Messenger
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Join Us For Worship

Sundays at 1 PM
942 E. Altadena Dr. Altadena, CA 91001

SWEET DREAMS!

I entitled last week's *Messenger* article "Sleep Well!" Just in case that didn't work, I'm adding another affirming word this week: "Sweet Dreams!"

I've always been a dreamer. Some of my friends tell me they never have dreams, or at least, they don't remember them. I'm the opposite. When I was about 10 or 11, I had a series of Technicolor dreams, continued over two or three nights, to which I gave the title "Little Orphan Annie on Mars." My memory is that she was moving slowly in a small boat on a narrow canal across the planet's curved surface. Go ahead, laugh! They made fun of me in the asylum as well.

Dreams are mentioned often in the Bible, mainly as a way in which God has guided or warned people throughout redemptive history. Among those who experienced these predictive dreams were: Jacob, Joseph, Pharoah, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and Ezekiel in the Old Testament; Joseph, Mary, The Wise Men, Peter, Paul and John in the New Testament. Even today, there are many accounts of people receiving messages from God in their dreams. Please notice, these dream-revelations are guidance for the individual person having the dream. When someone tries to impose their dreams on others, we usually have the beginning of a cult!

Dreams about the future do occur but are not common. Most dreams are about the past. Multiple psychological studies have shown that dreams are a way in which our minds do some important repair work as we sleep. Our brains review and sort out recent activities, selecting the things that are important to save in our memories. We process our emotions by re-imagining the previous day's experiences in different contexts. There is also a mental housekeeping function, cleaning out dust and debris that may be harmful and is, at most, useless. Our minds also reenact things that have happened to decide what deeper, lasting meaning they may have.

Some people have dreams that are scary, and they may wake up in terror. I'm thankful I don't have those experiences. Most of the dreams I remember are neither happy nor sad --- just life. The most common negative feeling I remember from dreams is frustration; I'm struggling to get to some location, and I just can't make it, no matter how hard I try. I interpret this as my realization that I'm never enough in my own strength and knowledge, an awareness of how much I need God.

"Dream Therapy" is an effective practice in treating many people who are suffering from trauma or anxiety. They are helped to remember suppressed dreams and to confront and analyze what these

dreams may be telling them. In the hands of a competent counselor, this can be effective in unlocking many avenues of healing. I've known people whose therapist had suggested, in advance, that they dream about certain things. They may have responded, "I don't dream," but were surprised that night when they had the very curative dream the therapist prescribed.

It's a great comfort to me to know that God, the Great Therapist, is in control of my dreams. He understands what's going on in Little Orphan Annie's mind, where the canals on Mars are headed and what's the true meaning of this cartoon world we live in.

Now I lay me down to sleep,

I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

If I should die before I wake,

I pray the Lord my soul to take.

Pastor George Van Alstine