

Chasing Dreams and Fighting Dragons-
The battle to pursue all that God has for you:

There is a word that is often bandied around in Christian circles and has been so for at least 30 years.

The word is destiny.

Now the word destiny means:

The apparently predetermined and inevitable series of events that happen to somebody or something.

A force or agency (noticed unnamed and not identified) that predetermines what will happen.

The challenge with this word is it is not a Bible word.

In fact the only time it is mentioned in the Word is in Isaiah.

Isaiah 65:11 ESV
(11) But you who forsake the LORD, who forgets my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny.

In the KJV version the word never appears.

The word as we have translated here in the ESV can more correctly be translated Meni, or fate.

Gad – or Fortune
Meni – Fate

Both were deities that were worshiped by the Jews when they were captive in Babylon. They were gods that were believed to control the lives of people and nations.

So this scripture could read:

"That you have set up a table for fortune and are drunk on the wine of fate."

Gill in his commentary describes what people would do when they worship these god's:

According to the number of letters in a person names they would toast drinks to their good fortune, they would raise a glass to in honor of worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars –

This is where we get our western practice of raising a toast.

Gills conclusion is that when the Jews were surrounded by the enemy they would raise a drink to the planets and toast them trusting that their fate was secure and they gave no reference or indication of their dependence and trust in God.

So in a real sense it is not appropriate for us to say....

I am chasing MY destiny.

I am pursuing MY destiny.

I am working towards MY God given destiny.

Because to say such a thing is making a reference to a form of worship and a force that we really don't want to subject ourselves to.

The truth is we don't have to use non-Biblical words or concepts to explain what God has for us.

We don't need bad theology to have a great life.

We don't need to be toasting the moon and the stars worshipping foreign Gods.

So if destiny is a deity we chose not to worship, what do we have to say as Christians to describe what God has for us?

I would suggest that we have great Bible concepts like:

- Dream
- Future
- Hope
- Sovereignty

A dream is: a vision, an aspiration, an ambition that you long for.

Joseph had a dream.

He had an internal vision from God about what his future would contain.

*T. E. Lawrence said
All men dream, but not equally.
Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds,
wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of
the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams
with open eyes, to make them possible.*

A destiny is something we are fated to have.

A dream is something we called to have.

A destiny is something that you believe the gods (little g) have given you.

A dream is something that you are working with God (Big G) to bring to pass.

A destiny is something I have to make happen.

A dream is something that I am partnered with God to pursue.

One is based upon presumption and self.

The other is based upon faith and His faithfulness.

Walt Disney said:

All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.

A future:

A future is happenings to come.

The future is the place where things that are yet to happen, happen.

Where the promises and the possibilities combine with the preparation to make manifest the reality we have been dreaming of.

Our future holds that one thing, which today does not hold, further possibility and opportunity.

You see even if you believe that you are in the worst season of your life, there is always tomorrow...the future.

Jeremiah 29:11 ESV

(11) For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

The word welfare here is translated from the Hebrew word shalom.

It means peace, soundness in body, tranquility, contentment, friendship with God and man.

So no matter what you are currently experiencing-
No matter what you are currently facing-

God already has your future in mind.

Jim Rohn said:

Let others lead small lives, but not you. Let others argue over small things, but not you. Let others cry over small hurts, but not you. Let others leave their future in someone else's hands, but not you.

A Hope:

Jeremiah 29:11 ESV

(11) For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Hope is not an ethereal thing.

Hope is grounded firmly in the fact that you have faith that Jesus is who He says He is and can do what He says he can do.

And this hope, gives rise to trust.

And this trust is the thing that drives us forward with eyes up looking for our future as we pursue our dream.

Albert Einstein said:

Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.

Helen Keller said:

Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.

But the thought I love the most is the one stated by Aristotle:

Hope is the dream of a waking man.

When you know that God is for you.

When you know that He delights in our prosperity.

Psalms 35:27 ESV

(27) Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the LORD, who delights in the welfare (health, soundness, completeness, prosperity) of his servant!"

When you know He is for you.
When you know He fills your nights with dreams of possibilities and your days with opportunities to fulfill them.

He is like a daytime dream!
It fills your heart and lifts you out of the ordinary.

Dale Carnegie said:
Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.

So we have dreams, we have futures, we have hope, and all of this rests surely and firmly upon the basis of the concept of God's sovereignty over the affairs of man.

In fact I would say that we can build our life and stake our future upon this sure foundation.

Sovereignty:

I love this word word sovereignty.

Its true Biblical meaning has been lost and confused down through time.

But for the Christian, it is the most astounding and comforting word in the entire Bible

Sovereignty

1. Supreme authority, especially over a state.
2. Freedom from outside interference and the right to self-government.

Sovereignty means that God has all power over all things.
That He can intervene how and where He sees fit as He sees fit.
He is not dependant upon us.
He wants to work with us.
He wants to work on our behalf.

He wants to make a way for us.
But He really doesn't need us.
He is not sitting around waiting for permission to move on His earth.

I heard a very famous TV preacher say that just recently. That God can do nothing on earth unless man gives Him permission.

Now this is not just one man's thought but the thought process of a whole group of them:

"God has to be given permission to work in the earth realm on behalf of man. You are in control. If man has control then who has lost it? God."

So since the fall of man, they say that God has been sitting in heaven fretting over the state of the earth.....and now because of Christ we Christians have all the power to run the place.

Ok...well what about the 4000 years before Christ?

Who ran the world then?

All of God's power was handed over to Satan at the fall is what they teach.

So logically they are suggesting that God had no control over the flood, over the tower of Babel, of the Israelites in Egypt.

It wasn't until this particular denomination was formed in the American Midwest in the 1950's that He could sit back and say "Whew, it is all under control now, I am so relieved, faith preachers have arrived!"

God is omnipotent. - I am the great I Am.

He is self sufficient.

He is subject to no law external to Himself.

He does not need man's permission to do anything in the universe that He holds in the palm of His hand.

Any limitation placed on God is placed there by His own choice, not by our error.

Let's not make stuff up, let's wrestle till we find the truth, thinking is a better use of our time than drinking the kool-aid of heresy just because someone else suggests that's what we should do.

People confuse the concept of sovereignty, God's power over all things with fatalism, our power over nothing.

Sovereignty implies we have personal responsibility based upon our relationship to God.

Fatalism implies that we have no personal responsibility because we are in the hands of the gods (little-g).

God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility – are two great truths that run from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation, throughout God's Word; and they never conflict.

People ask why do we pray for things when God knows the prayer and the outcome before we open our mouths?

Why do we work for things when God can just make it all happen? Shouldn't I just sit here and wait for it to happen?

God has always wanted to teach us to rely upon Him.

He is not into independence from Him, but our dependence upon Him.

But then again He is not into slavery, He wants friendship, He wants to partner with us to manifest His Kingdom in the hearts of others.

After God saves us, which is a supernatural thing, as only He can do, it is our responsibility to do everything we can with what we have been given.

God knows the beginning from the end, and the middle in between, but it is our responsibility to walk it with Him, fight for it against the forces of darkness and if necessary make happen what He wants to happen.

I believe that a lot of people are spiritually unemployed.

They sit around on their rusty-dusty waiting for a cosmic sign from heaven, when we have been given all the permission we should ever need in the form of the Word.

People, don't marry one of those that are a "one-day-gonna".

I am one-day-gonna-finish-school.
I am one-day-gonna-get a job.
I am one-day-gonna-get right with Christ.
One day –I'm-gonna start a company.

You are one-day-gonna wake up dead and disappointed!

We need to pour our life out for a maximum return.

Erma Bombeck said:

When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, "I used everything you gave me".

And that is how we should live this life.

Too many Christians wait for their dreams to come to them. I believe that we should be chasing them down, hog tying them and bringing them home to skin and put above the mantle piece And hear a great..."way to go boy" from heaven!

Chasing Dreams:

Your dream isn't something that you acquire.
It is not a destination that you arrive at.

Your dream is something that you pursue over a lifetime.
It isn't just one thing, but a collection of things.

In order to make manifest your dreams you are going to have to develop a skill set over a life time.

Here are 8 skills I believe we all need to learn in order to become all that we want to become.

Now, I said learn and I mean it.

Living a fulfilled and successful life isn't just for some; it is just not for the faint of heart.

1. Learn that the only place success comes before work is in the dictionary,

The measure of who we are is what we do with what we have been given.

Most people can't work hard.

Laziness is something that comes naturally to all of us.

I honestly believe that the ability to work hard is a skill most of us have to learn, not a deposition that few of us have.

Parents, the reason that your children act all self entitled is because they don't have to do anything.

Someone tidies their room.
Irons their clothes.
Cooks all of their food.
Does all the work around the home.
Drives them where ever they want.
And gives them as much money as they need.

Of course they feel entitled to the good life!
They have never had to work one day of their first 18 or 21 years!

They will whine, they will carry on, they will complain about you to their friends.

But we are called to be parents, not peers.

Betty Davis said:

If your children don't hate you every once in a while, you doing something wrong.

2. Learn to learn - most people don't.

An education isn't how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know.

It's being able to differentiate between what you know and what you don't.

You should never stop learning.

Every day you should be trying to improve yourself, your mind, your body, and your skill set.

Because if you are not pursuing learning, you are not pursuing your dream.

(2 Timothy 2:15)

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15 ESV

(15) Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

I love how the ESV puts it....do your best, make every effort.
Be diligent!

Are you diligently preparing yourself for tomorrow's opportunities?

Remember success is when preparedness meets opportunity.

Most people are never successful because they are never prepared.

Henry Ford said:

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young.

3. Learn people skills.

It doesn't matter how much knowledge you acquire if you can not communicate it effectively it means nothing.

Theodore Roosevelt said:

The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people.

We live in a world that emphasizes the accumulation of hard assets, the gaining of things.

But the one thing that the people who have the hard assets all have in common, is they all have great soft skills.

The more people you know, and who know you in a positive way, the more successful you will be at anything you attempt.

Skills with people are not dependant upon a personality.

You might sit there saying "That person is so good with people; they are just the likable type"

But the likeable guy sits here thinking...how come I never say no to anyone about anything, I can't get my team to do a thing and I always end up doing it...likeable guy lacks a skill because he as always relied upon his personality.

If you want to please people who are mistaken, you can't simply tell the truth.

You're always going to have to add some sort of padding to protect their misconceptions from bumping against reality.

Now that padding is not a lie and it is not a sign of weakness on your behalf, just an awareness of the fragility of the being on the other end of the conversation.

You have to start where people are and help them get to where they want to and need to go.

Learn to work with people.

Teach your children how to work with people.

Teach them about difficult people.

Small minded people.

Jerks.

And teach them not get jaded because of people, just how to move on from bad relationships in search of good ones.

4. Learn to lead.

It is better to have 100 people doing 1% of what you need done than you doing 100% of what needs to be done.

Leadership is the ability to get others to do what they don't believe they are capable of and have them convinced that they are enjoying the learning experience.

At one time in world politics, leadership meant muscle.

This attitude transferred over into business.

But real leadership is getting on with people, not beating them.

Real leadership is getting people to see a common vision and to share a common goal and to work side by side to achieve that goal.

You don't lead people by hitting them that is assault, not leadership.

*Peter Drucker put it like this:
Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.*

Real leadership is putting first things first every time.
Management is having the discipline to implement them on a daily basis.

If you are going to chase your dream you have to develop as a leader.

This is why I would always encourage you to focus on your people skills before you focus on your leadership skills.

Because the key to successful leadership is influence, not authority.

5. Learn to give up the good to go after the great.

Life is filled with good opportunities.
But you have to be prepared to put them all aside and pursue the truly great ones.

We go where our vision leads us.

If your vision is small, yes you will have the satisfaction of reaching, but you will also limit your opportunity to do more and become more.

We should be continually redefining success with each new goal achieved.

Success is the pursuit of a worthwhile goal.

Once you obtain something that you are chasing, you must learn to use that as a foundation to build on and don't let it become the roof under which you sit while you rest on your laurels.

Thucydides, the ancient Greek historian said:
The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them, glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it.

You can tell a God sized vision and a God inspired life because it is:

- Multigenerational in its execution
- Selfless in its focus
- Daunting in its possible impact
- Impossible in its fulfillment
- Exciting in its prospects
- Frightening in the ramification of it's failure
- Demanding in its detail
- Exacting in its price
- All consuming in its passion.
- God glorifying & Christ exalting in all that it does

Living and dreaming small brings no one comfort but yourself.

6. Learn to turn your disasters into stepping stones to your dreams.

I am firmly convinced that our dreams, our hopes, our futures, rest not on what we do, but on who we become as we chase after them.

God is always more interested and concerned with the character of His people than the accomplishments of His people.

He wants to do something in you in order to do something through you.

That is why he has no problem exposing sin in the camp.
That is why he has no issue with exposing sin in your life or mine.

Because the fertilizer of today, produces the roses of tomorrow.

Does this deny the facts?

No.

I can smell the facts.

I can read the bank statements.

I know what I am facing.

But learn to pick yourself up and go again.

Winners are not those that never fail, but those that never quit.

7. Learn to NOT be the jack of all trades; singleness of purpose is one of the chief ingredients in a successful life.

What are YOU good at?

Not the other guy.

Not compared to the other gal.

But you?

You?

Your focus determines your reality.

If you are going to obtain your dream you are going to have to prepare for it and train for it.

No you can't train to be a linebacker and a quarterback.

You can not train to be a catcher and a pitcher.

But I can do both...I am awesome guy...

Great....but you're not the flash.

You can't throw it and catch it.

So what skill sets do you need to get there and what are you doing to prepare yourself for it.

And once you are there, what is going to distinguish you from everyone else?

We all know that perfection is not obtainable, but if you chase it, you will hit excellence every time.

8. Learn to listen.

I am surprised at how many people, when I coach them, are not prepared to listen.

They will hear words coming out of your mouth.

But unless they hear what they want to hear, they will not listen to any other information.

Learn not to be selective in your listening.

Be selective in your hearing, but not your listening.

Select who you are prepared to hear talk into your life....then listen to all that they have to say.

You don't have to agree with it, but if they are your confidant, you need to listen.

I would even encourage you to listen to your enemies.

Often it is those that dislike us tell us the most insightful things about ourselves.

In 2nd Samuel, Shimei, a mean spirited little man threw stones at David after he was departing the city after the attack by Absalom.

It was one of the lowest days in David's life.

Criticism rarely comes when we're up and on top of things. It's usually when we're down and out that some critic comes along. People pile judgments on our sorrow and suffering, and once they get going, they can't seem to stop.

Now David had a choice, he had the right to shut it down or he had the right to take it on board.

There is a Yiddish proverb that says, "If one man calls you an ass, pay him no mind. If two men call you an ass, go buy a saddle."

You can deal with criticism in one of two ways.

Shut it down immediately and move on, and more often than not this is the right thing to do.

Or listen.

Really listen.

Listen beyond the bitterness and judgment and see if there is even a small bit of truth in these statements.

I have done this.

You sit.

Listen.

And at the end of the tirade say....you now what you're right, I could have done such and such better. On the rest of it you're wrong, but for that bit of information and reflection, I want to thank you.

Two things you get from this:

- 1) You have learned something because you listened.
- 2) You have control the full impact of the verbal assault because you have taken what was right to take and rejected what needed to be rejected.

Spurgeon said,
"Get your friend to tell you your faults, or better still, welcome an enemy who will watch you keenly and sting you savagely. What a blessing such an irritating critic will be to a wise man. What an intolerable nuisance to a fool."

Pat D'Amico

We learn from our friends, but heaven knows the lasting lessons come from our foes.

9. Learn to believe in yourself. Learn to trust that fact that God trusts you.

Because there will be many times when you and He are all you have going for you.

Chasing your dream does not have to be lonely.

I believe you are in a church full of people who are chasing dreams and who will support you as you go after yours.

But there will always be times when you feel alone.

Times here even the soft hand of the one you love can not bring comfort like the soft voice of the one who loved you first.

There is a phrase "Drive it like you stole it".

I believe we should live it like we own it.

Live like this is our planet.

Live like God is for us.

Live like we have everything we need to do everything we can.

If you're going to dream, I just can't see the point in dreaming small.

Just make up your mind to live your life disappointed and optimistic at the same time.

Every day I wake up thinking "This is the day".
And every day I go to bed thinking "not quiet yet".

And it will never change.
Because what I want to see is too big for my life time.
What I want to see happen will happen after I am dead.
And I tell you, I will die in a pulpit one day and my last thought will be,
just give me one more chance for one more soul.