

# Lord of the Subconscious

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ONE SUNDAY MORNING I woke at my regular time, then realizing I could enjoy the luxury of a few minutes of extra sleep, deliberately turned over and buried my head in my pillow.

As I slept, I dreamed. It was a typical dream—inane, senseless, and composed, I think, of various people from my childhood parading back and forth engaging in foolish activity. It lasted only seconds.

I awoke and realized I had been dreaming another of my nonsensical dreams. It wasn't even worth remembering, and I thought nothing about it until I stood in the bathroom shaving. I usually shave slowly since it gives me a few minutes of talking with God before the clamor of the day begins. This particular Sunday morning, staring at myself in the bathroom mirror, I began to run a quick self-inventory about my dreams.

"Why is it, Jamie, that you never dream about God? You talk about Him and pray to Him, but you've never once in all your life dreamed about Him. Why are your dreams always filled with shadowy figures of the past, old childhood friends, army buddies, fraternity brothers—events from yesterday mixed in garbled fashion with repressed ambitions and desires for tomorrow?"

Even as I asked myself these questions I realized I already knew (some of) the answers. Dreams are, for the most part, the work of the subconscious. (That is not to say God cannot

intervene in our dream life and actually speak to us there. Yet for the most part dreams are simply the conscious revelation of the subconscious part of ourselves.)

If the mind were to be pictured as a deep mountain lake, the conscious would be the surface and the subconscious all that lies beneath the surface. The surface not only reflects all that is around it, but it acts as a receiving point for everything that enters. Except for the contour and capacity of the basin (heredity), everything that is in the lake has been put there (environment)—through the conscious. Some of it stays on the surface where it can be seen, but the vast majority of material has sunk out of the conscious into the depths of the subconscious.

As the conscious goes to sleep and relaxes, the subconscious—that great storehouse of suppressed, repressed material that involves the larger part of the mind—comes floating to the surface. Often it will actually break out into the open, mixing with the conscious mind in sleep, causing us to dream.

The same basic process takes place when the conscious, pain-sensitive mind is put to sleep by an anesthetic. Sodium pentohol, (sometimes known as "truth serum") is an anesthetic used to put the conscious mind to sleep artificially, allowing the subconscious, under the direction of an authority figure, to respond to facts long stored beneath the surface.

That Sunday morning, looking in the mirror as I shaved, I suddenly had a shocking revelation of myself. To the best of my knowledge, my conscious is dedicated to God. I realize that much of what is seen in my conscious is simply the reflection of what is around me (as the surface of the lake reflects the mountains). But more and more my lips are speaking praises to God and my life is showing forth the image of Jesus simply because I will it to be. But my subconscious,

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that vast reservoir of *who I really am*, that area that is revealed primarily through dreams and sudden disturbances of the surface, still seems to be as un-Christlike as ever. I thank God I am not dreaming some of the things I used to dream, but why do I not dream about spiritual matters?

That same morning at church I had another vivid illustration of just how devoid of spiritual things most of my subconscious actually is. I was in the process of growing a beard, and it was just beginning to take on some kind of personality of its own, looking less and less each day like I had smeared peanut butter on my face or wrapped my jaws in briars. I was standing in the library talking to the librarian when one of my practical-joking friends walked up to me, and before I could duck, reached out and grabbed a pinch of whisker under my chin and yanked.

I reacted instantly—with a clenched fist. He danced back, laughing and pointing to my fists, already up in a fighting position. “Scratch the surface of the lamb and find a wolf,” he chuckled, much to my embarrassment.

I was chagrined, not that I had reacted (for a man will always react to pain), but that I had reacted with a closed fist. My friend had broken the surface of my conscious and revealed a Christless area where self was still on the throne.

I went on into the Sunday school class and sat in the back, half listening and half reflecting on how much of my life is out of tune with God’s perfect harmony. I remembered how I had reacted the day before when I saw a pretty girl wriggling out of her low sports car in front of the grocery store. As I looked and did not look away, my inner mind was suddenly suffused with lust.

Since I have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit I am able to keep most of my overt reactions under control (one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control) but it bothers me that beneath the seemingly calm and tranquil surface of my life there still lies this seething mass of self that is for the most part materialistic, animalistic, carnal, and only slightly flavored with the Christ Who has seeped down from the conscious surface into the dark, hidden areas of the subconscious. In less than twenty-four hours I had seen evidence that even though my conscious was under control of Jesus Christ, my subconscious was still quite capable of fleshly acts. It was not a pleasant revelation.

Surely this is what Paul was driving at in Rom. 12:2 when he said, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the *renewing of your mind* . . .” He also said in II Cor. 10:5, “Casting down imaginations . . . and bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ.”

That is what I want. I want to be God’s—not only in my conscious life, but in my subconscious as well. I want my entire mind renewed and every thought brought into the captivity of obedience to Christ. I’m tired of looking at a pretty girl and thinking lust. I’m tired of being pinched and reacting with a clenched fist. I’m tired of dreaming of self when I want to dream of Christ. I’m tired of finding there are tender places in my life where the veneer is so thin that if I am scratched I reveal vast, unhealed areas of self-pity, prejudice, or resentment. I want to be Christ’s to the core. I want Him to be Lord of my subconscious.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1971

We are getting ready to build a new room on our house and this morning the architect sent a geologist around to test the consistency of the soil at the base of the foundation. The geologist had a clever kind of drill that punched a small hole in the earth, going down about fifteen feet and coming back up with samples of the various layers of soil. I watched him, wondering what would happen if someone should take similar samples from the layers of my mind. Despairingly, I concluded that although they would find Jesus Christ in great abundance on the surface, in the deep areas of my life they would find only me.

Yet my desire is that such a drilling would reveal Jesus Christ all the way down to the bottom.

How can it be? How can my mind be actually transformed to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God? How can my every thought be brought under the captivity of obedience to Jesus Christ? The scriptures say that I am “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son,” (Rom. 8:29) but by what method is this finally consummated?

“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16), Paul says. A similar promise is made in Eph. 3:16-17: “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . .” Again he says, “Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind . . .” (Eph. 4:22-23).

So, what I desire is not an impossibility. In fact, it should be the goal of every follower of Jesus Christ. Being made conformable to His image does not begin with an outward expression, but primarily with the inner man (the subconscious) which will then eventuate itself in the conscious. In other words, the best way to clean up the surface of the lake is not by skimming the top, but by purifying the source of the flow from the wellsprings at the bottom.

But the question still remains: how is this brought to pass? First, the Christian must be committed to a walk of absolute obedience to Christ in his *conscious* life. He must stand guard at the doorpost of his mind to repel each evil thought by which Satan would gain entry. And he must hurl out those he finds already inside, in the name of Jesus. The Lord will honor such obedience with a cleansing of the heart. But if the Holy Spirit is to have completely free access to minister to all corners of the subconscious, He must be invited in. Thus the benefit of “praying in the Spirit.”

Paul says in I Cor. 14:4, “He that speaketh [prays] in an unknown tongue edifieth himself . . .” That’s what I want, to be edified—to be strengthened—in my spirit, in the deep areas of my subconscious. Paul goes ahead to say that “if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth even though my understanding is unfruitful” (I Cor. 14:14). Thus praying in the Spirit, whether it be in tongues or by letting the Spirit make intercession for me with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26), opens the door for the Holy Spirit to deal with my spirit in the area of my subconscious. And even

though praying in tongues is meaningless to my understanding, I find that the Holy Spirit, communing with God through the deep realms of my subconscious, invariably brings Christ into the hitherto untouched areas of my mind.

As I understand this, I can see where the sick areas of my mind, including the bad memories of the past, can actually be healed as the timeless Christ walks back through my past and touches with healing, or descends far beneath the conscious surface of my mind into the hades of my own creation, and preaches the good news of deliverance to those thoughts so long held in captivity. In such a way, those areas of my subconscious where self has always sat on the throne are now brought under the subjection of the King of the Mind, Jesus Christ. All of this is accomplished as I pray in the Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal even my subconscious to the

One who “searcheth the heart and knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:27).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, rather than being a climax to the Christian experience, is simply the door through which the Holy Spirit enters my subconscious. Eventually He will “fill” me, but until then, I, like Paul, “waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). And “waiteth” does not mean sitting around in passivity. With His help I also intend to resist Satan in every unwanted thought, word and deed, until such resistance becomes so ingrained that I instinctively resist—even in my sleep.

O God, hasten the day when, no matter where my conscious is broken or scratched—through dreams, by some friend with a cutting remark, or by a sharp look at the forbidden—Christ will be revealed all the way down to the bottom. ◀◀◀

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