

Foundations – Dreams/Visions/Listening to God

Identity - "I am a friend of God."

I. Dreams and Visions

- Numbers 12:6 – “If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles...” (ESV)
- Job 33:14-15 – “For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds.” (ESV)
- Spoken to in dreams: Matthew 1:20, Matthew 2:12, Matthew 2:13, Matthew 2:19, Matthew 2:22
- How did Jesus speak to the people in the New Testament? Through _____.
- God doesn’t want to just give us _____ and _____; He wants us to _____ it! (Matthew 7:7)
- How to interpret dreams and visions:
 - Daniel 7:1 - _____ your dreams!
 - Daniel 10:1-3 – Pray and _____ on the Lord.
 - Some dream symbols (taken from *Understanding the Dreams You Dream* by Ira Milligan):
 - Snakes –
 - Being chased –
 - Father –
 - Impure dream –
 - Nightmare –
 - Naked dream –
 - Open bathroom –
 - Water –
 - From God or from the pizza?

II. Listening to God

- Matthew 5:8 – “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (ESV)

- Ways God can speak: dreams, visions, prophetic words, the *Bible*, prayer, & worship
- Steps to listening to God:
 1. Get rid of _____ sin and bring every thought _____ to Christ.
 2. Learn how to identify competing _____.
 3. Stay close to the _____.
- The Spirit of God _____, Satan _____.
- How soon should we expect God to speak (Jeremiah 42:4, 7)?
- When God speaks, His words will always follow the will of God (the *Bible*).

III. New Identities!

- I am a friend of God (John 15:15).

IV. Small Group Questions

- 1) Share a vivid dream you have had; if you know the interpretation, share that as well.
- 2) What are some of the ways you have heard the voice of the Lord in your life? How did you feel sure it was God speaking?
- 3) Share about one of the longest times you have had to wait on the Lord to speak.
- 4) Read Jeremiah 33:3. You are a friend of God and He has many great things to share with you. What is something you can do differently this week to help yourself hear the voice of the Lord more clearly?
- 5) What are the 20 identities we have covered so far? What does each mean for us?

Memory Verse of the Week –

Foundations – Dreams/Visions/Listening to God (Master)

Identity - "I am a friend of God."

I. Dreams and Visions

- Numbers 12:6 – “If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles...” (ESV)
- Job 33:14-15 – “For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds.” (ESV)
- Spoken to in dreams: Matthew 1:20, Matthew 2:12, Matthew 2:13, Matthew 2:19, Matthew 2:22
- How did Jesus speak to the people in the New Testament? Through parables.

Parables are stories about people or objects that symbolize deeper things and are used to teach a truth or lesson. To the average person, the stories made little sense. Even the disciples would have to ask Jesus for interpretation, but that was what Jesus wanted.

- God doesn’t want to just give us faith and knowledge; He wants us to seek it! (Matthew 7:7)

As we ask Him for wisdom and understanding, He gives them to us. In the same way that Jesus spoke to the people in parables, God spoke to Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, and many other people in the Bible through dreams. And what they all understood is that without interpretation from God, the dreams are meaningless. But, if we seek understanding, God can reveal the symbols and teach us or encourage us in powerful ways.

- How to interpret dreams and visions:
 - Daniel 7:1 - Journal your dreams!

Often times no matter how strong or vivid a dream might be, we tend to quickly forget details shortly after waking up. Writing down a dream helps us remember it more clearly and also allows us to check back later. It is important to write down the date, what symbols stood out, and especially your emotions during the dream. God tells us often throughout Scripture to “listen carefully” to what He has to say. Journaling your dreams is a way to “listen carefully.” As you look over the symbols, try and see if there are any connections.

- Daniel 10:1-3 – Pray and wait on the Lord.

Sometimes we will receive an answer relatively quickly, other times it will take a long time before we are able to understand clearly. Joseph had to wait 13 years before his dreams were fulfilled. God is not toying with us when He makes us wait. Instead He is testing our desire to know Him and to receive revelation. He is giving us an invitation to really seek Him and to desire His treasures more than anything else.

- Some dream symbols (taken from *Understanding the Dreams You Dream* by Ira Milligan):

(Allow the group to guess for each symbol and encourage them to think it through. These symbols depend on the setting of the dream and also on the person's circumstances.)

- Snakes –

Curse, demon, deception, threat, danger, hatred, slander, critical spirit, witchcraft; Fangs = Evil intent, danger; Rattles = Words; threats; warning; alarm... Genesis 3:14, Psalm 140:3, Luke 10:18-19

- Being chased –

Likely means there is a curse on the person (that they can't escape until its dealt with).

- Father –

Authority: God, author, originator, source, inheritance, tradition, custom, Satan, natural father... Malachi 2:10, John 8:44

- Impure dream –

Spirit of lust: warning to cleanse the mind and pursue holiness

- Nightmare –

Spirit of fear: warning to receive counsel and to grow stronger in identity in Christ

For both impure dreams and nightmares, sometimes they are simply attacks from the Enemy to distract us. After waking up from such dreams we need to immediately confess any sin we may have committed in the dream (including fearing the enemy) and should pray the blood of Jesus over us. Satan wants us to dwell on our failures or to think about him. James 4:7 says, "[...] Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (ESV) If these dreams repeat, it is wise to find a trusted brother or sister in Christ to share with and pray with.

- Naked dream –

Uncovered or Flesh: Not under grace (Galatians 5:4), impure, ashamed, stubborn, temptation, lust, exhibitionism, innocence, open (revealed), truth, honest, nature... Revelation 3:17, Isaiah 61:10, Genesis 2:25

Having repetitive dreams of being naked in public might mean that you are not clothed in God's grace. You are like Adam and Eve when they saw they were naked in the garden and tried to clothe themselves. Despite their attempts to clothe themselves, they still knew they were naked and it wasn't until God clothed them that their shame went away. When we make ourselves justified with God by our works, the truth is that we are naked before Him. Our works cannot cover our shame and make us righteous before God. The only way for us to be accepted is to be clothed by His grace. It is by grace we have been saved.

- Open bathroom –

A bathroom symbolizes desire or cleansing: prayer of repentance, confession of offenses or sins to another person, passion, strong lust. A dream of using a bathroom in public usually means the need to confess sins before people (preferably a prayer team or small group of church leaders). Usually God is encouraging the dreamer to open up and confess.

- Water –

Spirit: Spirit of God, spirit of man or the spirit of the enemy, unstable; polluted water = iniquity, man ways; troubled water = trouble, worry; flood = depression, overwhelm, temptation; swimming = Spiritual, serving God, worshiping, operating in gifts of the Spirit, prophesying

Sample Dream: I was in a room and there was a huge cockroach, really disgusting. I tried killing it, but it just wouldn't die. I finally found a big book, which seemed like my Korean-English *Bible*, (it's like a brick), and I set it on the cockroach, trapping it underneath. Later I went to another room and found it filled with cockroaches. It was disgusting. So I picked up a big water hose that just happened to be right next to me and I sprayed all the cockroaches into a corner where a drain was and washed them all out.

What do you think cockroaches symbolize? One word would be, "Invasion." Another word would be, "Unclean." I sensed that the cockroaches represented evil trying to invade. What did I fight the cockroaches with? The *Bible* and the water. And what does the *Bible* represent? The truth. What does water represent? God calls the Holy Spirit the, "Living Water." So I fought the invasion with the spirit and the truth. John 4:24 says, "God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (ESV)

At the time of the dream I sensed it was a warning for the church to be on our guard against a spiritual attack. I sensed that the church needed to find balance in the Word and in the Spirit in order to overcome. Interestingly, just before I began to share the dream during a subsequent prayer meeting, one of the prayer team members had a vision of a great number of cockroaches coming over a hill.

- From God or from the pizza?

Not all dreams are from God. Some come from our own thoughts. Some are simply random. Journaling the dreams, writing out the symbols, and praying over them will help you know whether the dream is from God or not. If none of the symbols seem to match up and you don't feel any leads after praying and reflecting on the dream, then the dream may have just been "junk mail." It is still wise to keep the journal entry of the dream. In the future the dream may suddenly make sense.

II. Listening to God

- Matthew 5:8 – "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (ESV)
- Ways God can speak: dreams, visions, prophetic words, the *Bible*, prayer, & worship

(Ask the group how God can speak in each of these ways; answers should be relatively obvious. As for God speaking in worship, often during praise the Spirit's presence can grow thick and it can become easier to hear God's voice, whether audibly or simply through the lyrics of the songs.)

- Steps to listening to God (taken from Christian Lee's Sermon – "Voice of the Lord):

1. Get rid of **unconfessed** sin and bring every thought **captive** to Christ.

Guilt, shame, fear, a dirty mind, and a disobedient lifestyle will all keep us from hearing the voice of the Lord clearly. The longer we allow sin in our life, the more it rots and clouds our mind. The sooner we confess our sin, the quicker it will leave our mind and we can move on. If we see

something or think of something that is impure, we need to confess it and then focus on the Lord. The more we confess to God, the more grace we receive. The more grace we receive, the more we know God's love. The more we know God's love, the more we will know His voice.

2. Learn how to identify competing voices.

The three competing voices are: Man, Satan, and Self.

Friends, relatives, and other people in our lives will often share their opinions. Sometimes their opinions can shape your thoughts. If your parents always told you to study and that education is most important, then when you pray about your future you might immediately think of something to do with studying. While the opinions and encouragements of friends and relatives should be considered, we cannot let them shape who we are.

Satan lies, tempts, doubts, condemns, and brings fear and anger. His voice is usually either negative or alluring. Nearly every time Satan speaks it will be to encourage us to do or feel something that lacks love such as to pity ourselves, to act selfishly, to yell at someone, or to ignore others.

Our own self will have its own voice. It will voice your own desires. Usually your desires are to satisfy yourself and are rooted in selfishness. We need to take every thought captive to Christ. We cannot continually entertain selfish thoughts, or else we will become selfish people.

3. Stay close to the Shepherd.

The more you talk with someone, the more you recognize his voice. The more you spend time with someone, the more you know his character. In order for us to really know the voice of the Lord we must spend time with Him, whether through reading the Word, praying, praising, fasting, or simply listening. God is often speaking to us, but we are so busy and distracted that we never hear what He is saying. However, the more we spend time with Him, the better able we are to listen to Him and recognize His voice.

- The Spirit of God leads, Satan pushes.

We are always called to FOLLOW God, not go ahead of Him. Usually God takes His time in speaking and wants us to pray and wait on Him. Satan will tempt us to act rashly and make us feel like we must make a decision right away, and that if we don't then we aren't truly strong Christians. But all throughout the *Bible* God instructs us to wait on Him. He will lead us in His time (just as He did to the Israelites in the wilderness).

- How soon should we expect God to speak (Jeremiah 42:4, 7)?

For even great prophets like Jeremiah and Daniel, they had to wait on the Lord. Sometimes God will speak shortly after our prayer, but often God will wait. Why does He wait? He wants us to earnestly seek Him. He wants us to wait so that when we finally get the answer we will be confident in it. He wants us to wait so that we will rely on Him and trust Him to meet our needs.

- When God speaks, His words will always follow the will of God (the *Bible*).

God will not tell us to do something that goes against His written Word. His Word (the *Bible*) is eternal and unchanging, so God's spoken word can never go against it.

III. New Identities!

- I am a friend of God (John 15:15).

By being a friend of God we have a special relationship with Him that enables us to know the things on His heart. God trusts in us. He confides in us. Just as God spoke to Abraham and to Moses before He did things, so will He speak to us. We can be sure that God loves us and enjoys being with us. To serve Him should never be a burden but a joy. Repeat after me, "I am a friend of God!"

IV. Small Group Questions

- 1) Share a vivid dream you have had; if you know the interpretation, share that as well.
- 2) What are some of the ways you have heard the voice of the Lord in your life? How did you feel sure it was God speaking?
- 3) Share about one of the longest times you have had to wait on the Lord to speak.
- 4) Read Jeremiah 33:3. You are a friend of God and He has many great things to share with you. What is something you can do differently this week to help yourself hear the voice of the Lord more clearly?
- 5) What are the 20 identities we have covered so far? What does each mean for us?

Memory Verse of the Week – John 15:15

Bibliography

Milligan, Ira. Understanding the Dreams You Dream. Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House. 1997.