



Daring to Dream Again: Discover God's Present Involvement in Your Life

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By Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

Sermon Subject: Daring to dream again
Response Called For: Discover God's present involvement in your life
How to Do This: Go on a daily God Hunt
Scripture Text: 1 Sam. 24:1-15

Last week we began our new series, "Daring to Dream Again: Overcoming Barriers That Hold You Back." Most of us have already discovered that pursuing our dreams is a challenge – dreams have a way of quickly fading. Because dreams haven't come to pass yet, they can be difficult to pursue for an extended period of time. Often we lose our focus and get diverted, and before we know it, we're chasing rabbit trails that have little or nothing to do with our dreams. Pursuing our God-given dreams is particularly difficult, because God's dreams take time. When God gives us a dream, it usually stretches beyond one week, one month, or even one year.

If you have a dream of sharing Christ in the marketplace, that dream won't be realized tomorrow morning. It is likely to take more time than that. If your dream is to rear godly children, that's going to take decades, and it certainly won't be a straight line to success.

If your dreams involve using your spiritual gifts for Kingdom service, you'll quickly discover it takes time for God to bring our gifts to maturity. If your dream involves serving the poor, you'll soon find it takes focus to cultivate and nurture a heart of compassion. One of our dreams as a congregation is to become a community of committed believers who will help our city experience life in Christ. We believe God is calling us to be a core community supporting one another and helping our city experience life in Christ. But that dream takes time.

It's because of the time involved in seeing our dreams reach their fulfillment that we lose a focus in pursuing them. That's why I believe we need to see God's present involvement in our lives. If we can see that God is involved along the way, we will be reminded that God will ultimately bring our dreams to fulfillment. When we see God's present involvement in our lives, it strengthens us to pursue long-term dreams. Even though we don't see the dream fulfilled as quickly as we'd like or hope, we are reminded that the Lord is moving us toward the reality of the dream.

This morning we are going to look at David. God gave him the dream of being the next King of Israel when David was quite young. Even though David experienced a number of obstacles, he never gave up on his God-given dream. He was encouraged to go after the dream even during the dark days of his life. It was obvious to him that God was involved in his present circumstances.

Because God was involved, David was enabled to hold on to the larger dream. In 1 Samuel 16 the Lord gave the young shepherd boy David the dream of being King of Israel. Saul was the reigning king, but he gave up his right to be king because of disobedience. So the Lord sent the prophet Samuel to Jesse's house to anoint the next king.

David was the youngest child of Jesse and not well regarded. So when the prophet Samuel went to Jesse's house to "anoint the person God would point out to him," David's father didn't even bother to have David in the house at the time. David's father, Jesse, thought David couldn't be the one to be anointed, because David was young. In addition, David was just a shepherd and didn't have the stature of his older brothers. Nevertheless, the prophet Samuel asked Jesse to bring David into the house and Samuel anointed David, and a dream was birthed in David's life.

David was called to play the harp for King Saul. The king got into troubled moods, and when David played his harp, Saul experienced relief from his dark moods. As God used David and was with him, his popularity began to rise among the people. David defeated Goliath, and soon the people began singing songs about David. One of the songs went like this, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." And at this same time some of David's own songs began reaching the top 40 charts. King Saul became jealous of David's popularity and tried to kill him. Saul was so jealous and insecure that he went on an intense, prolonged pursuit of David to kill him.

If you read the next chapters of 1 Samuel it is like watching chase scenes in Westerns, where the bad guys pursue the good guys through fields and hills. While being chased like this it would have been easy for David to forget his God-given dream of being king. After all, who has time to dream when you've got to run from someone trying to kill you? In a similar way, we can lose our dreams.

- "Who's got time to pursue God's dream when we've got to pay the bills?"
- "How can we focus on God's dream when we're having conflict with a mate or are out of a job?"
- "How can I think about God's dreams when I feel alone or have an academic degree to complete?"

It's so easy for us to lose sight of God's long-term dreams when we're wrestling alligators now!

If we want to keep the dreams God gives us in focus, we have to see God's present involvement in our lives, even in small ways. Sometimes we're so busy looking for God in the "big deal" that we miss him in the ordinary. If we only look for God in the sensational, we will miss Him in the everyday.

Here is a helpful tool for discovering God's present involvement in your life. Go on a DAILY GOD HUNT. Some of you have seen the art that you stare at for a while and all of a sudden a 3-D picture emerges and stands out of the art. The dentist I used to go to in Illinois had several of those in his office and while I would wait for him to check my teeth, I would stare at the pictures. God Hunts are similar. Sometimes we don't see evidences of God's presence until we intentionally look.

I. Four evidences of God's present involvement in our lives.

1. *Answers to prayer.* Many people give up on praying for God to work in their lives. Some people have not ever started to ask for God to be involved in their daily lives. When God answers prayers for blessing our family, we wouldn't be able to recognize answer to such a broad prayer. But when we see specific answers to specific prayers, we're encouraged to discover that God is involved in our lives. And that simple fact helps us focus on our

larger dream. Get specific in your prayers. Ask God to bring new people into CLF. Not just shuffling kingdom furniture as people move from church to church, but people who are not churched that get turned onto Christ. I have been able to get downstairs with the Axis on Wednesday evening and it is exciting to see new faces of youth from the community. Our youth ministry has always been an outreach to this community and that is exciting. Some of those young people will start coming on Sunday, and some of their parents will end up here too.

I haven't seen crowds of people repenting at the altars at CLF, but in a quiet way God is bringing people to Himself. Answers to prayer provide tremendous encouragement to keep the dream alive. Now I know that God doesn't always say, "Yes" to our prayers. Sometimes he says "No." Sometimes he says, "Go slow." And sometimes he says, "I'm not going to immediately grant your request, because I want you to grow." But when we see answers to prayers, we are reminded of God's present involvement in our lives, and we're encouraged to pursue bigger dreams.

2. *Evidence of God's care.* Just last month, an anonymous gift of \$10,000 was given to CLF. As I pondered the way God sent that special gift along, I again was reminded that this church belongs to God. It is His work and He will provide for it. I must confess, there have been times in the last year, I was fearful of the step of faith our board took last year. When we had our series on fear this summer, and we burned our fears, that was one I wrote down, was the finances at CLF. Does God care? Absolutely He cares. Can I trust HIM? YOU bet! Over and over, through unexpected sources, God has provided. I've been reminded that God is involved, and it has helped me remember God's larger dreams.
3. *Unusual linkage or timing.* I read about the church this week that had needed a new van – much like CLF. Their facilities team was prioritizing the needs of our church (which was a very long list). At the top of their list was a new church van. The old van was simply unsafe for long trips, and their young people were preparing to go on trip together. The facilities team already had \$5,000 toward the purchase of a van, hardly enough for the need. So the facilities team decided to approach their presiding elder to ask if they could take \$10,000 from the emergency reserve fund. On a Sunday morning between the first and second service, the chairwoman of the facilities team was on her way to make her request of the elder. Also between those services, not knowing any of this, someone came up to the pastor and told him that they wanted to give the church \$10,000 so our

youth could safely go on their summer mission trip. The pastor made a beeline to the chairwoman, not knowing the plans of the facilities team, and told her about the surprise gift. She told me she was on her way to make a request for the same amount and she didn't know whether she should laugh or cry.

Then a man who was also on the facilities team volunteered to purchase the van. He had a friend go to an auto auction to look for a van. He told his friend we had \$15,000 to spend. The van they thought would be good for our church was taken off the auction, because it had a minimum sale price of \$17,000 and the bid didn't go that high. After the auction, this man's friend approached the owners of the van and told them that church would like to buy it for \$15,000 – and they sold them the van. One might say that was coincidence, but it seems as though God was orchestrating those "unusual links." And it encouraged the facilities team to keep dreams alive for their church.

4. *Help to do God's work in the world.* Often in our congregation we've seen God "just happen" to send someone who is gifted in a particular area right when we had a particular need in a ministry area.

These are just some of the ways we can look for God's present involvement in our lives. And when we see God's involvement in our lives we're motivated to pursue our long-term dreams again.

Let's go back to our story about King David. In 1 Samuel 23 David experiences an unusual linkage and timing. King Saul and his men were chasing David. Just as Saul and his men were closing in on David, Saul was diverted by an attack from the Philistines. David was spared the wrath of Saul's sword by a military diversion. But then we see another evidence of God's present involvement in David's life.

(READ 1 Samuel 24:1–15)

If someone had asked me what I was going to preach about this week, I would have responded, "I'm preaching about a man who had to go to the bathroom." That is true – but fortunately it isn't the point of the story. The point of the story is that the cave Saul chose to "relieve" himself in (I love the Bible's

euphemisms) just “happened” to be the same cave where David and his men were hiding.

This unusual linkage or timing is David’s God Hunt sighting. And I want to highlight two benefits of recognizing God’s present involvement in our lives. I believe they emerge from today’s text.

Recognizing God’s present involvement helps keep God-given dreams alive. In chapter 24 Saul once again takes up his pursuit of David. David is outnumbered. Saul takes 3,000 of his best men, according to verse 2. From chapter 23:13 we learn that 600 men are with David. So David is outnumbered at a ratio of 5 to 1.

But an odd thing happens. To relieve himself, Saul goes into the exact cave where David and his men are hiding. David’s men urge him to slay his pursuer while Saul is preoccupied. But David chooses a different tactic. He sneaks up behind Saul and only cuts off the corner of his cloak. It may seem like a small thing, but through this event David is reminded that God is in control of his life and has all sorts of ways to weave the course of events in David’s favor.

Someone could look at this event and say it is “coincidence.” However, I’m always amazed that when God is involved, coincidences seem to happen quite frequently.

Do you think that this event was an encouragement to David? David’s men thought this was David’s opportunity to “strike and kill Saul.” But instead, David used this incident as evidence that it was not his intent to harm King Saul. David wanted Saul to know that he was seeking Saul’s welfare.

This is one of those events in David’s life that reminded him of God’s faithfulness. How do we know that? The superscription of Psalm 57 reads, “When David had fled from Saul into the cave.” This psalm is identified with this very incident.

(READ Psalm 57)

When you know God is working in your life, it reminds you that God has larger plans for you! Have you seen God’s present involvement in your life? Begin looking for:

- Answers to prayer
- Evidences of God’s care

- Unusual linkages or timing
- Help to do God’s work in the world

These God Hunt sightings will help you realize God’s present involvement in your life; you’ll be motivated to pursue God’s dreams for your life.

Recognizing God’s present involvement helps us pursue God-given dreams with integrity. I believe that when people trust that the Lord is in control of their lives, they no longer have to feel like everything is up to them. While they take responsibility for their lives and do what is required, they don’t overstep the line of integrity.

When I know God has a plan for me, it is easy for me to step out on my own and try to expedite God’s plan. In other words, I can go beyond what is right and try to force God’s plan in my own timing. For example, in sharing my faith with others, I can cross the line and try to manipulate a person into the kingdom. As I cast a vision for what God may do in forming a community of faith helping our city to experience life in Christ, I can cross the line and use guilt to convince people to share God’s love in the city.

Do you know what I’m talking about? We can pursue God-given dreams by human manipulation. An example of that from scripture is Abraham. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. But Abraham and Sarah are getting along in years and Abraham knows time is running out. So Abraham takes Sarah’s servant Hagar and has a child through her. He wants to expedite the process. Ishmael is born to Hagar, and Abraham creates a mess in the process. We can pursue the right dreams by the wrong means. We can try to make God’s dreams happen, not through God’s power but by our own manipulation! We can cross the line and compromise our integrity. If we think we’re all on our own in making God’s dreams come true, we will likely operate that way. But if we know God is presently involved in our life, we are more likely to trust God. We will be people who pursue God’s dreams with integrity.

Sure, we always have to do our part in faith. We have to work and invest time and effort into our dreams, but we can’t manipulate the outcomes. Rather, we trust God to do his part.

God promised David that he would be king. It would have been easy for David to help that dream along by

killing Saul when he had the opportunity. But David knew he was to seek to fulfill God-given dreams in ways that were pleasing to God. Trusting in God releases us from manipulation and from compromising our integrity. That's why seeing God's present

involvement in our lives helps us to maintain integrity and know we're not on our own in pursuing God's dreams.

Conclusion: APPLICATION

1. Be intentional about looking for God's present involvement in your life. Go on a "God Hunt." Most of us learn to see what we've been trained to look for! Ever notice how objects that you rarely noticed before become commonplace once you begin looking for them?

This is true even in everyday observation. When you are looking to buy a certain kind of car, all of a sudden, you notice how many cars there are on the road just like the one you are thinking about buying. We take note of what we are trained to see!

That same principle holds true for our relationship with God. Why do some people see God at work in their lives, while others don't? That is because we see what we are trained to see. Are you looking for God's present involvement in your life? Remember the four categories of the God Hunt: answers to prayer, evidences of God's care, unusual linkage or timing, help to do God's work in the world.

2. Record God's present involvement in your life. As we record sightings of God, we will be encouraged to dream bigger dreams. One of the things I have done to help me to remember God's work in my life is to keep a journal. I often make a practice of regularly writing God Hunt sightings in a journal. Going back from time to time helps me stand in awe of God's work and builds a sense of expectancy. David wrote his God Hunt sightings down in Psalm 57.

In the bulletin today, along with the daily Bible studies, we have places for you to record evidences of God's present involvement in your life. Look for the four categories of God Hunt sightings. Write your God Hunt sightings on the sheet in your bulletin. Share your sightings with people in your small group and ministry teams. Your stories will help you as you seek to keep God's dream for your life alive.