



WORKTALK WEEKLY

22 DECEMBER 2008

## Words That Need Redefining

Welcome to WORKTALKweekly  
This is the fifth in our Advent series on dreams.

### #9 Dream

Maybe you have noticed how exasperating it can be when information comes in stages rather than in a completed form. There is something essentially human about wanting to know the whole story, the whole truth or the complete picture.

There are certain commercial practices which set up this frustration in us as clients or customers. Clever businesses will design a product in such a way that there is a built in continual need to come back to the manufacturer. So car makers design engines that only their dealers can maintain. Computer printers need a constant re-supply of ink. Wires are designed only to be compatible with the manufactures range. It's good business, if irritating for the free minded customer.

In God's business the design is also deliberate. He wants you to keep coming back for maintenance, re-supply and customization - not for His benefit or profit but yours. He seems to have designed us for trust and dependence, because this protects, preserves and develops us.

So Joseph finds himself given a partial piece of information instructing him to return home, because the original danger had passed. At this point a second, new piece of information unsettled him. The explosive king was dead, but his firebrand of a son was on the throne. Not surprisingly, Joseph's reaction is fear. What we don't know is whether his fear was a sign of doubt in the previous dream or wisdom in the face of new information - most likely it was a bit of each. Whatever the cause, God gives him another dream which drives him north past the danger, back to the relative safety and obscurity of Nazareth.

All pretty easy to recount and observe - the actions of a father trying to get his wife and Son safely home, that was his job.

But the diamonds are always in the detail. God was teaching Joseph (and Mary) the step-by-step approach to life. It is not about futures and options it is about day-by-day. For forty years his ancestors had trudged around the desert on an elongated trek from Egypt in order to learn this same lesson. God supplied what they needed for the day and that was it. He seems to specialize in communicating on a need-to-know basis because trust is the way to life.

You might like to shorten your vision at the moment and ask God to help you live day by day. Daily trust, daily forgiving those who offend, daily asking, daily resting on the fact that whatever information you have He knows what He's doing. Market conditions do not ambush the Son of God anymore than Herod, his soldiers or his successor could.

You might like to reflect on the fact that even if you doubt, fear or make the wisest choice you are able, God meets you in the twilight.

All these dreams were gifts - this one was a gift to reassure Joseph and steer him north past Judea and his own emotional turmoil.

This last of the five advent dreams heralds not an announcement but a withdrawal. Joseph and Mary and Jesus are sent to Nazareth to find a quiet ordinary season where the Son of God can be formed into the Son of Man.

Sometimes dreams challenge you to action, sometimes to withdrawal and preparation God uses them both in His step-by-step repertoire. So you might like to ask whether you are being invited to act or withdraw for a season in order to get ready for something spectacular.

In Matthew's sequence it's probably around twenty five years before we pick up the story again. Luke gives us one episode eight years after the return to Nazareth then he too is silent for another eighteen years.

That seems to be the deal in the people of God business - it takes years to get ready. Thousands of steps and millions of lessons - the warning to go to Nazareth was to go find a place to grow up.

Don't imagine God has given up on dreams as gifts. If Peter's Pentecost sermon is anything to go by they are very much on the agenda (especially for the older generation) so don't despise or ignore dreams. Pray for them, expect them, learn from them, test them and follow them.

Joseph's dreams took him on a rollercoaster ride of emotions, decisions, journeys and arrivals. He discovered, to his amazement, what you can also discover this season. When market forces are, to say the least, uncomfortable and possibly dangerous, the safest place to be is a place full of mystery, surprises, shocks and the spectacular. That place is close to the Son.

Wishing you an Authentic Advent  
Christ Centred Christmas and a New Year of Growth

Work Well

Geoff Shattock and all at WORKTALK

WORKTALKweekly will be back in January.

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## **BIBLE SECTION**

### **Matthew 2:21**

21 So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

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