

Divine Encounter

Life does not come without tribulations. Life doesn't withhold heartbreak, financial burdens, sadness, death, misunderstandings, suffering and the list goes on and on. Life, or God, continually changes our path, our goals, our desires; and simply tests our spiritual strength. Our fears are challenged. Our faith is challenged. Don't think for one minute that during these stressful times, God isn't with you. You need to listen, watch and pay attention for those subtle messages.

If you read the Bible, and I hope you do, remember the story of Jacob wrestling with God? Read **Genesis 32:22:32** God instructed Jacob to return to his family. Upon returning home, Jacob feared seeing his brother Esau. Jacob disappeared for years after he took his brother's birthright by trickery. Jacob worried that Esau would not forgive his deceitful act and have him killed. On his journey home, when alone, Jacob wrestled with a man until the break of dawn. The man wanted Jacob to release him but Jacob refused. Jacob wouldn't let go of the man until he received the man's blessing. Then the man, touched Jacob's hip. He put Jacob's hip out of the joint & Jacob was forced to let go. The man then renamed Jacob to Israel. "Israel" means "he struggles with God". The man was God. Finally, God blessed Jacob. And, Esau welcomed Jacob with open arms. The lesson here is in our weakest moments; God is there sending a message. God there helping us with our struggles.

The Bible is full of stories about God's visits to people. Do you ever wonder if God is near now? Does he send messages to people in our time? I believe God does! Below is a true experience by woman named Sharon (*fictitious name*).

Life has been unusually stressful. Emotional. Past pains have resurfaced, leaving Sharon feeling lost, confused and fearful. She has been praying repeatedly, asking God for guidance in making the right decisions & to help the challenges she is facing.



One night, Sharon had a run of dreams. In her words, these are the dreams she described.

"I was standing in the doorway of an old warehouse watching the beautiful birds flying around. Other people were watching the birds as well. I turned towards a voice for a second. When I looked back at the birds through the door, the birds were laying on the ground lifeless. In disbelief, we ran to the birds on the ground. We picked the birds up for examination. I asked a man holding a dead bird if the bird was full of sores. He pulled up on the wing." The dream fades into darkness.

Sharon woke up with an odd feeling as the darkness wrapped around her. Eventually, Sharon falls back to sleep and has another dream.

“I was sitting in the driver seat of an old beat-up truck. A pastor was sitting next to me. Two other people were in the truck on the opposite side of the pastor. Words were exchanged but I couldn’t hear the voices. The pastor reaches over me, starts the truck and we begin to move. I was so squished & uncomfortable against the door.” The dream fades into darkness.

Again, Sharon woke up. She wondered what these dreams mean. She felt exhausted. Despite trying to stay awake, Sharon fell back to sleep.

“Myself & others are walking through a restaurant, I believe it was a restaurant. It appeared there was a party. The workers were dressed in crazy costumes. Then suddenly we are sitting at a table. The pastor reaches both arms around me, holding me so very tight. I was embarrassed thinking of my husband. What will people say about the pastor hugging me. I couldn’t breathe. I tried to squirm away but the pastor wouldn’t let go. I finally got the words to come out, “Pastor, I can’t breathe.”. The dream fades into darkness.

Soon Sharon’s eyes opened. As she was lying in bed, she realized she just woke up from yet, another dream. Sharon felt scared and confused. While she knew these were dreams, Sharon felt like the dreams were too real. She wondered if the dreams were a message. After all, the Bible does suggest you give all your anxiety, troubles and worries to God for he cares about you.

Philippians 4:6-7 1 Peter 5:7 Psalm 55:22 Matthew 6:34 John 14:27

Sharon decided to research the meaning of dreams. She was shocked to find how close to home the dreams actually hit. Below is what Sharon discovered in reading about the dreams.

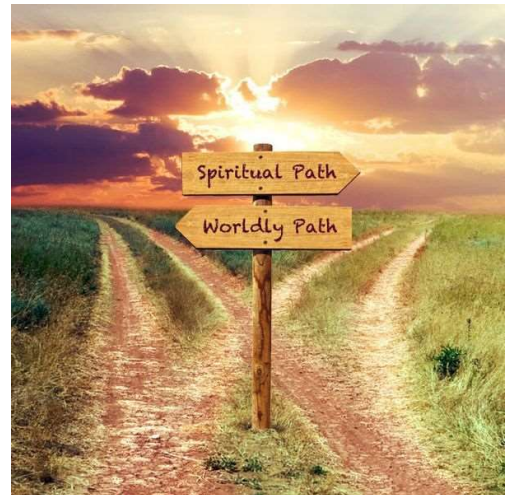
- The flying birds in itself symbolizes hope & independence. The flying birds that suddenly die represents an unexpected loss of freedom. A sign of halted ambition or an upcoming major transition in one’s life. Also, seeing the birds die insinuates one’s goals are blocked. Maybe a current project or relationship is coming to an unexpected end. The dream can signify the need of closure on something; to let go of old patterns, perhaps.
- The dream of a pastor starting a truck while you are being crushed against the door may suggest a spiritual, religious or authoritative figure has taken the driver seat to control your life’s direction. The inability to hear the voices around you & the feeling of being crowded may suggest you are feeling dismissed, unheard or overwhelmed by those around you.
- The dream of the pastor’s tight embracing hug in a crowd suggests conflict between seeking guidance & feeling restricted in life. The people in costumes represent disguises in social identities of those around you. Sharon may be feeling

people around her are not authentic, leaving her to feel alienated or exposed. The suffocating embrace suggests the attempts to “protect” oneself is stripping your independence or freedom of expression leaving you with feelings of being smothered.

- Finally, when a pastor is in a dream, this often indicates a need of spiritual guidance, moral alignment or needing more of a structured belief system. It's possible someone in your life is trying to push you in a different direction or guide you.

Sharon has definitely been in a season of distress. You can look at all of this as Sharon simply had a few unusual dreams. Or you can look at this as God's way of reaching out to Sharon to remind her that 1) he is near, 2) she needs to lean on him more & 3) rely on him to lead her down the path, to attempt her path alone. Sharon truly believes God was sending her a message. When she decided to give God her stress, she felt the burden lift. As **Proverbs 3:5-6** states, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart & lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

Let your troubles go. Give your troubles to God. Include God in your daily choices and situations. Rely on God's delightful wisdom to guide you the way forward into the next season of your earthly life. Watch for your divine encounter from God.



Prayer & Thanks to God:

Dear Lord,

In moments of worldly stress, please bestow upon me your strength & loving kindness. Keep me from shameless decisions. Open doors to guide me in a boldness walk of spiritual life. Show me how to give all of me to you. Point to the road I am to follow. Thank you for your forgiveness when I go astray and for the blessings you have provided in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.