Look Closer: Visions and Dreams

At a Glance:
Students will look at a variety of dreams in the Word and reflect on the part both night-time and waking dreams can have in our lives.



Teacher Background:

Jacob was directed by the Lord to leave his father-in-law Laban and return to his family in a dream. His dream started a long chain of events and a long journey. The Heavenly Doctrine tells us that there are three types of dream that can be significant: prophetic dreams (dreams in the Word that take place during sleep and telling a person what will happen or what he/she ought to do), visions (dream-like spiritual experiences that the Lord used for instruction), and the dreams people have while they sleep today.

Unlike prophetic dreams in the Word, which came from the Lord through heaven and formed the basis of Divine revelation, our dreams come from spiritual companions who are with us. Some have significance and some are more or less pure fantasy. We also talk about another kind of dream which is a personal dream, hope or vision for our future. We can envision ourselves being better people, helping our community or the world. Dreams like this are an important part of our spiritual lives, enabling us to see ourselves differently—and so take a new path in life.

Supplies Needed for Each Student:
- *Visions and Dreams* reading page
- *Visions and Dreams in the Word* chart
- Word or Bible

Directions:

1. Would you take action on the basis of a night-time dream? Why or why not?
2. List the ways in which dreams we have for our lives are different from night-time dreams.
3. Distribute *Visions and Dreams* reading page and read aloud with the students.
4. Distribute *Visions and Dreams in the Word* charts. Assign each student a different dream to look up, or pick a few of the dreams to focus on if you have a small group. Have students complete them, using a Word or Bible to find the answers.

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5. Share answers and discuss.
6. Discuss the following questions:
    - Where do our night time dreams come from? (Spirits who are close to us while we sleep (see Arcana Coelestia 1976).)
    - How are our dreams different from dreams in the Word? (Dreams in the Word came from the Lord, through heaven (see Arcana Coelestia 1976) and are a reliable part of Divine revelation to guide human beings throughout all time.)
    - Can we know for certain if our night-time dreams are from good spirits or evil spirits? (Not necessarily.)
    - Why is dreaming (visualizing the future) important? (It can help us think positively about changes we can make in our lives, and inspire us to act on these ideas.)
    - Is it important to evaluate your dreams (goals) by comparing them to what the Lord teaches us in His Word? Why or why not?
    - Give an example of a true idea that inspires you to change your life and become a better person. You can also give an example of a person who inspires you in a similar way.

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Visions and Dreams



Do you have big dreams or goals for your life? Maybe you can imagine a world without poverty, a crime-free city, or a neighborhood without trash. Maybe you can imagine yourself becoming a skilled musician, a successful athlete or providing important help to a friend or someone else in need. Imagination can lift our minds and enable us to visualize new possibilities. But our dreams for our own future will not become a reality until we take action!

In today's story Jacob had a "prophetic" dream that changed the direction of his life. The Lord appeared to him as he slept and said: "Arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family" (Genesis 31:13). On the strength of this, Jacob took his wives and livestock and started a new life, leaving behind the life he had led with his father-in-law Laban.

Unlike the dreams or aspirations we have for our own lives, prophetic dreams occurred while people slept, while visions occurred while people were awake. The Heavenly Doctrine talks about various kinds of dreams and where they come from:

> There are three types of dreams. The first type comes from the Lord through heaven. The prophetical dreams in the Word were like this. The second type comes by way of angelic spirits. This was the source of the instructive dreams that members of the Most Ancient Church had. The third type comes by way of the spirits who are close to a person when he is asleep. These too carry spiritual meanings. Delusory (fantasy) dreams however come from a different source (*Arcana Coelestia* 1976).

The night-time dreams we have today are not like the prophetic dreams in the Word. They occur when our conscious mind is resting and are the thoughts and speech of spirits and angels who are with us (*Arcana Coelestia* 6624). We cannot know where our dreams come from with enough certainty to base our lives on them. If we take dreams to be a sign from the Lord that we have to follow, we will tend to stop using our own best judgment.

> No one is reformed by miracles and signs, because they compel…it is of the Lord's Divine providence that a person act in freedom in accordance with his reason (*Divine Providence* 130).

The Lord has created the human mind so that it can be lifted up to spiritual life by learning true ideas, and wanting, seeing and starting a new life based on them. If we are willing to let them, true ideas from the Word can shape our minds so that we can begin a new, heavenly life. We can check out our life-dreams in the light of the Word to be sure that it is the Lord is leading us, and not our selfish desires.

Visions and Dreams in the Word

The Word gives many examples of dreams that changed lives. Look up the following verses in the Word to find out who had a vision or dream, and what changed as a result.

Where	Who?	Vision?	Dream?	What was foretold or changed?
Genesis 31:13	Jacob		X	Jacob took his wives, flocks and herds and left Laban.
Genesis 37:5-10				
Genesis 40:9-13				
Genesis 41:15-36				
Numbers 22:23-32				
Daniel 2:29-45				
Luke 1:26-38				
Matthew 2:13				
Revelation 21:10-27				

Visions and Dreams in the Word

Teacher Copy

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Where	Who?	Vision?	Dream?	What was foretold or changed?
Genesis 31:13	Jacob		X	Jacob took his wives, flocks and herds and left Laban.
Genesis 37:5-10	Joseph		X	His brothers hated him and tried to kill him.
Genesis 40:9-13	Butler		X	He was taken from prison and given his job back.
Genesis 41:15-36	Pharaoh		X	Pharaoh was able to prepare for a severe famine.
Numbers 22:23-32	Balaam's donkey	X		The angel talked to Balaam and he blessed the children of Israel instead of cursing them.
Daniel 2:29-45	Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon		X	A series of kingdoms would follow Nebuchadnezzar's until one arose that would destroy the other kingdoms and last forever.*
Luke 1:26-38	Mary	X		Mary was prepared to conceive and bear Jesus.
Matthew 2:13	Joseph		X	Joseph and his family fled to Egypt to protect the baby Lord.
Revelation 21:10-27	John on the Isle of Patmos	X		The Holy City New Jerusalem descended, prophesying the coming of the New Church.

* This dream foretells the history of the Five Churches: Most Ancient Church, Ancient Church, Jewish Church, Christian Church and the New Church.

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