

Why can't scientists explain what dreams really are and what exactly does the bible say about dreams? Are dreams and outer-body experiences the same? Where in the bible does it talk about someone's spirit leaving their body while the body is resting at night? I seriously believe our spirit leaves our body at night and God allows us to sometime see the future, communicate with us or visit loved ones who have passed away. At least with me this is the case. What exactly is this and why isn't this talked about in psychology and science classes. Why would they rather say a person is hallucinating rather than explaining the truth? I recently had a dream about my friend that passed away last month. At the end of the dream he ran in the bathroom stating "they are coming" and he closed the door behind him so I asked him through the closed door "why are you running and what's going on" but he didn't answer. I began to bang on the door until he cracked it open and stated "They are coming and they can't see us together." And the he quickly shut the door. I stood there waiting to see who was coming but no one ever came. I just woke up. That was so weird. Those who can't be with God when we leave but don't go to hell where do they go?

Science can explain many things but it limited to the material world. Science cannot explain the supernatural. Some reject all phenomena which cannot be: seen, heard, touched, tasted or smelled. They claim if something cannot be explained by the five-senses, then it must not be accepted as true. But, we know that there are phenomena that cannot be explained by the five-senses like language or love.

What we know with certainty comes from scripture. In fact, science catches up with scripture. Not one verse of scripture has been proven false by science. The Bible is not a science book but where it speaks on science, it is accurate. It tells us all that we need to know for life and godliness (Jn 10:10, 2 Pe 1:3).

Outside-body experiences do not happen. The bibles says: absent from the body present with the Lord (2 Co 5:8). Our soul leaves our physical body upon death (Ge 3:19, Jas 2:26). It does not return (Eccl. 9:10). Death is described as the soul's departure from the body (Phil. 1:23). One day God will join our earthy bodies back with our soul again (Ac 24:15). We will be given a body fit for eternity in heaven or hell.

Some claim to have gone to heaven and returned. That does not happen¹. Those who have made such claims often recant their stories. When we die, our eternity is set. We get no second chance to repent after death. The deceased goes to the place of the righteous dead (Is. 57:1, 2, 1 Thess. 4:14, Rev. 14:13) or to the place of the unrighteous dead (1 Thess. 4:13; Rev. 20:10, 14, 15) depending on his relationship with the Lord.

¹ The apostle Paul wrote that he was "caught up to the third heaven" but was not allowed to say what he saw there (2 Corinthians 12:1-9). The apostle John saw heaven and was told to write what he saw (Re 21:10-27, 11).

Some believe that they have seen departed loved ones. They have not.² We are not to be surprised that demons make themselves to appear as angels of light (2 Co 11:14). There is a great gulf between the living and the dead that no human can cross (Lk 16:26). We cannot hear from the dead and the dead cannot hear from us. We are forbidden from trying to speak with the dead (Deut 18:10-12).

God can speak to us in dreams if he would like to but his primary means of communication to us is through his word. We do not look to near-death experiences or hallucinations for truth.³ Dreams have served to: restrain men from evil (Ge 20:3),

² Departed saint have been recognized by the living on the Mount of Transfiguration. Jesus Christ was transfigured with three disciples present.

³ The Christian is thoroughly equipped for every good work [2 Ti 3:17]. "A thorough history should provide a clear picture of what troubles the person, how it started, and the context of the problem. Consider obvious causes first. Following the law of parsimony, you now try to explain the problem in the most obvious or natural terms.

For instance, if there is a history of mental illness in the family and the person you are counseling is experiencing bizarre behavior or emotions, the most obvious cause is likely the familial pattern of illness. Genetic factors strongly influence severe mental disorders. Unless you are trained in psychopathology, however, the most responsible action you can take is to refer the troubled person to a psychologist or psychiatrist for diagnosis.

Intervene at the most obvious level first. It is helpful to think of counseling intervention in hierarchical terms. Not only does diagnosis work upward from the obvious level of explanation, many interventions should also follow this approach. Treat the basic symptoms first, then move on to more complex symptoms. For instance, a man may be behaving bizarrely, saying he sees things or hears voices that no one else sees or hears. The first intervention should be to refer the man to a competent professional who will treat these unusual behaviors and hallucinations.

While treatment for the bizarre behavior is underway, you may wish to counsel the person in the steps of Christian commitment, encouraging a "surrender" to the claims of Christ. (Your responsibility as pastor doesn't end when you make a referral.) Of course, the one intervention (professional treatment) may need to temporarily take precedence over the other (spiritual guidance) simply because the disease needs to be under control before the person can adequately comprehend spiritual matters.

Consider supernatural causes. At what point should one consider the possibility of supernatural or demonic causes for a problem and invoke deliverance as the remedy? Only when the more obvious causes have been eliminated.

If there is a history of schizophrenia in the immediate family of a troubled person, for instance, the treatment of schizophrenia must be given first consideration. I think it is gross negligence to move beyond this diagnosis without addressing the presenting issue.

But what about less bizarre behaviors? The same principle applies. Find the most obvious cause and treat this first. If you have eliminated the obvious, or if the symptoms are so strange as to rule out any natural cause, then you might want to consider moving directly to supernatural factors.

Some words of caution:

- Never try to diagnose supernatural causes by yourself. Always seek corroboration from others and hold yourself accountable to corporate discernment.
- Remember that many experts believe that possession doesn't usually manifest itself in bizarre behavior. Satan is more creative than that. We may need to look elsewhere for it.
- Even when you think there is a state of possession, remember that psychological or psychosomatic problems accompany and complicate possession. These may also need treatment.
- While Jesus instructed his followers to deal with demons (Luke 9:1), we find no injunction to seek them out. In other words, avoid preoccupation with these causes. Focus rather on the victory and protection we have in Christ.

reveal God's will (Ge 28:11-22), encourage (Judg. 7:13-15) or instruct (Mt 1:20) individuals and reveal the future (Ge 37:5-10).

In God's providence he is able to control events but he does not see a future that does not yet exist. He has a plan and he is working it out. He is able to arrange circumstances well for those who love him (Ro 8:28).

The interpretations of dreams is: sought anxiously by men (Dan 2:1-3) but belongs to God (Ge 40:8) and is revealed by God (Ge 40:8). Some seek to know God's will (Nu 12:6). Dreams can be delusive (Is. 29:7, 8). False prophets try to interpret dreams (Deut 13:1-5).⁴

Consider the need for regeneration. One of the great drawbacks of counseling or psychotherapy is that it does not deal directly with the core problem of human existence: our alienation from God." Hart, A. D. (1997). *Regeneration, Deliverance, or Therapy?* In *Building your church through counsel and care: 30 strategies to transform your ministry* (Vol. 3, pp. 52-54). Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House.

⁴ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index* (p. 185). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.