

How Should Christians Respond to Dreams?

The Bible tells us that God has used dreams, and visions, as a way to communicate to people. For example, in Joel 2:28 a prophecy is given which says, *"It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."* Here, the statement "dream dreams" means that, while asleep, they will have dreams of a prophetic nature; dreams that should be considered due to their providing caution or direction from the Lord. The statement, "see visions" means that, while awake, they will see something that is specifically from the Lord.

Today, stories of spiritual revival are being told to come out of the middle east, in countries that are closed to Christianity. It seems many are testifying that they have come to faith in Jesus Christ and that the Lord reached them in their dreams. There's no doubt that God can use dreams and visions to communicate when He wants to. However, these things can be very subjective. When we have access to the Bible, then God's Word should always be the first place that we go when wanting to understand His direction for our lives.

A Caution About Interpreting Your Dreams

1. Dreams can deliver false messages.

- Zechariah 10:2, ***"For the teraphim (household idols) speak iniquity, and the diviners see lying visions and tell false dreams, they comfort in vain. Therefore, the people wander like sheep, they are afflicted, because there is no shepherd."***
- The point – if you have an adulterous dream, it doesn't mean you're an unfaithful spouse. If you have a dream that someone or something else is God, that other thing isn't god...dreams can & do mislead.

2. Dreams can test us.

Deuteronomy 13:1–3, ***"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.'"***

- God has used false prophets and lying dreams, even accompanied by supernatural signs and wonders, to test His people.
- The Point – if dreams are distressing you, it's not wrong to say, *"Dreams, Satan, brain, hormones, whatever you are, I won't be sucked in by this. I see how my faith is being tested here."*

3. Dreams can warn us.

Job 33:14–18, ***"Indeed God speaks once, or twice, yet no one notices it. In a dream, a vision of the night, when sound sleep falls on men, while they slumber in their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may turn man aside from his conduct, and keep man from pride; He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from passing over into Sheol."***

- God really does use dreams to warning us, to humble our pride, and keep us back from sin.
- Consider how some illicit dreams feature consequences which we want to avoid in real life.
- This takes us back to the idea that dreams test us; will the dreams effect cause us to rethink choices?

“Can you sin in your sleep/dreams?”

Here are some considerations, if you’re wrestling with this question.

1. Sin is an act of the will

- Sin of commission – doing what is forbidden. Sin of omission – failing to do that which is required.
- Committing murder or fornication in a dream, is not committing the sins of murder or fornication.
- Isaiah 29:8, ***“a hungry person dreams of eating, but awakens hungry still; as when a thirsty person dreams of drinking, but awakens faint and thirsty still.”***
- If sleeping minds execute wicked deeds, we aren’t actually doing them. Our will is not engaged.

2. Dreams can disclose sinful desires that abide in our hearts.

- Dreams can be oriented around our unique fears or fantasies.
- If you fantasizing about sleeping with your secretary and find you’re dreaming about that, there’s a pattern! Likewise, we can dream about what we watched or thought about before going to bed.
- Matthew 15:19, ***“For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”***
 - If sin is being exposed in your dreams, it may be a heart condition that needs addressing.
 - If you often having sin-filled dreams, treat them as you would any other intrusive sinful thought. Ask God to help you hate what he hates and love what he loves.

3. Don’t feed sinful dreams.

- If you harbor bitterness or lust in your heart, you shouldn’t be surprised to have sinful dreams.
- Galatians 6:8, ***“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption.”***
- Purge your movie and TV habits of graphic and thematic issues that may fill your dreams.

4. Focus your mind before you sleep.

- Psalm 4:4-8, ***“Tremble, and do not sin; meditate in your heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and trust in the LORD. Many are saying, “Who will show us any good?” Lift up the light of Your countenance upon us, O LORD! You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound. In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.”***

5. Keep sound wisdom and discretion.

Proverbs 3:21-24, ***“My son, let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and discretion, so they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck. Then you will walk in your way securely and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.”***

6. Don’t act upon sinful dreams.

- Regardless of what you dream, you control how you respond when you awake.
 - If lustful upon awaking, submit to the Spirit to help you resist acting upon that lust.
 - Galatians 5:16-17, ***“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”***
 - 2 Corinthians 10:5, ***“take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”***