

LIVE THE DREAM

The time was 12 seconds, the height was 3 metres, and the distance was 37 metres. These figures probably mean very little to us. Frankly speaking, they are rather unspectacular in and of themselves. For two brothers from Indiana, they signified the beginning of the fulfilment of a 4-year dream. On the 17th day of December in 1903, these two sons of a clergyman achieved the world's first powered, sustained and controlled flight. They had endured the ridicule of the scientific community. Their icarian pursuit was brushed aside as nothing more than the nonsensical substance of dreams. For Wilbur and Orville Wright however, this dream was going to come true. Much has happened since that day at Kitty Hawk, when two bicycle makers launched themselves into the record books. Technology has made astounding advances in the field of aeronautics. Few of us can imagine a world without aeroplanes, which have literally become a way of life. Yet, one cannot help but wonder what might have been, had the two brothers listened, when people said man would never fly.

Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf." And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

Gen 37:5-9

If you have plans to win popularity contests or to be voted the most likable person in your community, you should not have dreams. If you do, do not tell a soul. Your dreams are almost guaranteed to upset someone. Most of us remember the words of Dr Martin Luther King Jr:

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today!"

Martin Luther King Jr.

Few of us can forget the animosity shown to this dreamer, by a community unwilling to embrace change. The hatred Joseph's brothers had for him is a recurrent theme that runs through the course of history. There are few recorded accounts, of men whose dreams endeared them to all. In fact, it is more than likely that your dreams will estrange you from those whom you initially considered friends. Joseph's dreams must have been the subject of much discussion. I imagine the reaction of his family,

when he first recounted the dreams to them. They probably did not take him seriously, as few people do when dreams are first revealed. Their amusement must have turned, first to ridicule and then to irritation, as it became increasingly apparent that the young boy actually believed the visions. Our dreams are a preview of our hopes and aspirations. They are a glimpse of the limitless potential we possess in a world fraught with limitations. We live in times when conforming to the status quo is the order of the day. Society places invisible boundaries around us, within which we are expected to function. These invisible boundaries are like boxes that limit how large we can become and how far we can go. They are the framework within which we are named, identified and expected to conform. Conformity is acceptability. Society expects us to comply with its dictates. This is often at the expense of what we would rather do or become. When a man or woman decides to step beyond the limitations society has placed on him or her, their peers are intimidated by them. This is because the act of stepping outside the "box" of conventional thinking and limitation causes the loss of the "boxed identity." This is the identity that we were known by, understood by, and in some cases, manipulated and controlled by. Leaving the box fills our contemporaries with a sense of unease, as we suddenly become an unknown entity. Dreams take us beyond the realm of what is presently available to us, within the box. They take us into a realm beyond belief. God given dreams have the potential to launch us into places few people ever thought we could reach. Men can tolerate your promotion to a certain extent, as long as you stay within limits. Exceeding these limits often means moving beyond the reach of those who are content to stay in the confines of the status quo. When this happens, their ability to control you is lost. The disapproval and discouragement of those around us often intimidates us and prevents us from expressing our dreams. It is interesting to note however, that no human advancement has ever occurred, except as a result of the dreams of men and women who envisioned something no one else could see. It is those dreamers who, in spite of criticism and ostracism, stood their ground in reaching for the intangible, who have brought us the incredible. The world's greatest inventions and history's greatest revolutions have come because of the few who dared to dream. Never allow yourself to be intimidated for dreaming. Never permit the fear of men to keep you beneath your potential. Dreamers may not always be popular, but they invariably rule the world.

DON'T LET THEM SEE YOU COMING

Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. ¹⁹Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! ²⁰Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"

Gen 37:18-20

Life probably could not be better; the favourite son of his father, his exemption from the mundane responsibilities of tending the flock and a brand new multicoloured

coat that was the envy of the clan. These were good times for Joseph. Perhaps he did not notice the sidelong glances from his ten brothers. If he did, he did not pay them much heed. It can be dangerous to live life so caught up in your own experiences, good or bad, that you are oblivious to what is happening around you. Much like the adage of not seeing the forest because of the trees, an obsession with what we are currently going through, can easily deny us the value of a global perspective. As much as it is important to cater to the minute details of the immediate, we should never become so self-absorbed that we lose sight of the big picture. Joseph probably did not imagine he would never see his home again when he set out to visit his siblings that day. One might argue; with a little more sensitivity, he would have noticed that not everyone in the room applauded his dreams. Perhaps this may have informed a measure of caution on his part, in proclaiming his latter dreams and in approaching his brothers. The euphoria of discovering that God has a great plan for us tends to dull our senses to the envy of our peers. Child of God, not everyone around you is as excited as you are, over your impending success. Some of our closest friends become unwitting pawns in the hands of an enemy, desperate to thwart Heaven's agenda. This is not to say that we should not be proud of our dreams, or even hide them. It is more a note of caution; not everyone can be trusted with the sheer weight of our call. God often hides us in obscurity for good reason. Until such a time as we have developed the requisite strength to bear the weight of success, premature exposure can gravely endanger us. I have always been fascinated with the military. I once had a discussion with an army officer who was in the Special Forces. He told me that the latest assault rifle or military gadget was not their most prized weapon, even though these were important. It was the element of surprise. The ability to catch ones foe unawares was considered their most valuable asset in combat. To have surprise as an ally was much more advantageous than an extra troop of soldiers. The battle usually favoured the one who had it on their side. He went on to explain that much of their strategic training was aimed at teaching them how to employ natural elements and the terrain to maximise this factor. He said one of his unit's objectives, was to strike before the enemy even knew they were there. You and I may not be Commandos or in the Special Forces of any earthly army. In a sense however, we belong to an elite unit of troops in God's end time army. Our combat instructions are the dreams God has given us. For the most part, we can only entrust them to others on a need to know basis.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

1 Peter 5:6-(NKJV)

Unlike God, the enemy of your soul is not omniscient. He does not know the fine details of all that concerns you. Notwithstanding, the favour that surrounds you

evidences the hand of God on your life. This causes him to attempt to provoke you. His strategy is simple: to exert enough pressure on you, in the hope that you might expose yourself by coming out of cover. I often hear Christians claim that they will leave their local church or the company they work in, because things are not moving quickly enough for them. Some of these claims may indeed be valid, yet we sometimes fail to realise that these are the God ordained structures designed to protect us by providing us with cover. In some instances, Heaven actually ordains the delays we experience. They are to give us time to develop in areas where we lack strength. Leaving the protection of our covering will almost certainly leave us open to attack. Have you ever wondered at the unreasonable and inexplicable animosity sometimes directed towards you? This often has very little to do with you but everything to do with what you are carrying. It is pertinent that we learn a valuable lesson from the life of David. In spite of the fact that he had been ordained King of Israel, David kept a low profile in Saul's house.

Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.

Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him.

Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them...

Then the princes of the Philistines went out to war. And so it was, whenever they went out, that David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed.

1 Sam 18:12-16; 30

It is remarkable and worthy of emulation that David did not take matters into his own hands because of his frustrations. Instead, he kept his head down and in doing so, preserved his life. Joseph in contrast, was not so subtle. One might argue the point that Joseph's outspokenness opened the door for his providential transfer to Egypt. Perhaps, it may also be argued that, had his brothers Reuben and Judah not intervened, he most certainly would have been killed rather than sold. Whatever perspective one takes, it is evident that God is able to make all things work together for the good of those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8: 28). I am persuaded that Jesus Christ validated the good judgement of David. Jesus insisted on maintaining a low profile, despite the astonishing miracles He wrought: (Matthew 8: 4, 16: 20; Mark 7:36, 8:30; Luke 5:14, 8:56). He was particular about staying under cover until the right moment.

What you and I carry, in the form of our dreams, reaches far beyond the benefit of our generation alone. We carry something of great significance; to be released at a

time appointed by God. Its value is inestimable. Scripture declares that we bear this treasure in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4: 7). It is part of God's plan that we are lightly esteemed outwardly and underestimated by a world that does not know who we are. Do not despair in the days of your obscurity. It may not seem like it now, but you are being forged in the furnace of affliction, into an effective tool to be used at the appointed time, in a generation that did not see you coming.

THE KING OF THE PIT

Many of us live with the paradox of having a great dream, whilst surrounded by unspectacular circumstances. Perhaps one of life's frustrations is the knowledge of the immense potential one possesses within, in contrast to the dearth of opportunities that exist without. Our very inability to express the dreams we have inside, threatens to suffocate us as we struggle to reconcile what is, with what we believe could be.

*So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colours that was on him. ²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it.
Gen 37:23-24*

It must have been quite a reality check for Joseph to find himself at the bottom of a pit. It was only a short while before that he had vivid images of the stars, the sun and the moon, bowing down to him. It never occurred to him, that this is what the next phase of his life would entail. I find that life often presents us with situations that do not reflect the prophecies we have received. In fact, it would appear that no sooner has a fabulous prophecy been revealed, all hell breaks loose. It is in these times that our faith is tested. These trials prove our mettle and the strength of our character. By and large, when our dreams do not unfold as we envisaged, we perceive it as a major set back and become discouraged. Little do we realise that just like Joseph, what appears to be a set-back is actually a step forward, as God repositions us, in order to perform His will. Joseph's prophecy declared that he would rule as a king. His reality however, had him in a pit. Is this not the dichotomy you and I often face? Our prophecy declares we are prosperous but our reality says we are in debt. Our prophecy declares that we are healthy but our reality says we have a cancerous growth. Our prophecy declares that we are successful but our reality says nothing is working. The low seasons of life, when nothing seems to go right, are our pits. They are the moments when the great highs of the promise are challenged by events that say, "It will not come to pass." When life persistently hurls contradictions at us, it is easy to lose heart and grow faint.

The bible declares: *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.
Heb 10:23*

The chaos of the present often effectively disguises the awesome nature of the future. Tragically, too many people give up, just when they are on the brink of a breakthrough. Hold on! You are closer than you think. The integrity of God's word is something that cannot be questioned. When God proposes to do anything, consider it done. His word is never wasted.

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Isa. 55:11

It was more than likely that Joseph did not feel like a ruler, at the bottom of a pit. This mirrors how we feel when things go contrary to plan. Many of us have been through things, and are perhaps going through things, that belie the magnitude of what God is getting ready to do in us and through us. When you pass through difficult seasons, it is crucial to remember that you are like a train in transit; the season is not your final destination. The mere fact that a train passes through an unpleasant part of the city does not mean the passengers are transformed into what the train is passing through. In similar fashion, the call of God on you does not diminish, when you go through negative circumstances. Never write yourself off. Never accept when people write you off because of where they see you today. You will not always be in a pit. The world may have seen you go down, but you will rise again. Regardless of present circumstances, the prophecy on your life does not lie. It may be true that you are in a pit, but you are still a king.

WAS THIS IN THE SCRIPT?

So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. Gen 16:15-16 And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened. Gen 37:25-27 (NKJV)

Whenever I read the account of Abraham and Sarah, it reminds me of the plot of an unusual soap opera. It is filled with drama, tension and intrigue, all woven together in an almost unbelievable fashion. Sarah was faced with the apparent impossibility of bearing a child for her husband. She eventually came up with a means of improvisation; Hagar, her handmaiden would bear the child. It looked good on paper, but like most man-made solutions, "Operation Hagar" did not cover all the bases. Ishmael was born, and Abraham was left to deal with the immediate consequences of his error in judgement. Two generations later, Abraham's descendant, Joseph, has his life hanging in the balance. His brothers eventually decided, "mercifully," to sell him to a group of itinerant traders. These traders

just happen to be the descendants of Ishmael; Abrahams mistake. The providential manner of their arrival prompts the questions; What if Ishmael had never been born? Was the birth of Ishmael actually a mistake, or was it always part of God's plan?

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Rom 8:28

The God that you and I serve is able to tie up the loose ends of our lives so seamlessly, that even our mistakes work for our good. This is not an invitation to lead a carefree life of disobedience. It is rather, an opportunity to recognise the incredible hand of God that rests upon us. The work that God does, on us and in us, is so complete that one will occasionally look back on some of our misdeeds, and marvel at how they have been used to make us better people. It would almost appear that they were always part of the plan. The guilt that accompanies sin can cripple us, to the point that we can no longer function in the place that God has called us. Satan seeks to exploit this, with constant reminders of who we used to be, and what we did. I am a big believer in the kind of Godly sorrow that leads to repentance. Yet, when we place ourselves in a perpetual cycle of remorse, accusation and self-recrimination, it can be as destructive as the sin we committed in the first place. We are beneficiaries of the abundant grace of God. A grace that says even if I fall seven times, I will get back on my feet again (Prov. 24:16). History records some of the terrible things that have befallen humanity through the ages, some of them self-inflicted. Some events are so hideous that their consequences reverberate for generations. Yet, such is the resilience of man that he always seems to come out of a crisis better than before he went in. Louis Pasteur discovered life saving vaccines, following the loss of three of his daughters to typhoid. Slavery, in the United States, was eventually abolished after a bitter and violent civil war. Some of the greatest discoveries and medical advances have been born out of great adversity. As we applaud the progress we have made in coming through the fires of life, it is important that we do not forget that it is God, who has brought us beauty for our ashes. The direst of circumstances have a way of turning out just right, when viewed from the perspective of hindsight. With this outlook, even our most abject failures appear to have always been part of the plan. It is as though, like Ishmael, it was always in the script.