

# History Belongs to the Dreamers

## Dreaming Wide Awake

God is an irrepressible dreamer. It is difficult to explain a world with such complexity, creativity and beauty without believing so. Even the tragedy of our broken world, with its distortions and pain, is about a dream; albeit yet unrealized. In fact, the whole of history, if we believe history really is His-story, is the struggle for a dream.

Birthing in the heart of God, it explodes in an awesome display of creative power, bringing into being a universe – which as it turns out is really a nursery, the place prepared for the dream in its climatic moment, “Let’s make *man*.”

What does it mean to dream? Why does it matter? What is it to be caught up, captivated, captured by a dream so compelling, so filled with possibilities, so inviting that it seems to take our breath away? Only when we are so captivated, are we able to find our place, our vision, our reason for existence, the purpose for which we are created.

Oh, we can do the task, keep the wheels humming along, but eventually without the dream we will find ourselves tired and discontent – frankly, *uninspired*. Dreaming is not vision, though they are closely related and intertwined. Dreaming is something less concrete, but not less vital; in fact, without the dream, there is little passion for the vision and little energy for the task.

Real dreaming is the result of a *sanctified imagination*. Dreams are the function of that imagination lit on fire by the Spirit of God; they come when we are transfigured by the Dreamer and drawn seemingly irresistibly toward those things that stir *His* heart, stir His heart to the very depths. It may come in moment or after calculated reflection, but once we become dreamers, well, we are done in. We become as Joy Dawson says, “forever spoiled for the ordinary.”

If this seems a bit out there, impractical, “mystical,” then maybe you have let your American pragmatism, that “get ‘er done” mindset rob your heart. Dreaming is not impractical - for dreaming always fuels our doing; in fact without it our doing doesn’t seem to *mean* very much.

Dreaming is to be awake, profoundly awake, to the realness of the Story in which we find ourselves. For whatever else the Biblical narrative is, it is story. As John Eldredge says, it is the Story that stands behind all of the great and moving stories we’ve heard and read.<sup>1</sup>

So there is story to be found and a story to be lived. In fact, we now *write* the story in our generation as we come to know God and fulfill His purposes for our life and world. We, like Frodo and Sam or Aragorn or Luke Skywalker, find ourselves in the middle of something much greater than ourselves – we find that we are summoned to join with God to see His cosmic purpose, His *dream*, fulfilled. The plot continues to unfold and we are in it, whether we fully believe it or understand it. As I told my brothers and sisters in Jamaica, there are great deeds to be done, sacrifices to be made, history to be shaped. There are *pages* yet to be written, pages *only they* can write. So it is for each of us, if are willing to see it: that’s why we must dream.

Robert and Mary Moffat went to Africa in 1816. J. T. Mueller tells the Moffat’s story in *Great Missionaries to Africa*. One of the first to move inland from South Africa, Moffat paved the way for many who would follow. His work among the Bechuanas seemed a hopeless endeavor. There were many trials and hardships, including the deaths of their two oldest children within the space of two months. In those hours of despair and discouragement they continued on. Mary Moffat words expressed the dreamer’s heart, “We may not live to see it, but the awakening will come as

surely as the sun will rise tomorrow.” After 10 years the Missionary Society was ready to give up when suddenly came the breakthrough that would eventually see the entire Bechuanas tribe come to Christ.<sup>2</sup>

The Moffat’s, like God, irrepressible dreamers. Or more accurately, they had been gripped by the Dream, held in its tenacious grasp, compelled with its unshakeable conviction. Robert Moffat once said, “Many a morning have I stood on the porch of my house, and looking northward, have seen the smoke arise from villages that have never heard of Jesus Christ. I have seen, at different times, the smoke of a thousand villages - villages whose people are without Christ, without God, and without hope in the world.”

Here, we are given a glimpse into his dream, the dream that was *his* part in the Story. The words of that dream, the “smoke of a thousand villages” would catch fire in the heart of his son-in-law, one David Livingstone, who became a dreamer in his own right. Spending his life in exploring the “dark continent,” he would pave the way for other dreamers who would re-shape Africa and change history forever for the kingdom of God.<sup>3</sup>

It seems nothing much is done that matters without dreaming. So are you dreaming? Or have you just resigned yourself to just do the task? Is your heart on fire for something greater than your own life or have you allowed the mundane and the trivial of our culture or perhaps the daily grind, to lull you into the dreamless slumber of complacency?

It’s time to wake up and begin dreaming!

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<sup>1</sup> See his *Epic*.

<sup>2</sup> *Great Missionaries to Africa*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> “Dark” because so little was known about it at that time. Livingston was a pioneer in the exploration of central Africa; his adventures made him a national hero of sorts. His heart was to open up the continent to trade and commerce, partly in hopes of doing away with the slave trade and always for the purposes of reaching Africans with the gospel.