

# Impossible Dreams Dreams?

by Senior Pastor: Bill Couch

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This morning we begin our series of messages entitled Impossible Dreams. I hope you are reading The Hole in Our Gospel. The book is divided into five sections. I hope you will read or re-read one section each week in preparation for the message. As I planned my messages for this fall, God placed on my heart a vision for us as a congregation to reach out in even greater ways than we are already doing. We have ten outreach ministries in our community and we support several missionaries on three continents. I am grateful for the faithful core of persons who carry on these ministries each week. However, the needs are great and in the economic crisis the needs are getting greater. We are so blessed there is so much more we could do. Can we make a difference? What would happen if really began to dream Impossible Dreams.

## **Ephesians 3:14-21**

For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Horses are born to run. We are blessed to live on a few acres with some horses. One of the most beautiful sights in the world is to see our horses running free in the pastures. Our horses have a pretty good life. Unfortunately some horses are not so fortunate. Some horses spend their lives in a small corral. This corral sometimes consists of two strands of electric fencing—called a hot wire. A horse who is born to run wants to break free from the confinement of this corral. He will approach the fence and get zapped by an electric shock. After two or three shocks, he will quit trying. His life will be limited to the corral. Later the

owner can turn off the electricity and even remove the wire. The horse will not try to escape. The fear of the shock will keep it in the corral. How sad it is to see a horse born to run stuck in a corral.

God created us to live abundant lives—lives of significance and adventure. We all have dreams of making a difference; of living a life that matters. At some point in our lives we dare to venture out and pursue our dreams. But somewhere along the way we ran into a hot wire. The electric jolt sent us scrambling back into the corral where life was safe. After awhile we forgot that we had dreams. We never dared to venture out again to see if the wire was still hot. We abandoned our dreams and became content to live in the safety of the corral. But still deep down inside us we occasionally sense a rumble of discontent. We know that we were made for more than this. We were not created to be mundane, ordinary and safe. We long to live lives of significance.

One of the speakers at the Willow Creek Leadership Summit last year was Gary Haugen. Gary founded an organization called “International Justice Mission.” After hearing news reports that two million children were trapped in child prostitution, Gary wondered how a God who was passionate about justice could allow these children to suffer. He wondered how these children, who were forced to service 20 to 30 clients a day, could believe that there was a God who loved them. As he read the Bible searching for answers to these questions, he discovered that God did have a plan for dealing with injustice in the world. We are the plan. God wants to use us to make a difference in the world. Gary felt compelled to do something. He dreamed an impossible dream of making difference for these children. He established a network of people who find these places of prostitution. The perpetrators are sent to jail. The children are released

and provided with “after care” to bring healing and new life. International Justice Mission has made a difference for thousands of children in Asia and India.

#### VIDEO CLIP: GARY HAUGEN EXCERPT

Sometimes the mission becomes overwhelming. They have saved thousands, but there are millions of children still trapped. The persons on the front lines of this ministry struggle with feelings of hopelessness and fear. They wonder how they can really make a difference—other than saving a few. They live daily under threats against their lives. To deal with the hopelessness, they have to change their focus. Gary discovered that hopelessness comes by focusing on what we can do. Hope comes when we focus on who God is and what he wants to do. If God is passionate about getting it done, then he is responsible for providing the power to get it done. The folks with International Justice Mission learned that Jesus did not come to make us safe; he came to make us brave. If my life of following Jesus does not feel dangerous, I need to check and see if it's Jesus I'm following.

Jesus wants to set us free from our corrals of triviality and fear. The only way we experience the power of Jesus is to put ourselves in situations that are beyond our human power to handle—humanly impossible situations. Jesus shows up when we are in places where we actually need him. As I look at my own ministry, at times I wonder what is happening that cannot be explained by mere human effort. Do I really need Jesus to do the trivial and safe things I'm doing?

Gary says that struggling with the feelings of hopelessness and fear has led him to experience a deeper and more passionate relationship with God. Mother Teresa in her work among the poorest of the poor in Calcutta said she

found herself praying for God's help at least every 30 minutes. How long can we go without crying out to God for help because we are in over our heads? Fear has kept us safely in the corral where we don't need God. When we are engaged in the real struggles and suffering of the world we find that a quiet time is a necessity not an obligation. Too often we do our quiet time and we are relieved that we have done our duty to God. When we are on the front lines we do our quiet time for survival. We must have it. It is our lifeline to find promises in God's word that give us hope. We pray earnestly for God to make us brave and give us strength. And we learn to celebrate every small victory with great joy. Every person who is set free from suffering and bondage makes it all worth it. We focus on the ones that have been saved rather than being overwhelmed by the ones remaining. And we learn to experience joy in the midst of the battles. We don't take ourselves and the battle so seriously that we can't laugh at the irony that God is using someone as flawed as me to make a difference in the world.

A life of significance and meaning is not found in the corral, it is found beyond the walls. You may not be called to a dangerous, life-threatening ministry. But I have a feeling you will be called out of your comfort zone. Would it move you out of your comfort zone to talk with a homeless person? Would it move you out of your comfort zone to pray out with someone who was without a job and worried about how to feed his family? How would you pray with this person?

We have a group of folks in our church who stepped out of their comfort zones to participate in a couple of the outreach ministries of our church to persons who need food and clothing. They are part of our Good Samaritan

Ministry and our Clothes Closet ministry. Every Wednesday morning they offer hope to dozens of people. Let's get a glimpse of this ministry:

#### VIDEO: GOOD SAMARITAN AND CLOTHES CLOSET

During this series of messages we are going to be challenged to get out of our comfort zone. A life of significance and adventure is only found outside of our comfort zone. In this beautiful place of worship located in an area that is very blessed, it is easy to ignore the world out there that is filled with violence and suffering. A significant life is found when we step out of the corral of safety and do something that requires us to depend upon God. It first begins with opening our eyes. [The Hole in Our Gospel](#) tells us that a child dies of starvation every 5 seconds. Some persons in our church have questioned that statistic. They do not believe it is true. Why would we deny that truth? Because if it is true, then we know that we should do something about it. It is much easier to stay in our corral and bury our head in the sand, than to open our eyes and see the hurting in our own community and world.

Reading the book with an open heart and mind will open your eyes. During this series we will suggest ways that you can get exposed to the suffering that happens right here in our own community and around the world. See it for your self. Come up on Wednesday morning between 10 and 11 am to our Family Ministry and see the number of persons coming to get food and clothing. Bring gently used clothing and shoes with you. Talk to some of the people there and hear their stories. Make a donation to Good Samaritan Fund to purchase food vouchers. Go to Mahon Library early in the morning or late one afternoon and see the homeless persons who spend the night there—night after night. Imagine what it will be like to when the temperature is 20 degrees. Sign up to help with

Family Promise, a ministry to homeless families with children. Be an evening host or overnight host. Go to [The Hole in Our Gospel](#) web site and watch some of the videos about persons who struggle every day just to survive.

Another way to open our eyes is to pray. “God, break my heart with things that break your heart.” Use the prayer guide. Come up to the sanctuary and pray at noon at least one day a week. Pray for your prayer partner. Sign up for the prayer vigil.

Gary Haugen ended his talk with a description of body builders. They bulk up and have massive arms and shoulders and legs. But, for what? For posing! Occasionally they handle a crisis in the kitchen when a jam jar needs opening. All this strength for what? Jam jars. I look at our church. We are bulked up with an abundance of activity and for what? We are so busy, but are we busy about the things that matter to God? Occasionally we open a jam jar, but God has so much more for us. He wants us to make a difference. To get out of the corral and engage in the suffering and injustice of the world. To live on the edge where things are scary and hopeless—without him. Will you join with me in the impossible dream that God just might use us to change the world? O God, don't make us safe, make us brave.