

TO DREAM GOD'S POSSIBLE DREAM

ACTS 2:17-18 (Quoting Joel 2:28-32) states: "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy."

The main point of this prophesy from the OT is that during the Messianic Age, the gift of the Spirit is to be given to all believers, male and female, young and old, and not just to a few individuals. In keeping with this OT view, the writer of the book of Acts, and the Apostles all believed that all Christians receive the Holy Spirit, rather than just a few emotional extremists who speak in some ecstatic speech and claim some special unction from the Spirit.

But the main thrust of my message today is not concerning the gifts of the Spirit, or the sharing of these gifts with all Christians, regardless of sex or age, but I would like to call your particular attention to the statement about visions and dreams in connection with Christian service: "your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

God has a vision for his churches today.
Do you share in God's vision for your church?
God has his own dream for his churches today.
Do you share in God's dream for his church here?

At the outset, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Robert Dale and his book To Dream Again for many of my insights in this subject.

I. God Has a Great Dream for each one of his churches.

A. It is not an impossible Dream.

The experience of hearing and seeing Jose Ferrer and the cast in San Francisco performing Man of La Mancha back in the early '70s.

When Don Quixote sang about dreaming "the impossible dream" people thought he was crazy. But when you see the drama, and understand the great poetry, and are moved by the beautiful music, you wonder if it's not the other people in the world who are crazy, and perhaps Don Quixote is the only sane person around. He alone seemed to understand the renewing power of a great dream.

B. Jesus had a dream; it was of what he called "The Kingdom of God." He was consumed by that dream. He totally believed in it. To him it was not an impossible dream.

C. With God nothing is impossible.
If you dare to dream again a great dream for your church, it will come to pass.
If you base your dream on the eternal principles of the Kingdom of God, and on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it will come to pass.

If you make your objectives, and your church's objectives, the same as the redeeming objectives nearest to the heart of our Heavenly Father, your dream will come to pass.

If you together in this church so dream and plan and organize to give structure to the church's programs and activities, and give the proper priorities to the church budget, calendar, and ministries, then your dream (and God's) will come to pass.

It is not an impossible dream, but a totally possible one and almost certain to be realized.

II. Every Church Must Keep on Dreaming God's Dream after him.

A. This is the only way to interrupt the natural cycle of life for any person or organization:

Birth
Growth
Maturity
Decline
Death

B. Sometime during the maturity phase, when former dreams are being realized, unless the congregation takes steps to open itself to revitalization, a plateau occurs and decline begins. People start to show nostalgia for "the good old days," and doubt develops.

If they don't take some drastic action quickly, people will become alienated and drop out in total disillusionment. They will be well on the slippery downhill slide toward organizational death, unless they dream again. This is the way Robbert Dale expresses it, and I believe he is exactly right.

C. Churches must constantly open themselves to revitalization. It goes without saying that churches must have the spiritual blessing from God in order to succeed, but in addition to this, as far as the human side of the situation is concerned, they must have a dream which is their own, not merely that of the founders of another generation. They must dream again their own dream, expressed in their own words, fortified with their own convictions, and implemented with their own energy and commitment.

1. They need to decide again who they are, what they believe, and how they work together best.

2. They must develop a plan or plans.

Declining churches seldom seriously plan anything; they spend most of their time solving problems.

They don't act; they react.

They don't minister; they must be ministered to.

III. How a Congregation goes about Dreaming Again.

A. Write down and share together your vision, dreams, objectives, and goals for this church for the next year and for the next five years.

B. Learn about the Founding Dreams of this church.

1. What was the original dream of this congregation when it was established?

2. How is this originating dream woven into the history and current behavior patterns of this congregation?

3. What was the background of those who organized this church? Rural? Urban? Open or closed to cultural variety?

4. Do you believe that there are life scripts which individuals and organizations follow? What is the script this church is following? Does it need to be changed? If so, how?

5. What can we learn from our church's constitution and bylaws, that helps us to understand their early dream of the Kingdom of God for them?

C. What can we learn from the so-called "Golden Years" of the church?

D. Where are we right now in this church?

1. What are our priorities?

2. How is our church different from its founding dream?

3. What is the prevailing tone or attitude in our church now? -- Fellowship and love?

-- Guilt, fear, or anger?

-- Pride, division, suspicion?

-- Selfishness, or unselfish service without caring who gets the credit?

-- Burning desire to Dream or content to continue Drifting?

E. Insist that church objectives and goals are not merely generalizations, but are sharply defined and publicly and clearly stated.

F. See to it that worthwhile and generally accepted objectives and goals are put into a definite plan and are supported with the necessary resources and faithfully carried out.

CONCLUSION

It is so important to have dreams and to have the right dreams.

Arthur Miller's drama Death of a Salesman shows the cost of a wrong dream. Willie Loman was a born craftsman; he could have become a skilled cabinetmaker. His gifted hands had fashioned the front stoop of his house. But Willie tried instead to become a supersalesman. When his sales dropped, he snapped under the strain and killed himself. Biff, Willie's son, stood by his father's grave and said, "There's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made. He had the wrong dreams. All, all wrong."

When you dream God's dreams after him, and make those dreams your dreams, you have the right dreams. all, all right.

May, H.A. B.C. - 11-2-87, D53 "DREAM"