



Christian Dream Interpretation? By Christine Pack

Author Barbie Breathitt, described as a “respected teacher of the supernatural manifestations of God,” has just released a new book entitled “*Dream Encounters*,” in which she claims Christians can have access to a secret dream language that God uses to reveal “hidden knowledge” to believers. In this book Breathitt tells believers they will be enabled to use the “revelation” obtained from God through their dreams in order to unlock their “destinies” and live lives in which they are “productive, responsible, successful, prosperous, loved and fulfilled” (p. 138).¹ According to Breathitt, this is done by decoding information that God has “embedded” into our dreams and through which he continues to communicate with us in personal, ongoing revelation. But there are three significant problems with what Breathitt teaches, and I will attempt to develop why these issues are unsupported by Scripture. The three problems are as follows:

1. Breathitt’s teaching is more in alignment with a pagan and superstitious—even New Age—worldview than Christian
2. Breathitt puts forth the idea that each believer has a “destiny” waiting to be unlocked, accessed, known and lived out, **an idea that is** contrary to the teaching of Scripture—that, as Christians, we have no “rights” to our lives. And finally,
3. Breathitt's teaching about ongoing, personal revelation from God goes against the clear teaching of *sola scriptura*, which is that God speaks to us through scripture alone.

Dream Interpretation is New Age

To help explain how I can make the assertion that Breathitt's teaching on “dream interpretation” is much closer to being New Age (pagan) than Christian, let me back up for a moment. I write this review not as a theologian but as a former New Ager who was saved by God's grace out of New Age Spirituality. My testimony is this: after rejecting the church as a teenager, I went wholeheartedly into New Age Spirituality. While in the New Age, I went down many different paths to seek enlightenment, truth, hidden knowledge and, yes, God. I sampled from a buffet of religious practices and traditions, including psychological self-help, Hinduism, Buddhism, mysticism, paganism, shamanism, astrology, trance channeling, reiki, dream interpretation, yoga, astral projection, runes, numerology, chakra meditation, visualization, fortune telling, tarot cards, psychic readings and on and on. But the problem with this freestyle way of attempting to approach God is that, at its core, it is pagan and therefore cannot give anyone access to God. However, this “freestyle approach” is also the chief allure of New Age Spirituality: one is encouraged to choose any path or practice that “feels good” to them, that makes them feel closer to “God,” and gives them a sense of purpose. What I know now is that without God’s “special revelation” of Himself through His Word (the Bible) I *never* could have come to the saving knowledge of God. The Bible distinguishes between “general revelation” (found in nature) and “special revelation” (found only in God’s Word) this way: “**General revelation**” is revelation of God found through observing nature and the surrounding world. While “general revelation” gives enough revelation for people to know that there is a God to whom they are accountable, it does *not* give enough revelation for people to actually be saved. This was why God was so elusive to me while I was in the New Age. I was getting vague, shadowy glimpses of God through the many occult things I did but was unable to get a true understanding of his character, nature and what He required of me. For this, I needed “**special revelation**,” found only in the Bible, God’s revelation of Himself, which teaches who He is and the way of salvation. New Age Spirituality, **at its essence**, is a pagan form of religion in that it can operate only within the realm of “general revelation.” Even though plenty of biblical terminology and even scripture itself is used in the New Age, salvation is found only through

faith in the atoning death of a Messiah who made propitiation, died and was resurrected—the correct view of Jesus that is clearly rejected by adherents of New Age teaching.

Before we go further, let me define paganism and explain how I can make the assertion that New Age is pagan at its core. Paganism is often thought of as sort of a nature religion, something practiced by primitive people groups who live in grass huts in remote areas and who carve idols and literally look to “signs” in nature in an attempt to know God. But in another sense, *every* religion that is not Christian can be considered to be pagan; there are simply different “flavors” of it. *All* false religions attempt to come up with ways to “reach” God, whether through yoga, meditation and fasting (Hinduism/Buddhism); mecca, prayers, Jihad (Islam); meditation, energy work, spells (Wicca). Paganism, then, is the “default setting” of the natural mind when it is does not have the revelation of God’s Word which *only* comes through the Bible (“special revelation”). **As Pastor John MacArthur has said**, “There are only two religions in the world....One is by works, the other is without works.” Without benefit of God’s “special revelation” given through his Word, pagans are forced to sift through the natural landscape, searching for clues about who God is and what he requires of them in the hopes of coming up with a system that makes sense of what they see. So even though I identified myself at various times with specific religions when I was involved in New Age Spirituality, I was living and functioning as a pagan.

In my view this kind of “functional paganism,” is the main problem with Breathitt’s book. Though she quotes plenty of scripture in her book, she is continually pointing her readers back to the paganism of “divining” and interpreting omens and symbols in their dreams. Breathitt seems to want to make a distinction between the kind of “Christianized divination” she is teaching and what she considers to be unbiblical, occultic divination, **but the Bible makes no such distinction**. Even though Breathitt specifically names psychics, mediums, witches, wiccans and other New Age occultic means of divination as “counterfeits” (p 95), she is teaching her readers to do the same things that these occultic practitioners do. The Bible, though, has very strong words for anyone who attempts to divine hidden or secret knowledge belonging only to the Lord (Deut 29:29):

“There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. ‘For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you.’ ” (Deut. 18:10-12, my emphasis).

This passage in Deuteronomy makes quite clear what the Lord considers to be occultic and wicked. Yet two of the above practices (divination and interpreting omens) are exactly what Breathitt’s book is teaching! At least one third of Breathitt’s book is devoted to teaching readers how to interpret symbols in their dreams such as colors, stones, numbers, sounds, types of clothing, types of buildings, modes of transportation, animals, weather, insects and others. And incidentally, the type of dream interpretation as taught by Breathitt is virtually identical to the type of dream interpretation I was taught and practiced as a New Ager. But these are pagan practices, and they are off-limits to Christians in that they are an attempt to usurp God’s power and authority over our lives by discerning hidden knowledge.

“A man will plan his course, but it is the Lord who determines his steps.” (Prov 16:9)

Unlocking Our Destiny?

In addition to the New Age practice of divination (which I have noted is an attempt to usurp power and authority that belongs only to God), another key teaching of the New Age is that people can direct their own destinies (which they do partly through divining the signs and omens in their life, dreams and in the world around them). The main thrust of this teaching is that every person has a “right” to a life of good health, prosperity, transcendent happiness, wonderful relationships and exciting careers. This

brings me to my second problem with Breathitt's book. She teaches that God has a "divine plan for us to be successful" and that each believer has a "destiny"—a word she uses repeatedly—waiting to be **unlocked, accessed, known**, and lived out. This kind of man-centered, positive self-help sort of teaching has always been popular in America. Over the years it has latched itself to the culture and taken shape in many different forms ("Law of Attraction," "The Secret," "Possibility Thinking," "Word of Faith"). It has even taken on Christian terminology so as to become more palatable to confessing Christians who want a way to be "Christian" and still have control over their own lives and destinies. **Yet, this thinking is completely at odds** with the crucified, yielded life that is described of New Testament believers.

The Bible teaches that it is God alone who reigns and rules sovereignly over our lives. And while Breathitt makes mention occasionally that only God knows what the future holds for us, she also repeatedly puts forth the idea that once we are saved we are able to access this "hidden knowledge" about the "purpose" and "destiny" of our lives through dream interpretation and that our lives ought to be marked by happiness, success and prosperity. Breathitt asserts that it is the "right" of every Christian to access hidden knowledge through dream interpretation for the purpose of navigating their lives to "fulfilling destinies." Indeed, Breathitt claims in her book that an astonishing array of blessings can and should be had by Christian believers if they will learn how to decode their dreams. Some of these claims are that believers, through dream interpretation, will be able to

- Unlock God's revelation
- Receive messages from God through angels
- Get answers to questions
- Steer clear of harmful events
- Fulfill their dreams and destinies
- Know the path to their future
- Be healthier, both physically and spiritually
- Achieve prosperity, success and increase
- Be more creative
- Live longer

But this teaching of physical blessing and prosperity flies in the face of the clear teaching of scripture, which is that we have no "rights" to our lives, and that it is God alone who knows and determines our destinies. In fact, a study of the apostles does not give a sense of lives marked by "living longer," "steering clear of harmful events" or being "prosperous." All but one of the apostles were killed for the faith, most of them having suffered torturous deaths. Paul himself was shipwrecked, beaten, stoned, left for dead, imprisoned and ultimately martyred.

Paul often referred to himself in his letters as a "slave to Christ," and it is this language that gives us a more biblical understanding of a Christian's "destiny," according to Paul. Upon the moment of conversion, all "rights" to our lives are relinquished. We know that our lives are no longer our own; we have been bought for a price, and only God alone can know and direct our destiny. But oh, how this kind of language and teaching chafes today's Christians, especially American ones, who have been taught to esteem liberation and freedom, choice and autonomy. But is this the picture that Scripture paints for the life of a Christian? We do not have "rights" to our lives, nor do we have the power or ability to navigate our lives to "fulfilling destinies," as Breathitt claims. If I make a plan for my life and God has a "destiny" in store for me other than the one I have mapped out, I must bend the knee in humble submission before God's greater plan for my life. Just ask Stephen, who was stoned to death after rebuking the Sanhedrin for their sinful rejection of the prophets and Messiah himself. About Stephen, I wonder: did the "life of (his) dreams" include death by stoning? (Probably not, because in our flesh each of us is small, narcissistic, self-protective and vain.) But when submitted to the Lord, as Stephen was, and as we all must strive to be by God's grace, our lives have deeper meaning and serve eternal purposes that our finite minds cannot grasp. But not according to Barbie Breathitt, in whose teaching I saw nothing of the crucified life, a life yielded to its Maker for *His* purposes. Rather,

Breathitt's teaching seems designed more to tickle ears and pander to worldly and fleshly appetites for success, comfort, prestige and wealth, than to exhort true believers to lay down their lives in service of the Lord and to take up the cross and follow Christ, wherever that may lead. Christ never promised his followers that they would have successful, prosperous, fulfilled lives. In fact, one thing that He did tell them about their "destinies" was this:

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours." (John 15:18-20)

But to true Christians it doesn't matter. True believers don't come to Christ in the first place looking for "goodies" or worldly blessing; they come to Him because they know He and He alone offers forgiveness for sins and the way of salvation. True believers will follow Him anywhere, yielding their lives to Him, submitting their dreams, wants and desires to His perfect will (Mat 6:10), knowing that He alone knows what they need. This is what the Bible teaches: a crucified self (Rom 6:6), a life yielded to its Maker. Not a genie-in-a-bottle "God," or some hoop-jumping "God" or a "God" who is the outlet for us to "plug into" so we can get power for our dreams.

The Rejection of *Sola Scriptura*

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Which brings me to my third and final point: According to Breathitt, believers will receive personal, ongoing revelation from God if they will learn how to "read" the "dream language" God supposedly gives them, which to her is the way He desires to communicate with believers. But this is a rebellion against and rejection of the means God has chosen by which to reveal Himself to us, which is through the Bible, a concept known as *sola scriptura*. *Sola scriptura* teaches that we "hear" from God through the Bible alone. **In fact, this idea of personal, ongoing revelation from God is unbiblical, in that Hebrews 1:1-2 explains to us that God has spoken directly to prophets of His choosing in past ages, but that once His full revelation has been given, culminating in Jesus Christ, the final and greatest Prophet, the canon is then closed and no further revelation will be given in the last days beyond what has been given in Scripture.**

Let me point out that although Breathitt quotes a lot of scripture in her book, it must be understood that the usage of scripture does not necessarily mean that someone is teaching truth and that applying Scripture to wicked and forbidden practices does not somehow "cleanse" these practices of evil. Let me repeat, the sprinkling of scripture atop wicked practices will not sanctify them, nor will it imbue some kind of mystical protection over a Christian who innocently wanders into the occultic realm. I can attest from my own experience that the occult is a very dangerous realm and nothing to meddle with. Even for Christians the occult is a dangerous realm. I often hear the argument that once a person is born again and sealed with the Holy Spirit they have a "supernatural protection" against deception. "Well, I hear what you're saying about things being occultic, but I would know if I were being deceived." But isn't that the whole point of deception? If we *knew* we were being deceived, we wouldn't be deceived. Deception is evil masquerading as good. A "Christian" book by a "Christian" author teaching readers to do unbiblical things in the pursuit of forbidden, hidden knowledge is an example of this. A writer or teacher being loaded up on Christian terminology or scripture doesn't necessarily mean that biblical truth is being taught. All Christians are exhorted by scripture to test everything, to hold fast to what is true and to be like the Bereans, who were commended for their

diligence in studying Scripture. In short, Christians are not to blindly accept any and all teaching at face value. In fact, Paul exhorted believers not to believe even himself if he should come bearing a message that was different from the one handed down to the saints! Very strong words, and believers should take this as an exhortation to examine all teaching of scripture to take care that it is being taught correctly and in context.

As far as I can tell from reading Breathitt's book, the Bible functions as little more than a handbook of symbols for believers to search through for the purpose of decoding their dreams to "unlock" their destinies and live prosperous, successful lives. Again, Breathitt seems to be deliberately pandering to sinful desires with this teaching. Pandering to the flesh and to the human desire for hidden knowledge is nothing new at all:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" " (Gen 3:1)

Isn't Satan himself insinuating to Eve that there is hidden knowledge being withheld from her? And lest we forget, it did not turn out well for Eve when she began to long for the fruit God had forbidden. And we must also remember that Satan will rarely present himself in all his awful glory. He delights in taking evil and presenting it as something good and alluring, such as a luscious piece of fruit that is "a delight to the eyes and good to taste." In American culture, so rife with materialism and excess, the "forbidden fruit" that we seem to be continual lusting for is some form of worldly success or prosperity.

Conclusion

In closing, I believe Breathitt does her readers a grave disservice in her book by directing them *away* from the special revelation contained in the Bible and toward a "Christianized" kind of divination in which they will be reduced to living as functional pagans. While Breathitt does often quote scripture, her references are heavily lopsided toward passages describing dream sequences, visions and the like. As far as Breathitt's teaching goes, the Bible seems only to be useful as a kind of "omens handbook." This is amazingly bad theology coming from someone who professes to be a Christian, as Breathitt does. And contrary to Breathitt's teaching, Christians do not have some kind of "right" to access "hidden knowledge" once they are born again. They do not have the ability or power to navigate their own destinies toward prosperity, success and comfort. And the pursuit of "hidden knowledge" for the purpose of such is sinful and condemned by God, as it is God alone who knows and directs the destinies of believers. I simply cannot recommend this book to Christians, as it will lead them not into a deeper understanding of the one true God as revealed in Scripture but rather into the shadowy world of pagan divination and a lust for hidden knowledge and worldly comfort. Buyer beware.

ⁱ Barbie Breathitt, *Dream Encounters – Seeing your Destiny From God's Perspective* (North Richland Hills, TX: Breath of the Spirit Ministries, 2009)