dreams About Yourself

At least 95% of your dreams will be about you – your inner self, your current situation, your relationships. **Your dreams** come from **your heart** and will express the things that are important to your heart. The most common area your spirit will reveal will be your emotional, heart struggles and sanctification issues, expressed symbolically. Body and health issues are also important to your spirit, so they may be revealed, again in a symbolic way. Your relationships to other people are important to your heart, so these may be conveyed in signs and symbols. And the circumstances and events that surround your life, ministry or vocation are also important to your heart, so these may be portrayed symbolically in your dreams.

Because the vast majority of dreams are about your inner self, begin the process of interpreting your dream with the assumption that it probably is about something you are or should be dealing with in your own life right now.

*Isolate the **feeling** of the dream first.* How did you feel upon first awakening? Was your heart pounding in fear? Were you confused, frustrated, angry, rejected, or threatened? Did you feel loved, excited, happy, or content? Did you feel exposed, unprepared, or disappointed? What was the overall emotion that the dream evoked? In what aspect of your life are you also feeling this emotion? If it is not immediately obvious to you, ask the Lord to reveal it to you.

*Look at the **action** of the dream next.* Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the symbolism of the action. For example, if the symbol in your dream is that your car is going backward, ask, “In what way do I feel that I am

going backward, that I am not moving forward in this area of my life?” If someone else is driving your car in the dream, ask, “In what way is this person driving or controlling my life (e.g., my reactions, attitudes, behaviors) at this time?” or “How is the characteristic that this person symbolizes controlling me?” (See the section below on the symbolism of people in your dreams.) If you are falling, ask “In what way do I feel like I am falling, losing ground, or out of control in my life at this time?” If you are soaring, ask, “In what way or what area of my life do I feel like I am flying, that I am rising above my problems or my abilities?” If you are being chased, ask, “How and why do I feel like I am being pursued or hunted?” If you are naked, ask, “In what way do I feel like I am exposed and vulnerable?” If you dream of dying, ask, “What is dying within me?” (This may be a good thing, for perhaps you are dying to pride, or to self, or to workaholism.)

Remember, actions in the dream are to be viewed symbolically. If your dream wanted to really show you that you were going to die, it would picture that event symbolically. For example, just a few days before his assassination, President Lincoln dreamed of a casket.

Once you have used the feeling and action of the dream to identify the aspect of your life that it is revealing to you, the rest of the symbols will be much easier to identify.

*The **people** in your dreams often represent characteristics within you.* You can determine what facet of yourself they are representing by simply asking, “What is the dominant personality trait of this person, as I know him?” The answer will tell you what aspect of yourself you are dreaming about. For example, your heart may want to show you the entrepreneur, the hospitable host, the administrator, the class clown, the spiritual leader, the laid back one, the workaholic, etc. that is within you by the appearance in your dream of an individual who epitomizes that kind of person to you. Your pastor may be the spiritual part of you; a president or king may symbolize other leadership qualities within you; a policeman, judge, or dictator may be the authority figure in you; people in uniform (nurses, waiters, choir members) may represent your desire to conform.

It is also possible that the person's name may be the point that the dream is trying to bring out, especially if that name is spoken within the dream. Dreaming of a friend named Charity or Joy or Grace or Joshua or David may be your heart's way of calling your attention to the qualities that are seen in the meaning of the name. Or the name may actually sound like the message the dream is trying to convey. For example, dreaming of "Sharon" might be your heart's way of pointing out an area in which you should be "sharing" something you are not, or should not be sharing something you are. One person reported dreaming of a friend named "Anita Cook" and finding the interpretation to be "I need to cook."

It is also possible that the Lord Himself or one of His angels may meet you in the dream.

Animals often represent your emotions. Ask, "What emotion might this animal be symbolizing to me?" This will depend on your geographical home, your personal experiences, your knowledge of the Bible, and your own culture. For example, a bull might be anger (an "angry bull"); a fox, craftiness; a cat, curiosity; a dove, peace; an eagle, freedom; a snake, subtlety; a lion, royalty, and so on. Keep in mind that in the Bible, a lion is used to represent both Christ ("the Lion of the tribe of Judah") and satan ("as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour"). Therefore, you must maintain your dependence upon the Holy Spirit to reveal what the animal represents in your specific dream.

When you face the animal representing your emotions in your dream rather than running from it, you may find that the animal changes into a different one. It is good to face your emotions.

Numbers in dreams generally represent the identical number in real life. However, the number will probably be linked to something which needs to be interpreted symbolically. For example, when Joseph dreamed of eleven stars, the eleven was literal but the stars were symbolic and actually represented his brothers. Joseph was dreaming about his eleven brothers (Gen. 37:1-11). Likewise, the cupbearer's dream of three branches stood for three days (Gen. 40:12), and for the chief baker, the three baskets represented three days (Gen. 40:18). In Pharaoh's dream, the seven cows were seven years (Gen. 41:26). So expect the number to mean that exact number of something. It will take prayer, discernment and the revelation of the Spirit (confirmed by the leap in your heart) to determine what it means.

Continue to move through the dream, seeking revelation on symbol after symbol, until you sense in your spirit that the interpretation is complete.

Occasionally you may have dreams that relate to more than your personal, inner life. If you have examined the dream carefully, in full reliance upon the Holy Spirit to bring the interpretation, and you cannot see how the symbols of the dream apply to you, seek the input of your spiritual counselors. They may be able to see your blind spots and recognize the message your heart is trying to give you.

If your counselors agree that the dream does not apply to your inner life, you may then consider the possibility that it is a dream for or about others. One indication that this may be a dream for another rather than you is if you are an observer of the action of the dream, rather than a participant.

Following are some biblical dreams that demonstrate this principle:

Gen. 15:1-21 Abraham in interaction with God & sleeps = dream about himself
Gen. 20:1-18 Abimelech and God in interaction = dream about himself
Gen. 28:10-22 Jacob being spoken to by God = dream about himself
Gen. 31:10-29 Jacob and God in interaction = dream about himself
Gen. 37:1-11 Joseph and brothers in interaction = dream about himself
Gen. 40:1-23 Cupbearer and Baker = dreams about themselves
Gen. 41:1-49 Pharaoh's dream of 7 cows = dream for others
Gen. 46:1-7 Israel in dialogue with God = dream about himself
Judges 7:9-18 Loaf of bread hitting camp = dream about himself
1 Kings 3:5-28 God and Solomon interact = dream about himself
Daniel 2:1-49 Statue hit by stone = dream about others
Daniel 7:1-28 Four beasts = dream about others
Daniel 8:1-27 Ram and goat = dream about others
Daniel 10:1-12:13 Terrifying vision = dream about others
Matt. 1:20-25 God spoke to Joseph = dream about himself
Matt. 2:3-15 God spoke to Joseph = dream about himself
Matt. 2:19-23 God spoke to Joseph = dream about himself

Summary: Thirteen (13) dreams about the dreamer; four dreams about others.

Two important observations may be made from the biblical example:

1. The dreams for or about others were prophetic in nature and were **all** given to kings or king's advisors concerning the future of their kingdoms. The principle which may be drawn from this is that dreams (and indeed all revelation from the Holy Spirit) are only given to us that apply to our own area of responsibility. We do not hear from God about people over whom we have no influence, authority or accountability.
2. Dreams about self may be **for the dreamer and his descendents**. Again, the revelation of the dream was not given to any random individual, but to one with authority and influence. Intercessors may be given revelation of others, so they can pray for them.

It is vital to remember this principle: *All kinds* of dreams can contain symbolic language, literal language, or a combination of symbolic and literal language.

When interpreting dreams, look for metaphors, similes, and metonymies of our language. Dreaming about ketchup may be calling you to "catch up" in some area. A fire may be trying to warn you that you are "playing with fire." A dream of being smothered or drowned may indicate that you are feeling "in over your head." A frozen lake, an ice flow, or even ice cubes may be cautioning you that you are only seeing "the tip of the iceberg." Having your glasses broken may be an indication that you are not seeing the situation clearly. One lady reported that a dream of a fire in the kitchen of her house was a warning that she had an inflammation in her digestive tract. Other examples of word plays that may show up in your dreams include: "walking a mile in someone else's shoes;" "being born in a barn;" "being up the creek without a paddle;" "as the crow flies;" "throwing the baby out with the bath water;" "on a level playing field;" "throwing a wrench in the works;" "at the eleventh hour;" or "speaking with a forked tongue." Your heart may use one of these pictures in your dreams, expecting that you will understand the symbolic meaning of the expression.

Think outside the box! Be prepared for unexpected and clever ways for your heart to get its point across to your conscious mind. Be open to plays on words and lateral connections.

Finally, always remember that God is big enough and gracious enough to make sure that you understand the message He wants to give you. If your understanding of dream interpretation is different than that given above, He will meet you in the dream according to your expectations.

THE SIMPLEST METHOD FOR INTERPRETING A DREAM ABOUT YOURSELF

The best way to interpret a dream is to start with the first symbol and try to interpret that. Then go on to the next symbol, and so on. Continually ask the question, "In what way am I experiencing this symbol in my life at this time?"

DREAMS ABOUT OTHERS

Perhaps only 5% of our dreams are about others. This dream is not talking about parts of yourself, but about real outer situations. I have discovered that the more right brain a person is (i.e., visionary and intuitive) the more likely he is to dream further away from home (away from his own self). That means that right brain people may be more likely to have a greater number of dreams about others.

For example, I have noted that three different women who scored very strongly "right-brained" on a Brain Preference Indicator test (the highest scores I have seen) have vivid dreams about others in which they see the murders, rapes, and thefts taking place in their communities that night, and which are indeed reported in the newspaper the following day. These were literal dreams of real life events. Obviously, not all dreams about others show such fearsome pictures. These are just given as examples I am personally aware of.

Dreams about others are shared publicly much more often than dreams about self, which is why the vast ma-

ajority of the dreams in the Bible fall into the category of dreams about others.

CLUES WHICH MAY INDICATE YOUR DREAM IS ABOUT OTHERS

1. You are an observer of the action.

If you play an active role in the dream, it is likely a dream about you. If you are only an observer to the activity of the dream, it is likely a dream about others.

2. The dream just does not fit your life.

You should always ask God, "Lord, show me any way the events in this dream are revealing struggles my heart is currently facing." If you cannot see that the dream is talking about an issue you are facing, and your spiritual counselor cannot help you see how this may be something your heart is currently processing, then you may assume that the dream is not about you.

Dreams Which Tell of the Future

In a sense, many dreams are foretelling the future. Some dreams may simply be showing what will happen in the near future if one does not repent and change his ways. Other dreams seem to tell of the very distant future, as some of the Bible dreams appear to do. Perhaps more prophetic people may find that they dream further into the future and further away from themselves, while people who are not prophetic may tend to dream closer to home (i.e., have dreams which deal with issues concerning their own hearts' struggles).

Additional Thoughts Concerning Working with Dreams

1. Dreams are reliable messengers. They reveal the condition of one's heart (Dan. 2:30), as well as the voice of God within one's heart (Acts 2:17). They may from time to time reveal direct attacks of satan or demons upon the heart. (Job 4:12-21 may be an example of a demon speaking accusation leading toward hopelessness and death - this is the only possible biblical example of a demon

speaking through a dream.) In my own life, I have had only one dream which the Lord has told me to ignore because it was satanic. Thus, because of the biblical evidence and because of my own life's experience, I do not attribute many dreams to satan or demons.

2. In the Bible, when people awakened, they acted upon their dreams. Act on your dreams!
3. Do not pose as an expert on interpreting others' dreams until you have been interpreting your own for five years. You can offer ideas and advice to others concerning their dreams, however you are not to pose as an expert.
4. As with prophecy, the messages and warnings in dreams are conditioned upon man's response (Ezek. 33:13-16). The dream is calling you to act or change so some calamity will not befall you. If you respond appropriately, the calamity will not come.
5. Sexual dreams should be viewed symbolically. Sexual intercourse is a symbol of union, so ask the question, "In what way is there a union or joining taking place within me?" This will probably be a union of previously warring parts of yourself (for example - a merging of the workaholic part of yourself with the laid back part of yourself could appear as a dream of sexual intercourse). Or if you needed to incorporate the gift of hospitality into your being, you may have a dream of sexual intercourse between yourself and a person you know whose chief trait is that of hospitality.
6. Repeated dreams occur because you did not hear and act on the message of the dream when it spoke to you the first time.
7. Nightmares are the scream of an unhealed heart, asking you to apply the prayer ministries of inner healing and deliverance to the areas of need within you. In my own life, a recurring nightmare of 15 years disappeared immediately and completely

when I had a demon cast out which was underlying the fear being portrayed in the nightmare.

8. The most natural interpretation is most likely correct.
9. Successive dreams on the same night are usually dealing with the same issue, presenting various approaches to it and offering the proper solution to the dilemma.
10. The dream calls the dreamer to action.
11. As you approach the dream, recognize that you know nothing about the dream. The dream and the dreamer's heart will need to tell you what it means.
12. Religion tries to get to God through developing theologies, stirring up emotions, and setting one's will. God comes to man through directly encountering his heart and spirit with His voice, prophecy, dream, vision and anointing.
13. Dreams release divine creativity. Many discoveries and inventions have come through dreams. The location of the hook of the sewing machine needle came through a dream. The discovery of the round formation of the Benzene molecular structure came through a dream. These are just two of what I am convinced are thousands of examples.

Warnings About Dreams and Visions???

1. There are no warnings in the Bible to beware of your own dreams, with the possible exception of Ecclesiastes 5:3,7, which is probably best understood as a reference to "daydreams" since all other references in the Bible to "dreams" are positive. When one verse contradicts many others, you need to seek to understand that one verse in light of the volume of references on the other side of the topic.
2. The only biblical caution concerning dreams, then, is when you are *listening to another's* dream.

They may be trying to lead you astray, to go after other gods (Jer. 14:14; 23:16,25-27,32; Ezek. 13:1,7; 12:24 Deut. 13:1-5; Jer. 27:9-11; Zec. 10:2).

Rules for Interpreting Dreams in a Group

1. Have group members keep journals beside their beds and ask God to give them dreams which they will immediately record upon awakening. Dreams shared in classtime are to be recent ones so that the dreamer knows the setting of the dream, that is, the issues on his heart when he went to bed. Also, it is best in group dream work to be working with shorter dreams rather than longer ones.
2. In a group setting, never go further in interpreting a person's dream than the dreamer is willing to go. As the meaning of the dream is being drawn out, the dreamer may suddenly realize it is speaking about something he or she is not ready to discuss openly in front of the group. The dreamer therefore always reserves the right to say, "That is as far as I want to go in interpreting this dream."

A Method for Interpreting Dreams in a Group

1. With the group leader presiding over the interaction, interpret two or three dreams using the following approach.

The Key Question Approach Leading to Heart Revelation (guided self-discovery):

- a) Write the dreamer's name on the top right corner of the blackboard so everyone can address him or her by name. Have the dreamer standing or sitting in the front of the room, available to answer questions from the group.
- b) The dreamer reads the dream aloud twice. While the dream is being read, someone writes on a blackboard the key elements and events of the dream, leaving space between each. If

no blackboard is present, each member of the group should create a list on a paper for their own reference.

- c) Ask the dreamer:
 - "What was the key feeling in the dream?"
 - "What was the key action in the dream?"
 - "In what area of your life are you experiencing these?"
 - This will give the dreamer and the group a reference point as to the setting of the dream, and what issue is likely being discussed. The answers to these questions can be listed across the top of the blackboard after the phrases "Key Feeling" and "Key Action."
 - d) Beginning with the first event/element of the dream and continuing to the last one, listeners then ask questions like the following:
 - What is the dominant trait of that person?
 - What emotion does that animal represent to you?
 - In what way are you experiencing (the event described in the dream) in your life at this time?
 - e) If the dreamer cannot come up with an answer to any of the above questions:
 - Remind him to relax and tune to flowing thoughts, rather than analytical thoughts, thus moving from his mind to his heart.
 - Have the group brainstorm ("heart storm"), offering suggestions of what the item in the dream might mean. These are listed on the board.
 - The dreamer then comes to the board and draws a line through the ones that definitely do not ring true in his heart, and circles the ones which his heart leaps to, offering any interpretation God is revealing to him.
2. Break the class into groups of four to six and have them work for two to three hours on dreams of individuals within their groups. Follow the "Rules for Interpreting Dreams in a Group" given above. Instruct the groups to use "The Key Question Ap-

proach.” If they need help, they should raise their hand to attract the attention of the classroom leader to come and work with their group.

When the seminar/classroom leader is not assisting a specific group, he should rotate from group to group making sure things are progressing well in each.

Examples of Dream Interpretation

I had two dreams on the night following the day I learned to hear God’s voice, see God’s vision, and journal (write out what God was speaking to me). The simple act of putting my journal next to my bed and asking God to speak brought me several dreams that first night.

Dream # 1

I had a new job as caretaker of a house. I was in the house going up a flight of stairs and I was riding a horse. At the top of the stairs I entered the bathroom and took out some cleaning supplies.

Interpretation

Question: “In what way do I have a new job?”

Answer: “Just today, I have begun to hear God’s voice, see vision and journal.”

Question: “In what way do I feel like a horse on the stairwell?”

Answer: “I feel extremely awkward tuning to the flow of God’s Spirit, seeing vision, and journaling. This way of living is an art I will need to practice until I become comfortable with it. Right now, I feel like a ‘bull in the china closet.’”

Question: “In what way will this path take me up a flight of stairs?”

Answer: “Hearing God’s voice, seeing God’s vision, and recording them will take me to a higher place in my walk with God.”

Question: “In what way will I be getting out some cleaning supplies?”

Answer: “Hearing God’s voice will clean up some areas of my life.”

Dream # 2 - on the same night as the above dream: I had pulled my car into a parking lot and turned off the ignition. However, the engine would not stop; it kept backfiring.

Interpretation

Question: “What am I trying to turn off that is not turning off?”

Answer: “My analytical brain, so I can tune to intuition and thus hear the voice of God.”

So the above two dreams are talking about issues taking place within me and are counseling and encouraging me, saying, “Even though I feel awkward about this new direction in my life (of hearing God’s voice, seeing vision, and journaling), if I will keep with it, it will take me to a higher place in God, and it will clean up some areas in my life. And yes, it is going to be a struggle to shut down the analytical reasoning process in my life which has ruled me and been a god in my life for many years.”

A dream by Mike Bastien: Recently I had the honor of teaching a Communion with God seminar to about 35 pastors who had come for a week of training to the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship. Toward the end of the week, one pastor, Rev. Mike Bastien, voiced some concerns that he was not getting all the information I was unloading on them at breakneck speed. I assured him that he probably wasn’t, but that it was all right since he could take the *4 Keys to Hearing God’s Voice* book and CDs and DVDs home with him to review at his leisure. However, this advice was not heard by all parts within Mike, as he e-mailed me a day or two later with a troubling dream he had had. Following are the e-mails which went back and forth between us over the next few days. Mike has given me permission to share them and his dream.

The dream as Mike sent it to me: “Here it goes: The school bus was coming to my home when I was in high school. I was running late and saw the bus coming and was running towards it and I saw my father-in-law (Fred) get on the bus and before I could get on, just before I reached it, it left. I was a bit upset that he didn’t

wait for me. I tried to look to see if it was George driving the bus and thought it was. (George and I talked once in awhile and he was the actual bus driver when I was in high school.)

“But soon after, I saw another school bus coming and knew it was going to the public school in the same town and asked the lady if I could take it and she said yes. So I got on. Don’t remember any of the ride. Next I remember talking to my father-in-law and asking him why George left me and didn’t wait. He gave me a mumbled answer which didn’t make sense and which I can’t remember at all now.

“And that was the dream. One thing that really concerns me is that my father-in-law died this past December of cancer at the age of 61.”

My first response: “I’ll be glad to offer a few questions and suggestions for you to consider.

“The symbols in the dream include:

- * school = place where we are educated and learn
- * bus = transportation to the place of learning
- * being left behind = fear of being left behind

“So the question you would ask yourself is, ‘In what sense am I being educated at this time in my life, and am I afraid I am going to be left behind?’

“I suspect the answer is that you are being educated in the area of communion with God, and that there is a part of you that is afraid that you are being left behind (i.e., not going to get it all). You actually expressed exactly that fear in class. I assume it is that fear in your heart which was expressed in your dream.

“However, God showed you in the dream that there was hope. Another bus came along and took you to school. So you do not need to fear missing some parts of the teaching the first time around. There is another way to get it. For example, reading the whole *4 Keys to Hearing God’s Voice* book; taking the three-month Communion with God course with Christian Leadership University and having me as a mentor; purchasing the videos which were made; purchasing the CDs of

me teaching the entire course; purchasing the *4 Keys to Hearing God’s Voice Teacher’s Guide*; getting a couple of spiritual counselors in your church or area who are right-brain and sharing your journaling with them and having them cover it, etc.

“Don’t be concerned that the person in your dream died a year ago. People in our dreams most often are part of ourselves. The way we discover what part is to ask, ‘What is the dominant characteristic of the person?’ Then, it is usually that part of ourselves we are dreaming about. The dream is not about you dying.”

Mike’s second letter: “Thank you, Mark, for responding. To be honest, it was not what I expected. It sounds good but I have this big question...why was my father-in-law in this dream and why was it so evident that he was in it? He must have something to do with the dream?”

My second response: “When you think of your father-in-law, Fred, what is the most dominant characteristic of him? That is your key. Once you identify that characteristic, you are then talking about that part of yourself. Your heart is drawing pictures (like Bible Pictionary - if you have ever played it), to communicate a message to you.

“Whatever part of you that Fred is representing, that part of you is OK with the message of CWG and is getting along with it and on time (as evidenced by the fact that he got on the bus OK). Some other part of you is struggling with the message of CWG, being afraid you are not getting it all.

“Any chance that Fred is a ‘heart’ kind of a guy as opposed to a ‘head’ kind of a guy?”

“My guess is that your heart is fine with the CWG message but your left-hemisphere is afraid that it hasn’t got all the pieces yet (which is true - it hasn’t). However, as I mentioned earlier, your head doesn’t need to get all the pieces in my four mornings of teaching you, because I have provided books and CDs and DVDs which you can take home and study in detail.

“My guess is that your left-hemisphere (your analytical reasoning brain) is uptight, but that your heart (as perhaps represented by an ‘easy going Fred’) is fine with the message of communion with God.

“What do you think?”

Mike’s final response: “Mark. Wow. That’s exactly how he was. Easy going. Laid back. Blessings, Mike”

Another Example of Dream Interpretation - from a co-worker: A lady who used to edit my materials and take Bible school classes from me came to me with the following dream.

In the dream, she entered her house and smelled smoke. She went upstairs looking for the fire but she couldn’t find it. Then she looked downstairs, but could not find it. She went into the kitchen and the smoke smell was stronger. She opened upper kitchen cabinets and could not find the fire. She opened the lower kitchen cabinets, flames leapt out, and she awoke.

At the time, we could not understand what the dream was saying. Two months later, she went to the doctors with an intestinal ailment which was diagnosed as inflammation of the intestines. It was a stress-related disease, and the doctor put her on medication which took care of the inflammation.

Do you see that her dream was warning us of this physical ailment two months before the doctor diagnosed it?

Her dream said, “In her house there was a fire.” Her house was the place that she lived - her body.

The fire was in the kitchen. The kitchen is the place we eat, and thus symbolized her digestive tract.

The fire was not in the upper cabinets, which would symbolize her upper digestive region, or her stomach.

It was in the lower kitchen cabinets, which would symbolize her lower digestive region - her intestines.

The dream said, “In your intestines, there is a fire,” two months before the doctor diagnosed it.

A year later the dream returned. She realized immediately that if she did not relax, the stress she was experiencing would bring another visit to the doctor’s office. She did relax and was able to offset another attack. Awesome counsel! Worth listening to, and worth acting upon. This is an example of a dream which was talking about things taking place within the individual. It was providing her with God’s counsel, instructing her of calamity to come if she did not mend her ways. WOW!