

GENESIS 37 DREAMS AND DREAMERS

Dreams: we need our dreams, our hopes, our aspirations, and our ambitions! They are part of being human. But “I’ve nothing left to dream for!” is a sadness that many people feel; their dreams have been disappointed, have come to nothing; or they were prevented from having dreams in the first place because they were told it was stupid; we were not allowed to follow our dreams because someone else’s ideas and plans were forced onto us. We need our dreams!

Chomno has a dream. Our friend in Cambodia has a dream that one day someone will rise to power in Cambodia who has been nurtured through the Cambodian Hope Organization, by education at their school and then at the Christian university that Chomno would love to establish, graduating to leadership in the country. In a country where leadership is corrupt, the dream of having someone in power with Christian values and who loves Jesus is Chomno’s great dream. He has fulfilled so many of his dreams, who is to say he won’t fulfil this one too! During our 2010 visit to Cambodia we met a little boy whose dream was to be a rocket-scientist and that was hard to imagine happening; how could this be? But the only thing lacking was opportunity and CHO’s education programme is all about giving children and young people the opportunity to fulfil their dreams.

What is your dream for yourself? Only you know answer to that question, but these dreams matter. Young people have their dreams for the future, about work, about relationships, about life. We think that when we’re older that’s gone; why? I met someone a few years ago who was ill and has since died, but she had three or four dreams that she wanted to fulfil before she died, experiences she really wanted to enjoy. All of her dreams were fulfilled; she enjoyed all of them. It is not always like that and it can be tough to see people with dreams having these dreams disappointed and having to find new plans. Let that not stop us from dreaming, from having hopes and aspirations, no matter your age. The media is full of stories of people doing amazing things on their 100th birthday!

What is your dream for the Church? Do you have a dream, what you want our church to be or become? You might not put it that way, but... My dream for our church is that we simply become more of what we already are, a people with Jesus at the centre; a church family of all ages and stages in life, where everyone is accepted, where the values of the kingdom are lived out in the kind of people we are, in the way we speak to one another, in the way we follow Jesus and that we look out to the community around us and relate the gospel to the issues of the everyday life of the people we meet everyday. Paul had a dream for the church in Ephesus, a dream that was also based on what they already were: “*there is...*” (*Ephesians 4:4f*) His dream of the church was all about its sense of oneness, a people united in Christ, with a sense of belonging together, one body, one hope, one faith and that being the most important thing about them. That dream wasn’t always realised, but it was and still is, something for which the Church should aim, that sense of oneness in Christ.

What are your dreams for the community in which you live? Your dreams for Scotland? Your dreams of making the world a better place? We need to have some people with these dreams otherwise nothing changes. Go back to Cambodia as an example: the people are poor and the government is corrupt; you need money to send your children to school, but the government school teachers are not paid enough so they turn up for three days in the week, but for the other two days they are off to do their ‘other’ job to earn enough money to live on. Do you dream of a world where everyone behaves honestly and openly in government? Do you dream of a

world where everyone has respect, where everyone has enough food to live on, where everyone is honest and upright? Someone needs to dream that dream and then needs to work out a way of making that dream come true. Go to Tearfund's website to see how you can help make these dreams come true!

Joseph was a 17-year old boy who was given two dreams by God. As we said earlier these dreams set out something of his future, though he had no idea at 17 of what that future would be; it surprised even him. His dreams came true: God had shown him that one day he would be great, and that his brothers and parents would kneel before him. We know from the rest of the story that it happened like that, but we also know that Joseph was to be the saviour of his people and that God planned it that way. Dreams do come true; not always, but dreams do come true and this story tells us that God is gracious – how could such a family have a dream like this? - and that God is faithful – God kept His promise to Joseph, a promise that is included in this dream.

There are two things that we learn about dreams and dreamers from Joseph and his family. First of all, dreamers need to resist the temptation to show off about their dreams. Society, the church needs dreamers, but Joseph's big mistake was to boast and brag about his dreams. Sometimes, dreamers give the impression that they have a direct line to God and a more direct line to God than everyone else and so we should listen to their dreams as divine revelation. We need dreamers, but our dreamers also need to remember humility and grace in sharing their dreams with others. Joseph seems to have been an intolerable brat, fuelled by his father's favouritism that just created and stoked the hatred that existed between the brothers. Dreamers need grace to see that not everyone might share their dream.

Secondly, we need to love our dreamers and treat them with respect. Joseph's brothers hated Joseph and they hated him more for his dreams. "*Do you...*" (*Genesis 37:8*) It was inconceivable to them that Joseph would rule over them! There was no way they would listen to these dreams; that was just never going to happen. Society, the church needs people to dream of a new future, people who can show us a better future and how things can be. If everyone was a dreamer, we'd get nothing done, so some are dreamers and some have the task of analysing - these dreams need to be tested and those who are not dreamers have the responsibility of bringing these dreams down to earth, to touch the real world. But we need to love our dreamers, to give them permission to dream, and then lovingly and graciously test these dreams in the real world. If we stop our dreamers from telling us their hopes and aspirations for the future, then society will be a poorer place, the church will be poorer; sadly in our culture we see that happening all too often, so our dreamers are learning to be quiet and say nothing!

We need our dreams; we are poorer without them; that is true of us as individuals, it is true of church, it is true of society. The Bible dreams of a new world, a new heaven and a new earth and invites us to share that dream. God is gracious, God is faithful; dreams do come true and the Bible's dreams surely will. Our dreams, hopes and aspirations are part of who we are; pray that God will fulfil your dreams. Don't abuse the dreams of others – God is at work in these dreams too!