
DREAM

DISCOVERING GOD'S
PURPOSE FOR YOUR LIFE

DUTCH SHEETS



BETHANYHOUSE

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Minneapolis, Minnesota

© 2012 by Dutch Sheets

Published by Bethany House Publishers
11400 Hampshire Avenue South
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Printed in the United States of America

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ISBN 978-0-7642-1021-1 (international trade paper)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sheets, Dutch.

Dream : discovering God's purpose for your life / Dutch Sheets.

p. cm.

Summary: "The author presents God as a dreamer and reveals how God has shared this nature with His people. Through Bible teaching and personal stories, readers are shown how to recognize and live out God's plan for their lives"—Provided by publisher.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 155).

ISBN 978-0-7642-0947-5 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Dreams—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. God (Christianity)—Will. 3. Revelation. I. Title.

BR115.D74S54 2012

231'.74—dc23

2011045025

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Scripture quotations identified KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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12 13 14 15 16 17 18 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To Ceci:

When you came along, I knew that dreams really could come true. Thanks for being my best friend and biggest fan, my wisest counselor and most trusted confidant.

What a gift you are! You're loving, beautiful, smart, and talented—thanks for marrying “down”!

Let's keep dreaming!

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Introduction

THE GIFT

You may not be aware of it, but you have a dreaming nature. You inherited this part of your disposition from your Creator. He created us in His image and likeness so our hearts could relate to His and in order that His dreaming heart could find millions of expressions. You were *designed* to dream, and you *must* dream—*both for yourself and for God*. In fact, if you don't dream with Him, He can't experience all of His dreams and you'll never achieve your destiny.

A life without dreams is like a GPS without a satellite. The GPS might operate, but it would lead you nowhere. Likewise, without God-given dreams to guide you, you will travel life's highway searching for a destination you'll never find. Divinely inspired dreams, on the other hand, will guide you to the destiny He intended for you.

Your Designer dreamed dreams for you before you were even born, then skillfully wove them into your DNA as you were created, along with the ability to find and fulfill them. His destiny for you will be the sum of those dreams. The journey of life, then, is meant to be a

dream quest; finding what your Maker has dreamed for you brings life's ultimate satisfaction and should be life's ultimate pursuit.

If you don't discover God's dreams, you'll either waste your life running in wrong races and crossing wrong finish lines or, like many people, have no finish line at all. Other individuals stop running altogether, wandering through life as though it were a maze, hoping they will stumble upon the right exit. What a tragedy. Your Creator doesn't intend for life to be such a gamble. You *can* find His plans and dreams for you and pursue them with confidence.

I want to help you through this book. The inspiration for it began four years ago on a personal retreat, as did a new phase of my own dream quest. The Lord used several things to launch me into this new season: prayer, His Word, a song, the right setting, and a movie. Yep, a movie.

The Ultimate Gift is one of my favorite movies. It's the story of Red Stevens, an older and extremely wealthy businessman who knew he was dying and was trying to decide where to leave his fortune. It seemed his children were money-hungry, self-indulgent, and irresponsible, as were his grandchildren.

All but one.

Jason seemed like all the rest, but Red had seen something else in him, buried under the outer layer of pain, laziness, and his party-driven lifestyle. Red knew that under this stained veneer was great strength and noble character. So Red decided to leave his fortune to Jason—if he passed a series of tests, which Red personally presented posthumously by video. These were difficult, time-consuming tests, some of which took weeks. Jason would only learn of the next challenge after finishing the previous one.

At first Jason resisted—the old man's money could go to charity—he wasn't going to play the game. But after much thought he decided to give it a try, just to get the money. What he didn't know was that each challenge was designed not only as a test but as a character builder and teaching tool—Red called them “gifts, a series of gifts.”

It is fascinating to watch the transformation in Jason. He learns the value of hard work, loyalty, giving, family, and several more important qualities needed for a successful and responsible life. Toward the end, he sits down to see the video showing him his next assignment. Grandpa, though now gone, knew when making the videos that if at this point in the process they were still being shown to Jason by his wise and discerning business partner, Jason had passed the tests and could be trusted with wealth.

Almost.

When this latter video begins, Red says, “It’s time for you to learn to dream, Jason.” Like the character in the movie, I was riveted to the television. *What a concept*, I thought, *the test of dreaming*. Jason was given a very large sum of money and told to do anything he wanted with it. And just in case you decide to watch the movie, that’s where I’ll stop.

The timing of watching this movie was perfect for me. I was in a season of reexamining my life, analyzing the past and wrestling over the future. As part of this process I planned a week alone to think and pray. I had a cabin reserved for the week, but when I arrived, it just didn’t feel right. I decided to follow my heart: *This isn’t the place*.

I called my wife, Ceci, and asked her to check the Internet for another place, preferably in Estes Park, Colorado. I would start driving in that direction. The place she found was more than perfect. The altar and cross out back reminded me of Moriah, a special place of dreaming mentioned in Scripture. God knew He and I would dream together in this place.

Perhaps you aren’t aware of Moriah and its rich biblical history. It is the mountain where Abraham took Isaac to offer him as a sacrifice. God stopped him, of course. He had only wanted to paint a picture of Himself offering His Son on the cross centuries later. Moriah was the actual place where this would occur! There, on that momentous mountain, Abraham and God dreamed together.

Abraham envisioned the day he would have so many descendants they would be a great nation. God dreamed of the day He would recapture His dream of family. But I'm getting way ahead of myself. We'll visit Moriah later in great depth.

Back to the cabin. No, I wasn't kidding about the altar and cross. Behind the cabin, thirty or so yards from the deck, was a well-built rock-and-mortar altar at the base of a rugged but sturdy wooden cross. There was a beautiful stream just off the deck that forked several yards upstream, then came back together a few yards downstream, forming a small island directly behind the cabin. Someone had gotten onto the island and built the altar and cross—just for me.

Hmm, I thought as I stood gazing at it. There it is, the place where God recaptured His dream. I wonder what He has in mind for me this week? I would not be disappointed.

As the week progressed, I found myself being drawn into a thoughtful analysis of my life. *What had I accomplished? Which of these accomplishments were truly worth the time and effort? How many would stand the test of eternity?* As painful as some of it was, I was trying to be brutally and utterly honest. *What dreams had I pursued under the banner of "for the Lord," when my heart had deceived me and they had actually been "for me"?* Many dreams passed the test, some failed. It was painful, but it was good.

At one point the Lord steered my mind toward Jacob, a grandson of the great patriarch Abraham. It seemed that Abraham, like Red, had a grandson with great potential buried under layers of carnality, egotism, and selfish ambition. Jacob, like Jason, had to be transformed and then taught how to dream appropriately.

I saw myself.

It was during that holy time with the Lord that He taught me much of what is in this book. He showed me the process Jacob had to walk through until, like Jason, he was given the ultimate gift. And like his grandfather Abraham, he eventually became God's friend and the two of them dreamed together.

Finally, on that life-changing day several years back, the Holy Spirit shifted my focus from my past to the future. As clearly as though He was in the recliner next to me—He was most definitely present—the Lord began speaking to me about dreaming, just as Red did to Jason. “What are your dreams for the future?” He asked, pulling my innermost thoughts from my heart to my conscious mind.

I thought. I journaled. Hopefully, with a little more clarity of heart and a few decades of added perspective, I dreamed with greater depth and less selfish ambition than I had years earlier. Over the past four decades, climbing the ladder of success has gradually been replaced by plumbing the depths of His heart. Accomplishments are now measured more by heaven’s approval than by earth’s applause, and making a name has given way to making a difference. At least I believe so.

Eventually, the Lord steered the conversation in a direction that caught me off guard. “Now I’d like to dream a little,” I heard clearly. “Would you like to hear some of My dreams?” I listened and I wept. God was trusting me with His dreaming heart. That day remains one of the most holy of my life. I built an altar that day. Not made of rocks and mortar—this one was in my heart.

My greatest goal for this book is that you, too, connect with the dreaming heart of God. If I can enlist you in His dream program by connecting you to His dreaming heart, you’ll never again be satisfied with the abnormal existence of a nondreamer or the mundane life of an earthbound one. You were created to dream, and doing so in partnership with God is one of His greatest gifts to us.

You’ll also witness God’s own agonizing yet wonderful dream journey. Seeing His disappointments and how He overcame them will encourage and inspire you; His wisdom as He does so will amaze you. His is the greatest dream story ever told.

I also pray that as you read the following pages you will do some honest self-analysis, just as I did on my retreat. I believe you will see facets of yourself through dreamers like Adam, Abraham, and many

others right up to today. I'm confident that as we look at Jacob and the process he went through to become Israel—this was the name of a person before it was a nation—you will see some characteristics of yourself. And I pray that as you see pieces of your heart still controlled by earthly dreams, you will go to the cross, where God recaptures dreams and hearts, the place where relationship with Him is sealed forever.

Untold pleasure and exciting surprises await you on your dream quest. Like Abraham of old, you'll begin the journey by viewing the Lord as your *God*. As time goes by and the relationship matures, you'll ascend to the understanding that He truly is your *Father*. But the crowning point of a successful life—indeed, the apex of the journey—is when your God and Father has become your *Friend*. God wants to dream with friends.

Let's unwrap the gift!

1

The Power of Dreams



Like you, I've had many hopes and dreams over the years, some frivolous and insignificant, others meaningful and substantive. I recall my first baseball glove—a Pete Rose signature edition, by the way!—which actually had supernatural powers of baseball artistry. I promise it made me a better baseball player. Instantly I was the most excited and envied kid on the block. And, of course, the best baseball player.

Then there was my first new bicycle. Not a used bike, mind you, but a brand-new red, three-speed Schwinn Racer. The world was different from that day forward. Every guy in town was jealous of me and my wheels.

My dreams changed over the years as they graduated to jobs, money, a family, a home—the usual list of American dreams. “With your good looks and intelligence,” my mother assured me, “it will hardly be a challenge.” (I know what you're thinking, but unlike most moms, mine was very objective.) I went to college to begin my journey toward greatness and was most certainly on my way to

success, fame, and fortune . . . that is, until God arranged for me to go on a missionary journey to Guatemala.

What a dirty trick!

I was there when the earthquake in 1976 occurred, killing thirty thousand people in thirty seconds. One million people were left homeless. How do you look into hopeless, grieving eyes and dream of fame and fortune? How do you face a hungry, now fatherless three-year-old and her widowed mother—having to turn them away

**Things are
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because you just served the last bowl of soup available in the relief effort—and dream of ease and comfort? My dreams of owning the world transformed into changing it. I've been working at it ever since.

You can change the world, too. Things are supposed to be different on planet earth because you showed up. You're part of the plan. A solution, an invention, a prayer, another person yet unborn—there is something in you we need. It begins with a dream.

In his book *A Savior for All Seasons*, William Barker speaks of dreaming. He tells of a disagreement between a traveling bishop and the president of a religious college who also taught physics and chemistry. The itinerant minister persistently contended that we must be near the return of Christ and the beginning of His millennial reign. Why? “Because just about everything concerning nature has been discovered and all inventions created.”

The college president disagreed and insisted there would be more discoveries. “Name one,” challenged the preacher.

“Well, I'm certain that within fifty years humans will be able to fly,” replied the president.

“Nonsense!” shouted the skeptical minister. “Only angels are intended to fly.”

The preacher's name? Wright. He had two sons at home, dreamers named Orville and Wilbur—you know them as the innovative Wright Brothers—who proved to have a bit more vision than Dad!

Dreaming ignites creativity. The impossible is powerless against the relentless energy and creative imagination flowing from a dreaming heart. Dreams are pregnant with hope, persistence, ingenuity, and inventiveness—if you dream you will create. Contrarily, if you do not have dreams to pursue, you'll languish and stagnate in a sterile, uninspired, unimaginative, and uninventive world—exactly the way most people live!

Their world is small and confined, restrained by the mundane existence of a nondreamer. For them, the fulfillment of destiny is not accomplished by dreaming, planning, and creativity, but instead is based on chance. God's plan for us, however, is not to spin in circles on the roulette wheel of life hoping we bounce off at the right place and land on success. Our Maker wants us to dream, plan, and create.

Many people are simply waiting for “the big break” or longing to be “discovered”; they trust chance, wandering through life hoping for the right lottery number to appear. Those are fantasies, not dreams. God doesn't want you to live in a fantasy world, waiting for a magical spider bite to launch you on your Spider-Man journey. Just because we're dreamers doesn't mean we have to live in a make-believe world.

The Bible says much about dreaming, and it is enlightening that the concepts of dreaming and creating are both found in the same biblical word. *Yatsar* (Hebrew) means “to create”; *yetser*, a slightly different form of the word, means “imagination, conception, and thought.”¹ *Yetser* refers to the plans and purposes formed in the mind, which, of course, include dreaming; *yatsar* is the resulting act of creation. *So the power to create begins with the ability to dream.*

This is exactly how God functions. Isaiah 46:10 states that He declares the end from the beginning. In other words, He sees or imagines the end result (*yetser*), backs up to form the plan or design, then begins creating (*yatsar*). He dreams, then He creates.

Likewise, when God fashioned humans in His image, He placed within us a portion of His ability to imagine and create. We have a God-given ability to conceive something in our mind or heart, which then awakens the creativity and innovation He placed in each of us. Like Him we dream, and then we create the dream. Consider these cases in point.

- We have airplanes because a couple of brothers dreamed we could conquer gravity and fly. Eventually, we went to the moon because someone dared dream we could conquer space.
- We have lightbulbs because a man dreamed of light without a fire. People continued to dream and now we have lasers.
- Telephones were invented because some dreaming mind conceived the outlandish concept of talking through wires. But dreaming begets dreaming, so someone imagined telephones *without the wires* and cell phones were born. Crazy!
- Cars exist because someone dared to dream of a horseless carriage. Henry Ford dreamed of mass-producing these man-made beasts. Another dreamer dreamed of making money by paving roads for those amazing new machines, and, eventually, someone dared to dream of a network of roads all across America *without one single stoplight or stop sign*. Think about it: Through the innovative minds of a few inspired dreamers, traveling went from horse-drawn, covered wagons on rutted, unmapped trails to air-conditioned automobiles on interstate highways (using a GPS, by the way).
- Some nerd dreamed of the computer. Someone “nerdier” dreamed they could be portable—not bad since initially one computer filled up an entire room. Then came the Internet . . . wireless . . . Facebook . . . Twitter . . . Google. And the multizillionaire nerds are still laughing. And tweeting. (Someone even had to dream up new words for all these crazy ideas.)

- Someone dreamed of a television and—it was inevitable—some guy dreamed of changing the channel without getting out of the recliner. Yep, along came the remote. (Sorry, ladies.)

All of these once unbelievable concepts began with a dream. Dreaming, then, unlocked creativity. And by the way, dreams don't have to be big to be substantial in their impact. Consider these “insignificant” dreams:

- Someone got tired of their papers being displaced and dreamed of a paper clip. (They also made sure they were small enough to lose easily so we would have to buy trillions of them.)
- Annoyance over trapped food inspired the toothpick dream.
- A would-be writer grew tired of drawing in the dirt and dreamed of a pencil.
- A guy with sore feet from going barefoot dreamed of sandals. A woman dreamed of making them stylish. Some teenager dreamed of making them comfortable and *voilà*—flip-flops were born! (Go ahead, smile.)

Dreams happen! But they don't *just* happen. They're accomplished because dreaming unlocks creativity, innovation, action, and originality. If you don't dream you won't create. Period. End of story. But if you do dream, you *must* create. Necessity isn't the mother of invention, dreams are!

**Necessity
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dreams are!**

Thirteen-year-old Markita Andrews had a dream of taking her mother on a trip around the world. Her father left home when she was eight, and though struggling to make ends meet, it was Markita's and her mother's dream to travel the globe. So when Markita learned that the Girl Scout who sold the most cookies would win an all-expenses-paid trip for two around the world, she decided she would sell the most.

And did she ever.

Markita sold 3,526 boxes of Girl Scout cookies that year and went on to sell 42,000 more boxes. While other Girl Scouts were accepting an assignment, Markita was fulfilling a dream. They sold cookies, she sold a world tour. Her dream led to creativity, which produced a plan: how to dress, the best times to approach people, the most effective way to ask them to buy, and how to overcome rejection. “Don’t ask them to buy your cookies,” her aunt advised. “Ask them to invest.”

“Hi. I have a dream,” Markita would say. “I’m earning a trip around the world for my mom and myself by merchandizing Girl Scout cookies. Would you like to invest in one or two dozen boxes of cookies?” It worked.

Actually, it worked more than Markita ever imagined. Dreams have a way of multiplying. Since then she has spoken at sales conventions all over the country, starred in a Disney movie about herself, and coauthored a bestselling book, *How to Sell More Cookies, Condos, Cadillacs, Computers . . . and Everything Else*.² Her plan, coupled with hard work, created the fulfillment of her dream.

What an inspiring story. And like Markita, there’s a story in you. Yours will be different, but you have one. Yours may not result in a movie and you may not invent something as monumental as the airplane. Nonetheless, you have an important story, written by the very Author of dreaming Himself. The best place to begin your journey is to see what He had in mind when He started this dreaming thing.

For Review

1. Explain the biblical connection between dreaming and creating.
2. Describe a time when an idea, however fleeting, captured your imagination.

The Power of Dreams

3. What was your response to the inspiration? Did your idea move from *yetser* to *yatsar*?
4. How does Isaiah 46:10 relate to dreaming?
5. Have you given value to what seem like small ideas? If not, how can you do so?
6. Decide now to spend a set amount of time every week dreaming and journaling.