

# Where Do My Dreams Come From?

Everybody dreams. Scientists tell us that we all dream for one to two hours a night.<sup>1</sup> Dreams are a normal and healthy part of being human. But where do they come from?

A middle-aged woman named Meg once told me her dream. Meg was in her bedroom trying to look in the mirror, but her husband kept getting in her way. When she finally looked in the mirror, she was horrified. The reflection showed her husband, but his face had morphed into the image of a devil. He had bright red horns and a ghoulish face. Meg woke up terrified.

The dream troubled her so much that she began looking more closely at her husband's life. She checked his bank accounts and watched his behaviour for something amiss. Meg soon discovered that her husband had been deceiving her along with their friends and family. Eventually, he was charged with criminal fraud and taken away to prison.

Meg's dream saved her from a dire situation, but it leaves us with an important question. *Where did the dream come from?* Did Meg subconsciously know her husband was being deceptive, but was unable to recognise it? Or did the information come from an outside source that exposed what no-one else could see?

Theories abound about the source of our dreams. While it isn't possible to be definitive about all our dreams, we can learn from the perspective of different cultures and our own personal experiences. Here we see that dreams arise from three possible sources:

## 1. Dreams Come From Ourselves

Most of our dreams come from ourselves. They are a picture of what is going on beneath the surface of our waking life. This is why counsellors and psychologists often engage in dreamwork with their clients.

The first psychologist to take dreams seriously was Sigmund Freud in the early 20th Century. He was followed closely by Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. Both Freud and Jung understood dreams to be windows into the subconscious personality. Like shadows reflecting a reality we don't always see, dreams tell us about our hidden selves. Usually they speak in a symbolic language that draws on the imagery we use in our everyday lives.

So we dream of turning up naked to an examination when we're anxious about a job interview scheduled the next day. Or we dream of being chased down a dead-end alley when facing the stress of limited options. Or we see ourselves flying weightless over the treetops when longing for new levels of freedom.

These are all natural dreams. They contain *messages from ourselves*. With its in-built healing system, the brain uses dreaming to process the everyday happenings of our lives. It's a little like *housecleaning for the mind*. Humans *need* to dream. That's why dreams have been called the "guardians of sanity."<sup>2</sup> Researchers have found that if you try to stop a person dreaming, they show signs of mental illness.<sup>3</sup>

These natural dreams offer much more to us than just "housecleaning." They can be a powerful tool for self-awareness. We are not always cognisant of what is going on beneath the

surface, but our dreams point the way. Jung wrote: “No one who does not know himself can know others. And in each of us there is another whom we do not know. He speaks to us in dreams and tells us how differently he sees us from the way we see ourselves.”<sup>4</sup>

This is why it is so important to attend to our dreams. Each one of us was created for potential and purpose. Like a physical wound that has inbuilt mechanisms to heal itself, our dreams point the way towards healing and growth. They become a powerful aid for personal development, exposing our anxieties, fears and wounds. They shout; “Alert, alert!” Something needs attention.

This may have been the case in Meg’s dream. She may have been suspicious of her husband’s deceitful behaviour, but was unable to confront it in her waking life. Her dream of the devil revealed the truth. When you have a natural dream that draws your attention, take note of it. It’s a bit like having your own personal therapist! Natural dreams are well worth listening to.

## 2. Dreams come from the Spirit World

The second source of our dreams is the spirit world. Dreams act as a kind of doorway between the earthly and the spiritual realm.

This understanding of dreams has been held by practically **every culture and religion in history**. The American Indians have their dream-catchers; the Chinese have their dream books and the Ancient Babylonians had their professional dream interpreters. Most religions also share this perspective of dreams. Hindus, Muslims and Jews all have sacred Scriptures that contain accounts of the spirits communicating through dreams. The idea that there is another world of reality that breaks in through our dreams occurs everywhere except in modern Western culture.<sup>5</sup>

When the spirit world speaks to us our dreams, we can often access information that is normally inaccessible to us. Even *evil* spirits can get it right.<sup>6</sup> But that doesn’t mean that we should listen to them. When we open ourselves to hearing from unknown spirits, we can never be sure of their intention. Spirit-dreams can often lead to fear, shame and condemnation. The best way to deal with these kinds of dreams is to resist them. If you hold to the Christian faith, pray in the name of Jesus for these voices to be silenced before you go to sleep.

## 3. Dreams Come from God

Finally, our dreams may come from God. In Christianity, God is deeply personal and longs to have a personal relationship with us **based on two-way communication**. People are often familiar with prayer, but they have not always considered the possibility that God can speak back. The Bible itself contains hundreds of examples of personal “God conversations.” Most of these conversations occurred while someone was sleeping! Even the Christmas story contains five different dreams. The baby Jesus would have been murdered if people had not listened to them (Matthew 1-2).

You’ll recognise a God-dream, because they are always creative, clever and contain wisdom from beyond ourselves. Often they contain supernatural information. Some reveal glimpses of the future. Dreams that are sourced in God will always bring hope, joy, peace and love to every situation. They will be consistent with his character most fully revealed in Jesus who

came to give us life to the full (John 10:10). God speaks to people regardless of whether they affiliated with a religion. This is because he wants to reveal himself to all people.

This may well have been the case with our friend Meg. God may have been revealing supernatural information that would protect her from her deceitful husband. If you have not yet encountered the God revealed in Jesus for yourselves, we encourage you to pray and ask God to speak to you. You can also learn more about what God is like by reading his story as told in the Bible. Start with the [Book of Mark](#). Our prayer is that you will know the God who speaks personally to you – and that you will always have sweet dreams!