



**SERIES: MY LIFE WITH GOD**

## **God Is at Work – Keep Dreaming**

**Life Reference: Ruth 1:1-20**

**Focus Verse:**

**“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psalm 42:11).**

The future held great promise as she married and then had two wonderful sons. Filled with dreams and aspirations for this young family of hers, she envisioned so many things for their future. All was well for several years as life moved in predictable paths. Then came the disappointments. As the economy grew worse in their town, her husband decided they must move somewhere which offered a better chance of meeting their needs.

The new place was not like home—the people were different, their customs were different, and even their religion was different. The family knew no one there, but, as one does, they adjusted. Soon things didn't seem quite as strange as they settled into their new routine. By the time the boys were ready to marry and have their own families, the differences didn't seem to matter as much anymore. Oh, she would have liked daughters-in-law from back home, but these were nice young women and she grew to love them. Life wasn't perfect, but it was still good.

Until trouble again came to her doorstep. First her husband died and then unexpectedly both sons. The life that began with so many hopes and dreams now stretched before her empty. One by one, the things she loved had been taken away. Her dreams lay in shattered pieces.



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Alone except for one devoted daughter-in-law, she gathered her few possessions and returned to her old home—empty. Why dream more dreams? She had no hope that they would be fulfilled. Even her name, bestowed at birth with so much promise, now served as a reminder of all she no longer possessed. “Call me not Naomi [pleasant], call me Mara [bitter]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1:20-21).

## Life Reflection:

Has there been a time that you felt life did not fulfill all your hopes and dreams?

Because of disappointments that you have experienced, is there an emptiness inside that you cannot explain to others?

Why do you feel that your desires and dreams did not come true? Were there certain circumstances beyond your control? Or do you feel it is “God’s fault” that these things happened to you?

All of us have unfulfilled desires which we have not seen become reality. No two situations are alike. We might look at each other and think, “Oh, she really has it all together,” while inside we feel distressed, disappointed, or even cheated. Solomon said that “hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12).

At other times it is the sudden, unexpected event that disrupts our plans and dreams.

**“People can never predict when hard times might come. Like fish in a net or birds in a snare, people are often caught by sudden tragedy” (Ecclesiastes 9:12, New Living Translation).**

For you, this might mean a serious financial setback, the death of a spouse, personal illness, or other event that leaves you feeling helpless.

- Like Job, you may mourn the life that has been swept away in a whirlwind of tragedy.
- Like Hannah, you may suffer the pain of infertility.



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- Like David, you may see your plans put on hold and left to the next generation to build your temple.
- Like Jeremiah, you may be asked by God to serve Him in singleness.
- Like Paul, you may desire to reach new places for the gospel but find yourself in a "prison situation" where you cannot fulfill your ambitions for your ministry.
- Like Joseph and Daniel, you may find yourself far from home and in a situation not of your choosing.

## **Life Reflection:**

How do you deal with life when it is not all you had hoped? How do you cope? Are you able to hold onto your dreams when they seem distant or impossible?

### **There are three things that we must consider about dreams:**

- Not all dreams will be fulfilled, but God may have a plan that will far exceed what you determined for yourself—if you are only willing to trust Him.
- Sometimes our dreams are deferred and fulfillment will come through another.
- Sometimes our dreams are unfulfilled because we have unrealistic expectations.

**"People cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end"  
(Ecclesiastes 3:11, New Living Translation).**

God orchestrates events and outcomes that are hidden by our limited natural sight. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that God is "the author and finisher of our faith." That means that He is the one who begins the good work in us. If He is the author (beginning) of our faith in hopes and dreams, then He is working to finish those things He has begun in us. If He is the finisher, then He is in charge of what happens to us as long as we stay in His will.

### **Remind yourself often that God is at work behind the scenes.**

**Jeremiah 29:11** The Lord has plans for our lives that offer us a future and a hope.



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- Psalm 37:4-5** He directs us to "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."
- Matthew 6:33** We are to make God our priority and seek Him first.
- Hebrews 11:6** God rewards those who diligently seek Him and His righteousness.

We do not know all that it might actually take for our dreams to become reality. The delay in their fulfillment may be God's way of testing us to see how much He can trust us. We may be going through a refining process. Trials are often what shapes our character and helps us to become more like Christ—the ultimate goal, dream, or desire in the heart of a Christian.

Charles Spurgeon wrote: "Happy is the man who hath one desire, if that one desire is on Christ. If Jesus be a soul's desire, it is a blessed sign of divine work within."

As we seek ways to achieve our dreams, it is important that we increase our prayer life. Prayer combined with study of the Word will help our minds stay focused on the spiritual and not be diverted from the right path.

### **God May Have a Different Plan**

There is an old saying that, "What you are will live on in someone else." Although our dreams may never come to pass in our lifetime, if we plant the seeds of our dream in the heart of another, it will live on. Perhaps the timing is not right for our dreams to be fulfilled or perhaps God intends it to live on in someone else. That was the case with King David. Although he had a strong desire to build a house for the Lord, God did not allow him to fulfill that dream. Instead God permitted Solomon, his son, to be the instrument of the dream's fulfillment. David accepted God's will and poured his energies into doing all he could to see that dream come to pass through Solomon (I Chronicles 22).

While David knew that his dream would be completed through his son, it is doubtful that Naomi had any such assurance. Although her life did not end on the bitter note of Ruth 1:21 when she declared herself empty, she most likely never realized what hope lay in her arms as she nestled Ruth and Boaz's son, Obed, to her. She felt a certain joy and contentment at holding this promise of the future, but little did she know that the child in her arms would be the grandfather of a king and in the lineage of the King of Kings. God did not reveal His ultimate plan to her, even though He was working through her all the time.



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God's Word tells us that "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Perhaps, like David, He will reveal that time to us. Or, we may be like Naomi who held the promise of the future but did not realize the full scope of what was within her hands. We speak of Ruth and her dedication, yet we should not forget the life of the mother-in-law that inspired Ruth to leave behind the gods of her people and follow the One True God. God in His time fulfilled the dream in a way Naomi could never imagine or live long enough to see.

### **I May Be Dreaming the Wrong Dream**

We must be careful to dream the right dreams. God's plan for us is perfect, and it is important that we ask Him to make us sensitive to His direction and purpose for our lives. He will show us if our dreams are in His will.

**"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"  
(Proverbs 4:23).**

Some dreams can take us in the wrong direction and our spiritual life will suffer because of it. If we pursue the wrong desires, God may not always put a roadblock in our way. Psalm 106:15 tells us, "And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul." That is why we must align ourselves with what God wants for us and set boundaries on our desires.

It may be that we desire good things but that our goals are too lofty or we are personally unable to achieve them. If that is the case, we must evaluate ourselves to see whether we are qualified to attain that dream. It may be helpful to take time to evaluate our personal strengths and weaknesses. We can ask questions such as:

- What types of things do I really enjoy?
- What do I think are my God-given abilities?
- What things create strong feelings or emotions within me?
- What people can I surround myself with who are capable of helping me see the dream happen?

### **Life Reflection:**

Do you have a dream that is not yet fulfilled?

Are you doing anything to see that dream become reality?

Do you think this dream is within God's plan for your life?





## Life Response:

Dreams are only dreams unless we work to fulfill them. We may have to get dirt under our fingernails—struggle and push—to see our dreams materialize. They will not come without effort. II Timothy 2:15 says to “study to shew thyself approved unto God.” Fulfilled dreams come with determination, effort, and, yes, even sacrifice. How hard are we willing to work to accomplish that dream?

The writer of Proverbs knew the importance of aspirations or goals (Proverbs 21:5). Webster defines a goal as “an object or end that one strives to attain; aim.” Dream is defined as “a fond hope or aspiration.” Without goals we are at the mercy of those strong figures around us. If we do not give serious thought to our goals, how can we realize our dreams? Studies show that people who set goals concentrate better, are more satisfied with their lives, and have less anxiety.

- Keep goals short and achievable. Otherwise, you set yourself up for failure.
- Set short-term goals (intermediate steps) so you can see yourself making progress.
- Set long-term goals to reach your dream.

## Life Reflection:

What short-term and long-term goals can you set to help you achieve your dream?

Do you feel you have set a realistic timetable to achieve your goals?

When we feel disappointed, perhaps even cheated, out of the things we desired for our lives, is it possible that these are really appointments with God that will bring us to a better place?

Elizabeth Elliot once said, “If God, like a father, denies us what we want now, it is in order to give us some far better thing later on. The will of God, we can rest assured, is invariably a better thing.”

**“For the LORD is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11).**



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Have you ever gone on a journey and been so focused on reaching your destination that you missed all the scenery along the way? Life can be like that. We can become so caught up in our desires that we forget to enjoy the journey. We allow what we do not have to steal the joy of what we do possess. Don't be afraid to dream—one must dream—but until you reach that highest desire, do not neglect that which is within your grasp right now.

## **My Prayer:**

Dear Lord, I bring my hopes, dreams, and aspirations to you. I know that You have a plan for my life, and that Your plan is good. Give me direction that I may hold onto the dreams that will bring glory to You and let go of those that may be detrimental to my spiritual walk. Help me to diligently work to develop the abilities You have given me that I may see my dreams come to pass. Thank You, Lord, for guiding my steps and helping me to see the possibilities within myself.

## **More Life with God References:**

John 16:33  
Romans 8:26-35  
Romans 12:12  
Philippians 4:4  
I Thessalonians 5:16, 18

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