

A PARENTS' GUIDE TO

UNDERSTANDING

Children's
DREAMS *•AND•*
NIGHTMARES

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RECIE SAUNDERS



WHITAKER
HOUSE

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A PARENTS' GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

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Foreword

Is there a dreamer in your house? Do you draw a blank when your children wake up with a dream and start asking questions? Some might say dreams are simply nighttime fairy tales. But have you ever considered there might be a message to uncover? This book will help you learn how to respond with confidence when the children in your care share dreams or other spiritual experiences with you.

During his years in ministry, my husband, John Paul Jackson, was known for his ability to understand dreams and visions. The foundational courses he authored came from over thirty years of studying the metaphorical language in the Bible, and his expertise in this area made him known as “the dream guy” in some circles.

Throughout this book, Recie, whom I’ve known for many years, shares his own experience, research, and insight into the meaning of dreams, while incorporating some of John Paul’s

teachings related to this significant part of the spiritual realm. Recie addresses dreams and other spiritual encounters children have in a thoughtful, age-appropriate way, helping you and the children in your life embrace dreams with more ease. This book presents dreams like pages in a book, full of adventure and waiting to be read, but infinitely more real than fairy tales. Recie reminds us that children, too, receive dreams from God, and are ripe for spiritual encounters through innocent hearts and childlike faith.

As a former teacher, daycare-center owner, and homeschool parent, how I wish a book like this had been available for parents years earlier! For me, early childhood did not include conversations about God, but that didn't stop my sleep time from coming alive. Dreams were a routine occurrence, but without guidance and training, I had no way to understand what I saw. This informative book prepares you to educate your children about dreams and spiritual experiences from a godly perspective.

Children are influenced by countless voices and opinions outside the home—bombarded by a worldview shaped by media and technology. Could some of your children's dreams actually be influenced by God? If so, wouldn't it only make sense to process and discuss these significant encounters with your child in the privacy and safety of your own home? With this book, children, while at the height of curiosity and learning, can discover the purpose of dreams from a Bible-based view that is untouched by mainstream education or church curriculums.

If you've pondered or asked yourself any of these questions, you'll want to read this book:

- ✦ Do the scenes that play out while children sleep really have special meaning?
- ✦ Can children of all ages, cultures, and religions have significant dreams?
- ✦ Should children be encouraged to talk about their dreams and spiritual experiences?

- ✦ How can parents welcome the questions and overcome the fears that children have about dreams?
- ✦ Can children experience God's power in a dream that transforms their life and destiny?
- ✦ Does God give dreams to guide children, and influence parents' decisions concerning the protection of their child?

Children never tire of asking “why?” That question usually triggers an influx of information and endless opinions, but is there a more *natural* way to connect children with their Creator? Instead of endlessly grasping for answers, could we actually cut through some of the sensory and informational overload our children experience during their formative years by just stopping and listening to a dream they had the night before?

This book will help you value dreams—and maybe set the stage for a child's receptivity to God's truths. Find out how to open another window of opportunity for children to understand the ways of God—whose voice and presence is far superior and more valuable than any other they will encounter. And isn't that what we desire for everybody, at every age? A treasured find at any stage of life!

Are you open to sharing in your child's excitement, expecting something powerful to come from a dream? You can't become a child again, but this book gives examples of how to respond to a child about the “dream world” they experience while sleeping.

You'll also learn:

- ✦ How to enhance children's spiritual eyes and ears by walking through and exploring the dream with them.
- ✦ How to understand the meaning behind dreams, and give your children a handy and valuable spiritual tool they can carry with them into adulthood.
- ✦ How to be better prepared to explain spiritual experiences to children in a relevant and positive manner.

- ✦ How to introduce them to the symbolic picture language that captures their attention while asleep.
- ✦ How to engage your sons and daughters in conversation about spiritual matters, and prepare them to grasp dream interpretation as they mature.
- ✦ How to understand dreams that might boost their spiritual confidence, and be used to help others.

Unlike other phases of childhood, dreaming is something you never outgrow. No law or protest can stop anyone from having a dream. Children can continue to grow in the application of dream interpretation, and this book will help make this lifelong spiritual tool a natural part of your children's life—a tool that doesn't require a warranty, doesn't rust, and doesn't become antiquated and useless. Be sure to take advantage of Recie's training and experience with dreams and dreamers as you consider how dreams can be used to reveal the ways of God to you and your family. Who better than a child's Creator to fill their eyes, ears, and senses with the wonder of dreams!

—Diane Jackson

Diane Jackson is the lifelong wife of John Paul Jackson, founder of Streams Ministries and creator of the TV program Dreams & Mysteries, which still airs on the Daystar TV Network. Diane, along with her active and vivid dream life, resides in Fort Worth, Texas.



Introduction

In the year 2000, I took John Paul Jackson's Understanding Dreams and Visions class, because the topic fascinated me. At that time, I was not a dreamer and could not interpret dreams at all; in fact, I could only remember three dreams in my lifetime. After taking the class, I felt wounded, and I wondered, *How come the church never taught me that God uses dreams and visions as one way to communicate to mankind?*

After repenting for my heart issue regarding the church, I started reading, listening to, and devouring Bible passages about dreams, visions, and strange events. A few years later, John Paul hired me at Streams Ministries International, which he founded, to lead the Dream Team outreaches. I took teams of interpreters to the streets to evangelize and interpret people's dreams. I was blessed to travel around the world, teaching and speaking on the Spirit realm. You might say I had a dream job.

On the streets, we told people we were practicing our dream interpretation skills and asked them if they had any dreams they needed help understanding. We soon discovered how little people know about the reality of how God talks to us in dreams.

On one outreach event, Scott, a team member, approached a young woman in her early twenties and her friend and asked them if they had any dreams they'd like interpreted. One of the women shared with him this distressing story:

"When I was a little girl my father left me and my mother. I often cried myself to sleep; during these many nights throughout the year, I had the same dream over and over. In the dream I would fly very high into the big, blue sky, and as I was flying, I saw a rainbow, so I would fly over and above the rainbow and land at the door of this castle.

"I would walk inside, onto a beautiful tile floor. As I continued walking, I would see a man sitting in a big chair. So I would climb up onto the chair and into his lap. He would sing to me a song that gave me comfort while wiping away all of my tears. This dream continued for many years, but as I got older it stopped.

"What do you think it means?" she asked Scott.

"What did the man look like?" he replied.

"Oh, I was not allowed to look at his face."

"Did you know his name?" he asked.

"I called him Kingie."

Scott smiled and asked, "Do you know a king that lives above the rainbow in a castle?"

Tears began to fall from her face. "Do you think it was Him?"

"I know it was Him." Scott went on to share with the two ladies about the Lord's fatherly love, the first step in their salvation process.

This dream seems like it would be simple for the woman to interpret on her own, but it wasn't. I've heard hundreds of such stories of people having dreams or visions involving the presence of God, who is wanting them to know Him in a very personal way. Unfortunately, because of our belief system, we often miss or do not believe that God would want to speak to us as His children in any form, let alone in dreams.

Our gifted generation is designed for the supernatural; they are created for kingdom activity and kingdom purposes. So what's stopping them? It might be us. We, meaning the church as a whole, have not sought to understand the very God-encounters that are a part of our heritage. We are often uneducated, unaware, and unprepared to relate to a super-spiritual generation. Regardless of what we think, children *are* dreaming spiritual dreams—they are having visions and supernatural experiences that neither they, their parents, nor their youth ministers understand. I know this is true because I hear the same questions and concerns everywhere I teach:

- ✦ Why does my child have nightmares and how can I help them?
- ✦ What is real and what is just my child's imagination?
- ✦ Are dreams really from God?
- ✦ What is the difference between dreams and visions?
- ✦ Did my child really see Jesus, or was it an angel or maybe a demon?
- ✦ How do I help my child benefit from their dreams and visions?

It is my hope that this book will answer these questions and serve as a guide to understanding dreams and visions so that parents and those who mentor youth can encourage and facilitate these experiences in the children whom God has entrusted to their care.

Moreover, after reading the real-life stories and advice in this dream guide, you will understand dreams and visions from a biblical foundation—not only to help your own spiritual growth but, more importantly, to help your children develop their gifts and understand the goodness of God that is being manifested through their dreams and visions. Without this understanding, you may easily and unintentionally inhibit their relationship with God and prevent their gifts from being recognized, let alone developed and used. I know this because I have been there, as you will see.



Who Wants Kids, Anyway?

We're never gonna have kids," couples tell me. When I ask why not, I hear the same response: "This world is so dark and dangerous. It's not like it was when I was growing up. Back then, you could play outside and not worry about someone kidnapping you or killing you." They conclude, "I don't want to bring kids into a world like this."

I understand their concern. Our culturally-hip media blasts children with the message that every destructive behavior imaginable is tolerable: drugs, alcohol, pornography, witchcraft, you name it. Nothing is sacred. No one is spared. Our kids are at risk from the moment they emerge from the womb, and even before. Since America is no longer a Christian nation, we, as Christians, seem to have lost our collective voice. We feel helpless, benched in the game of life, only able to watch as the world spins out of control.

Yet, even in the midst of this spiritual and moral chaos, Christians should not be afraid to have kids! I respond to Christians around the globe by asking this: "What if Moses's mother or Jesus' mother had thought the same thing?" I would argue that at the time they came into this world, the world was a very dark place—in fact, it was probably even worse then than it is now.

THE BLESSING OF CHILDREN

In Moses's day, the hatred that the Egyptians and the king of Egypt had for the Hebrews was barbaric and inhumane. The Hebrews were worked to exhaustion as slaves, and the Egyptians even tried to stop them from multiplying by throwing all newborns into the Nile. The king gave an edict to the midwives to kill all newborn males:

Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you serve as midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter, she shall live."
(Exodus 1:15–16)

This sounds very similar to a story in the New Testament. When Jesus was still a baby, Herod tried to find and kill Him by commanding the murder of every boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (See Matthew 2:16.) It was a slaughter. Having a baby during Jesus' time in Bethlehem would have been far more dangerous than having one today in America!

The reality is that some of the most influential people were born in of the darkest circumstances. On the news, we see women speak before Congress who survived their planned abortion—a terribly traumatic experience to be born out of, yet they are making a difference for future generations. Helen Keller was born deaf, blind, and dumb at a time when people with disabilities were institutionalized. Yet she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree and

became an author and political activist, inspiring millions to overcome their darkness—literally and figuratively.

When hearing about babies who defied the odds of an abortion or disability and are growing healthy and strong, I often say to myself, *I want to see where that child is twenty years from now and see the good that person is doing for others.* And quite often, twenty years later, they are doing just that.

So I ask the would-be parents who are turning down a chance to have children, “What if God wants to give you a Moses or someone who would grow up to find a cure for cancer—and you are saying to Him, ‘No’?”

The usual response is silence.

Let’s not make the same mistake that King Hezekiah did. In God’s valuation, Hezekiah was set above all the other kings in the history of Israel. This means his obedience was even more radical and more pleasing to God than David’s obedience. (See 2 Kings 18:5–6.) That’s an astounding compliment! But one thing he lacked—he had no passion for the generations that would follow him.

When the prophet Isaiah spoke to Hezekiah in Isaiah 38 of the king’s impending death, Hezekiah wept and pleaded with God until He reversed His decree and gave Hezekiah fifteen more years of life.

But when Isaiah later brought Hezekiah a message of destruction about many of his offspring, the king couldn’t be bothered. Not one single tear, not a whispered prayer, not an iota of effort invested in the securing of the well-being of subsequent generations of his own family line. He had a total disregard for the future generations, so long as he himself died in peace. (See 2 Kings 20:16–19.)

THE JOEL ARMY

Today, the same mind-set is rampant. Instead of treasuring the awesome responsibility to raise up godly citizens in heaven and

earth for future generations, couples are postponing childbearing until their careers are well-established. When children *are* conceived, they are shuffled off to childcare because high income in the present is more desirable than developing a spiritual heritage for the next generation. Moms use TV and handheld devices to entertain their children hour after hour, because it is easier than personally nurturing their minds and spirits. Dads accept promotions, knowing that the hours and the travel schedule will be hard on the family. Or, even more frequently, dads come home from work more focused on relaxing for the evening and watching the game on TV than on nurturing the next generation.

As children grow older, parents give in and allow their kids to do unwholesome things that the parents do not approve of, simply because the parents would rather have short-term peace than vigilantly hold the line against the pressures of an evil society. The anger and the persistent whining of their self-absorbed children transcend the parents' commitment to train up the next generation.

As a result, when we turn on the television, walk the streets of our cities, or speak with the young people in our churches, we soon realize that the young generation is in crisis. They are searching for truth, bound by sin, and growing up in troubled homes. Violence, homosexuality, drugs, depression, suicide, and much more plague their hearts and souls with a hopelessness and despair.

Who will speak true life into the next generation—so hungry for true authenticity and for true spirituality?

The church on the corner tries to do so, but they fail miserably. Why? Because they approach the problem legalistically—through a “do” or “don’t do” mentality, ignoring the inward transformation that must come before any outward change. The legalistic mentality results in a religious spirit that focuses on correct behavior instead of honest belief. My daughter and sons actually get physically sick when confronted with a religious spirit—it turns their

stomach. I believe most youth have similar reactions. They don't have the vocabulary to explain why this is so; they just know they don't like "religion."

And it's not "religion" that they need. This next generation is created to do great things for God, to restore the testimony of His great name back on the earth, and to usher in the end-time harvest. They don't realize it but they are the Joel army:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. (Joel 2:28–29)

They are a spiritually-minded generation that believes God lives *outside* the box, but when they go to church all they see is God *inside* a box. They are a generation that wants to see God move in a powerful way and wants to personally encounter Him, but when they go to church all they see instead are programs and half-hearted believers who take no risks.

It is a difficult time to be sure. A pessimist might even say that this is a generation doomed before it begins. And yet, in spite of all of that, I would argue that this is a critical time. I believe we live in a time of incredible opportunity. It is precisely the intense opposition of the enemy against this generation that gives me hope and brings me to the conclusion that the greater the attack, the greater the anointing. Judging by the advancing forces of darkness directed at our young people, the light intended to shine through them must be incredibly brilliant.

NOT THE FIRST TIME

And it won't be the first time that the Lord has used children to accomplish His supernatural agenda. It's helpful to remember that throughout church history, children have had remarkably

prophetic experiences—and they were much more common than we think. By “prophetic,” I mean the ability to communicate with God through whatever means God chooses to use.

JOAN OF ARC

One of the earliest and most well-known accounts of children functioning prophetically is that of Joan of Arc, the famed teenage liberator of France. At age thirteen she claimed to have angelic visitations from Michael the archangel. In fact, it was in part her steadfast witness about these heavenly encounters that eventually led to her martyrdom at the hands of those who were not open to the power that was manifesting through this incredible young woman.

JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley (1703–1791), the great revivalist, wrote extensively on the need to keep children in order. He also wrote about children experiencing the conviction of the Holy Spirit in his meetings. For instance, he wrote this account about a meeting where he preached on 2 Timothy 3:5, “*Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*” (KJV):

May 30, 1759: The power of religion began to be spoke of, the presense of God really filled the place. And while poor sinners felt the sentence of death in their souls, what sounds of distress did I hear! The greatest number of them who cried or fell were men; but some women, and several children, felt the power of the same almighty Spirit, and seemed just sinking into hell.¹

A year before, he wrote again of children encountering the awesome presence of God:

1. Daniel Jennings, *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley* (Sean Multimedia, 2012), 92–93, <http://www.danielrjennings.org/tsoojw2.pdf>.

July 30, 1758: I began meeting the children in the afternoon.... I had not spoken long on our natural state before many of them were in tears, and five or six so affected that they could not refrain from crying aloud to God. When I began to pray, their cries increased, so that my voice was soon lost.²

JONATHAN EDWARDS

Like Wesley, Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) was one of the great revivalists in America’s history—maybe most famous for his impassioned sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” In recording some of the events he witnessed, Edwards wrote,

Very many little children have been remarkably enlightened, and their hearts wonderfully affected and enlarged, and their mouths opened, expressing themselves in a manner far beyond their years, and to the just astonishment of those which have heard them.³

HAROLD ARMSTRONG BAKER

Harold Armstrong (H. A.) Baker (1881–1971) wrote of a revival among orphaned beggar boys at the Adullam Rescue Mission that he and his wife started for street children in Yunnan Province, China:

The morning prayer meeting was lasting longer than usual. The older children left the room one by one to begin their studies in the school-room, while a few of the smaller boys remained on their knees, praying earnestly. The Lord was near; we all felt the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Some who had gone out returned to the room.

2. (WJW2:11) Supernatural Occurrences, 97.

3. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 1585, [http:// www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.pdf](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.pdf).

Such a mighty conviction of sin—a thing for which we had prayed so long—came to all, so much so that with tears streaming from their eyes and arms uplifted they cried out to the Lord for the forgiveness of their sins, which now seemed so black. One after another went down under the mighty power of the Holy Spirit until more than twenty were prostrate on the floor....

Eventually an agonized cry went up, beyond anything I had ever heard or imagined, as in visions the children saw the horrors of hell, the anguish of lost souls, and the indescribable evil power of the devil and his angels. Many witnessed themselves bound and dragged to the very brink of hell. Condemnation for sins and the power of the devil over them became a terrorizing reality. But freedom from this evil power through the grace of the Lord Jesus was just as real. When they experienced this liberating power from the clutches of the evil one, salvation was made as real as condemnation had been. Great joy, laughter, and peace resulted from the knowledge of what they had been saved from. This was a realization I am sure they would never be able to forget.⁴

ROBERTS LIARDON

Roberts Liardon wrote a powerful book about his experience with Jesus as an eight-year-old boy titled *I Saw Heaven*. Today, he has a worldwide ministry helping people grow into a deeply spiritual and real relationship with Jesus. In his introduction, Roberts stresses the importance of dreams and visions in our time:

I believe that as time moves toward the return of Jesus, we will see more and more dreams, visions, and other works of the Holy Spirit. It will become even more important

4. H. A. Baker, *Visions Beyond the Veil*, 2nd ed. (New Kensington: Whitaker House, 2006), 23–26.

to know God's Word concerning these supernatural manifestations as well as have the discernment by the Holy Spirit as to what is truly of God.⁵

WINGS TO FLY

These are only a handful of publicized accounts of children expressing their prophetic gift over the ages. In this age, we as parents and youth leaders have a choice: we can sit by as a spectators, watching our lives go by, or we can seize the moment and fulfill one of our primary purposes as parents—to become the spiritual beacons God is calling us to be and teach our children to be the same.

We are not helpless. Our Father always has a plan. If we are willing, He will use us to give our children wings to fly, wings that will carry them with the Spirit of God into their appointed destiny as one of the greatest generations ever born.

5. Roberts Liardon, *I Saw Heaven* (Ada, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 1987), 4.