



Daring to Dream Again

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Introduction:

Over 60 years ago, just outside of Nashville, Tennessee, a girl was born. She had major health problems, which left her disabled. While her brothers and sisters enjoyed running and playing outside each day, she was confined indoors, her legs wrapped in leather and steel braces.

Her family members were all Christians, and they showed her much love, support, and encouragement. “Will I ever be able to run and play like the other children?” she would often ask the doctors. Encouraged by her parents’ support, she began to believe that God would enable her to walk without braces.

Her brothers and sisters helped her to practice moving her legs without the support of the braces, and on her 12th birthday she amazed her parents and doctors by removing her braces and walking around unassisted. She never wore braces again!

Her next goal was to play basketball. She continued to exercise her faith and courage – as well as her underdeveloped legs – and tried out for the school basketball team. The coach told her that she wasn’t good enough, selecting her older sister, instead.

Her dad, a wise and loving man, told the coach, “My daughters come in pairs. If you want the one, you have to take the other also.” So, reluctantly, the coach added her to the team. She was given an outdated uniform and allowed to practice with the other players.

One day she told the coach, “If you’ll give me an extra ten minutes of coaching each day, I’ll give you a world-class athlete!” His laughter trailed off when he realized she was serious, and he agreed to give her the extra time.

It wasn’t long before the extra coaching paid off, and she became one of his best players. When her team made it to the state basketball championships, the coach of the internationally famous “Tiger Belle’s Track Club” invited her to try running.

She soon started winning all of the track events she was entered in. By the age of 16, she found herself competing in the Olympics in Australia and winning a bronze medal for anchoring the women’s 400-meter relay team.

Not satisfied with that, she worked extra hard for the next four years, and represented the United States in the 1960 Olympics in Rome. There, she won the 100-meter dash and the 200-meter dash, and anchored the 400-meter relay . . . all in world-record times! This time, it was three medals – all gold. At the end of the year she received the prestigious Sullivan Award as the most outstanding amateur athlete in America.

Her faith and hard work had paid off. And today, Wilma Rudolph is a reminder to us that (sometimes) the most restrictive barriers are not those of the body, but those of the mind and spirit.

If you had no fear of failure, what would you attempt for God?

What is it that you would like to lay at the Master's feet when your life is over?

Would you really like to be free? Then you need to allow God, by his Spirit and through his Word, to change you "from the inside out". Over the next two months, each Sunday, we are going to dare to dream again. It's a process, and that process takes time to come to full fruition in your life.

Many of you ordered a book to go along with this series. We ordered a few extra, so be sure you pick yours up at the information counter before you leave today. Start the journal this week so you can be preparing yourself for next Sunday. For your sake and the sake of this fellowship, I'm daring us to be a church family like none before in our history. I dare you to be involved in a series like you never have before. Plan to be here each week. Come expecting to be challenged and to grow. Expect that God will change you during this series.

During these Sundays, I believe numbers of you will benefit from the insight you'll gain from God's Word, as you consider the following ways to break through the barriers that can hold you back from becoming the kind of people that God wants you to be.

Focusing on the negatives can bring you to unbelief. I want to encourage you to allow Jesus Christ to set you free from that, and to learn new ways of believing God for great things not only in your own life, but also in the lives of others in this congregation.

We have a great eight weeks ahead, as restrictive barriers of the mind and spirit are broken and we all begin running spiritually in record times!

As your pastor and coach I've come to know and love you. All I really want is God's best for you . . . and all that implies.

Many of you are living below your rights and privileges as children of the living God. I dare you in this series to change all that. Whether it's one or more of the barriers that I've already mentioned, or fear . . . unforgiveness . . . rebellion . . . secret sins . . . hardness of heart – whatever – I'm literally daring you to take this Word (the Bible) seriously, and the God of this Word seriously and to experience radical changes in your life, changes that will last for all of eternity.

My text for today is **Romans 12:1-3**

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

So many people struggle with God's will for their life. It doesn't need to be like that!

God has made his general will known to us through his Word and by his Spirit and through the example and the teachings of his Son, Jesus. There's nothing hidden, mysterious, or complicated about God's will. He has called us all to the following:

- a) Repentance
- b) Relationship with him and with others
- c) Likeness to his Son, Jesus
- d) Service/ministry (the Great Commission)

But if you allow the thinking of this world and the kinds of barriers I've already mentioned to hold you back, ensnare you, and keep you in bondage, then I

think you'll never be able to test out God's good, pleasing, and perfect will for yourself.

Throughout this series we will look at some key biblical characters - six men and two women. All of them could have said "Dreams? I don't care for any, thank you. It hurts too much when they don't come true." Even so, each of these individuals will have a key lesson to teach us.

This morning I'd like to briefly examine the life of another person in God's Word. This will get us into the topic of dreams and to prepare us for next Sunday.

Genesis 37:5-11

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it."

His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Joseph was a young man destined, but not ready, for greatness. He was a good looking young man.

Genesis 39:6

So he left in Joseph's care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome.

If you had known him back in your high school class, you would have said, "Good-looking, right, and he

knows it! Smart too, but spoiled. His rich dad gives him whatever he wants. Did you see the Technicolor dream coat he wore when his senior picture was taken?"

God had dreams of greatness he placed in Joseph's heart. But he also had a lot of work to do to make him the gracious, humble, forgiving man he eventually became. For Joseph, that meant some major behavioral changes were in order, and things would get worse, much worse, before they got better, much better.

It seems like generally before a dream becomes reality, there is a dip and things often fall apart before they get better.

Here are some things God had to do in Joseph's life and how he took a dip before the dream became reality.

I. God had to work so Joseph was willing to let go of his painful past

His brothers sold him into slavery because they despised the dreams he had and told them about. If Joseph had held on to anger and unforgiveness it would have hindered him from moving beyond the experience of the pit and his life would have been over.

II. God had to work so Joseph was willing to recognize that God was in control of his life, and was at work in his present day circumstances to bring Joseph to a place of maturity and growth so he could be useful and the dream fulfilled.

III. God had to work in Joseph's life so that appropriate goals for the future were realized. No matter what the circumstances, Joseph set goals for his future. In realizing the fulfillment of the dream, one has to set goals that will keep them moving in the direction of the dream. Joseph remained pure. Joseph remained honest. Joseph remained close to God.

IV. God had to work in Joseph's life so that his prejudices were dumped. Here he finds himself in a foreign land, in Egypt as a slave. I'm sure Joseph had prejudices about the Egyptians. The Egyptians were not friends of the people of Israel. In fact they were enemies. They served foreign gods, they were anything but holy people and Joseph was captive in their culture and land.

V. God had to work in Joseph's life so that he saw the world in new ways through God's eyes. In **Genesis 41:50-52** we read:

Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh and said, "It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." The second son he named Ephraim and said, "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering."

We see from the names that Joseph gave to his sons that he had to change his view of things. In verse 51 we see he named his son, Manasseh. "It is because God has made me to forget all my trouble and all my Father's household."

In verse 52 we see he named his second son Ephraim. "It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering." Joseph had to look at the world around him in new ways. He had to have compassion for the people who were starving during the 7 years of famine.

VI. God had to work in Joseph's life so that he moved beyond his comfort zone. If Joseph had stayed at home, he never would have realized the

fulfillment of his dreams. God knew that and provided opportunities for Joseph to grow and mature along the way so he could handle the dream.

Before things got better it had to get worse. He was sold into slavery. He was put in jail then worked his way up to Potipher's house and became head of the home until Potipher's wife accused him of trying to go to bed with her. Then he was put in jail again, and eventually interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and was promoted to become most powerful in the nation of Egypt under Pharaoh.

Daily time in the Word, answering the journal questions, completing the weekly assignments might initially seem to some like a downhill, rather than uphill, path. That's because this is not a make-believe adventure, but one that's for real, in which God Himself is involved. . . . And Satan will show up as well.

"On behalf of the Lord, I want to tell you that if you are going to grow, there will be a dip before the upswing, and unfortunately people often quit before the upswing happens. So I challenge you to be serious about this adventure. Grow with us as together we dare to dream again. Don't quit. Stick with it.

Conclusion:

The point is that when significant behavioral change takes place (as with Joseph), things often get worse before they get better. But over time, great maturity marked Joseph. And you can end up different than you are today as the Lord molds your behavior to be more and more like that of his Son, Jesus.

This morning I dare you to not think any longer of conforming to the behavioral and thought patterns of this world, and to allow your will and your mind to be radically transformed by the power of God as you submit yourself fully to his will and to his Word over the weeks ahead.