

**Sermon Study Guide Based on
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of January 18, 2009
"I Have a Dream"**

[As we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his vision for America this weekend, we need to understand that God has had a dream for all humanity before the creation of the world and is fulfilling it through his Son Jesus Christ.]

[Topics: God's Dream for Mankind, Stewardship, Image of God, Sharing God's Love and Life]

Excerpt: This is the weekend we celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., who delivered one of the most famous speeches ever given – "I Have a Dream." This sermon was originally called "To Dress and to Keep." But during his walk on Monday, the Lord inspired Pastor Glen with more information about the sermon, so he changed the title to "I Have a Dream," because it better fits the subject he'll be discussing today.

God has a dream! One of Pastor Glen's sermons in October, which was based on **Ephesians 1**, where Paul tells us that before the creation of the world, God determined that he was going to adopt children. God has this amazing dream of having a family with billions of people walking and living with him experiencing what he had been experiencing for eternity as the triune God.

And he has been working on that dream to accomplish exactly that. That's why God created this earth and the universe so that he could fulfill his dream. God is accomplishing what he set out to do.

In **Genesis** chapter 1, God begins to talk to us about his dream. In verses 26 and 27, God said he's going to create man in our image, after our likeness. And then in **Genesis 1:28**, "**God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'**"

So God said that part of my dream is to have many, many children and have those children multiply through the whole earth. And God wanted them to have dominion over this planet and to experience life to the full. And so he created Adam and Eve to draw us into that dream.

And then we read in **Genesis 2:15**, "**And the LORD God took the man, and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.**" The King James Version says to, "**dress it and to keep it.**" God told mankind, I want you to take care of things. I want you to steward and manage what I've created. And God is expecting us, as Christians, to be good stewards. This is also a sermon on stewardship because God has asked us to be stewards.

We are stewards of not just physical things here on earth, but we are stewards of the Father's dream. Please don't think of stewardship as how much you should give in the offering this week. That is such an infinitesimal part of it that's it's embarrassing.

Stewardship is all that we do. It's how we treat each other. It's how we live our lives, and much more, as we will see.

Now let's read **Genesis 3:6-7**. "**When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.**"

So God had given them this amazing dream concerning them. And Adam and Eve told God that they had a better dream. And so they choose a different dream for mankind. Now thousands of years later, we need to ask, "How well has their dream turned out?" While it's got some good stuff, it also has some very lousy stuff as well. In reality, we haven't done so well with our dream.

Now meanwhile God has still working with his dream. God is still saying to us, "I have a dream. And here's what mankind will become. Mankind will join me in eternity." But unfortunately, mankind hasn't followed along well. Christians have a bad reputation of how well we steward.

The reputation of Evangelical Christians is that we are against the environment. Now technically we aren't. Most of us are against big government telling us how to take care of the environment. But still we have that reputation of being poor stewards.

Well, Jesus came 2000 years ago to re-establish the Father's dream and to move it in the right direction. Jesus came to invite people back into God's dream. Jesus wants us to experience that dream – which includes the life that God intended for us to experience in the first place. Jesus wants us to understand what the Father has intended all along in his dream for all humanity.

But most of what Jesus taught the disciples went over their heads especially about how he was going to have to die to make that dream a reality for us. And after his death and resurrection, he told them in **Matthew 28:18** that he has all the authority to make the Father's dream a reality.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'" And so now the church gets sent out to help re-establish the dream, to help all these people who turned away from God and invite them in and say – you can be a part of the Father's dream. That's so much bigger than just inviting them to come to church with you. Once we talk about the Father's dream, then we can invite them to come to church to experience it and to learn more about it.

Now as we go along our way and bumping into people whether at work or at school or down at the grocery store, care for them, love them and invite them into that dream. Let them experience the Father's life flowing out of you so they can see what the dream is all about. And baptism pictures that entering into that dream and that relationship with our triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now some years ago, Jesus realized that a very large part of the population of America wasn't experiencing the dream – because they were the wrong color. And Jesus said, they're my folks. What are you talking about?

And so he sent a man with a dream. But it wasn't Martin Luther King's dream. It was Jesus' dream. It's Jesus' dream that all people would be equal, because he has said that there is neither male nor female, Gentile or Jew. There are no differences. In Christ we're all the same. And Jesus said that the major nation that's taking the Gospel to the world is taking a perverted Gospel because they are saying it basically for white folk. And that's not the dream of God. And so he sent a man to carry the dream.

And so he stood up that day and gave "I Have a Dream" speech. He was giving it on behalf of Jesus Christ. And he was shot for it. It sounds familiar, doesn't it? Jesus got killed for the dream too. So God wants us to look after the dream. It's so wonderful that our congregation has a broad cross section of Asian, Hispanic, Black, Caucasian, because that's what God's vision is all about.

So Martin Luther King came with a dream from God the Father. Dr. King's speech is telling us that we shouldn't judge a people by the color of their skin but by their character and by who they are as a person. It was if God was saying – America wake up, I have a dream!

And on Tuesday we are going to inaugurate such a person of the United States of America. Barack Obama is going to president by choice of the American people. We should all rejoice in that the dream is being fulfilled. And it's sad that Dr. King isn't here to see it. But Jesus is! And Jesus is smiling, whether he agrees with all of his politics or not. Jesus didn't agree with all of George Bush's politics either. Jesus is bigger than all of that. He can make things happen the way he wants them to go.

At this point in his message Pastor Glen said, "I have a dream that I hope is from Jesus Christ. I want to talk about that dream as it fulfills the Father's dream and as it impacts New Hope and all of us. I hope it's the dream of Jesus for our coming year. I have a dream that all of God's people will be walking in his dream. That we can be out there telling people that God loves mankind, that God sent Jesus on our behalf, that God is doing an amazing thing and you can come and be a part of that."

Here's a quote from a former youth pastor Mike Mercer from Portland, OR concerning child trafficking to take girls and make them sex slaves. *"As a Christian, I can't be satisfied knowing there are people living in such a condition. As a Christian, I'm a steward of the image of God. And every person on the face of the earth bears that image. I became responsible for Eka the day I met her."*

We are stewards of the image of God. We are stewards of what God is doing. Pastor Glen has a dream that we in New Hope begin to catch that vision more and more so that God's heart in us is so palpable that people will see it. And they are drawn to it because we carry the image of God.

Pastor Glen also has a dream that all of us will be managing our finances and all the resources that God has given us – and that we will be managing those well. Let us also manage our priorities even in difficult economic times. In a recent local pastors

conference, some were commenting on how busy families have become that they don't even have time to think. Pastors are noticing a trend of our busyness. Pastor Glen has a dream that our families will stop and think about what they are all doing. Maybe we need to be doing all those things. And maybe we need to only do half the things. But some of our families are burning both ends of the candle and are just hanging on for dear life.

Maybe part of stewardship is asking whether the dream of God is being fulfilled or are we getting carried away into other activities. Pastor Glen has a dream that we would manage all of our resources like Jesus would. Jesus didn't say come to me and I'll give you lots to do. No, he said, "**Come to me and I will give you rest.**"

Pastor Glen has a dream that all of God's children will be debt free and managing their funds well. Many of you can't give more of an offering because you are on a fixed income. Thanks to inflation and your 401K, your funds are shrinking. But for others, they couldn't give more, even if they wanted to, because they are up to their eyeballs in debt. In essence, they can't give any more to God because they are bonded or indebted to the credit card companies or the bank.

Pastor Glen with his wife, about 7 years ago, attended a financial workshop with Dave Ramsey. And Dave talked about how indebted we are as a society and quoted **Proverbs 22:7. "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."**

And Pastor Glen thought about that. He wanted to be a servant of God not to some lender. He and Connie went home and did some calculations and came to the conclusion that they were spending about a tenth of their income in interest payments. Pastor Glen then said, "Now I love the church. I love God. I really enjoy giving to God. But every time I drive by that 10-story bank, I don't think of love. I think that I put those windows in that building. I put the carpets in that building because of my stupidity. I found out that I can live without car payments and credit card payments. It maybe a little more challenging in Southern California but you can. "

"We began a 5-10 year plan to get out of debt. I couldn't have moved here if we hadn't started that plan 7 years ago, because I would have been in a financial position not to be able to come. It would have caused me not to get this opportunity – just financially alone. What are you missing because you are in a position where you're being held back? You'd love to give to someone but you can't. Maybe sometime in the spring, I'll run Dave Ramsey's course since I'm a qualified teacher for it. And if you're interested, please see me."

Pastor Glen has a dream that New Hope will multiply and fill the earth; that we will do what Jesus said of going out and bringing those folks in and we will begin to impact others; that we will have great growth spiritually but also numerically. It's not wrong to grow numerically, its not wrong to pray for that. Please pray and ask God to send us people and that he will begin to fill up this sanctuary. Not so we can all feel good about ourselves. But rather that it means that we are doing what we've been asked to do – fulfilling the dream of God.

We need to connect with people and invite them into that wonderful relationship that we have with God. Pastor Glen also has a dream that we will have church multiplication. Do we realize that every single thing that Jesus gave life to when he created them reproduces in some way? Except the American church. Pastor Glen has a dream that New Hope will have a baby soon – and then another baby after that as we reproduce churches. Please make that a prayer point in your life.

To accomplish this we need church planters. So pray that we will be investing in more leadership training. And pray that God would be calling some church planters to us. Or inspire those who are sitting right here with that vision. Our denomination – the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) has the best training program concerning church planting.

Pastor Glen has a dream that the churches of our community will work together to impact our society. That why he gets together with pastors of other churches to connect with them to find out the needs of the community and how we can make a difference.

Acts 17:6 in the King James Version says, "**And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, 'These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.'**"

Pastor Glen wants to see the day when New Hope is being accused of turning the world upside down. (Actually, Christians turn the world right side up.) We are already making a difference in the community, but Pastor Glen wants us to do it even in a greater way. We need to have a greater impact, because Jesus has asked us to. Pastor Glen has this dream for us. It's Jesus' dream for us as well. By making a difference in the community where we live, we aren't just drawing people to New Hope we're drawing them to the Father's dream and what Jesus is accomplishing today.

Pastor Glen also has a dream that our denomination, WCG, will make a great impact, as well. The church has better foundations now than it's ever had. We have Generations Ministry, which is involved in youth summer camps. And through Church Multiplication Ministries we can multiply church congregations.

And through Church Renewal, we can begin to work with and train new pastors. We desperately need people from within and from outside our congregations because our pastors are getting old. So, Church Renal is making connections with certain colleges, whose theology we're in sync with us, to have their graduating seniors consider pastoring our churches. So our denomination is working on how to get them involved in our system and how do we get them to understand our culture and who we are.

Pastor Glen has a dream that New Hope will spread God's love and God's life to many people. We must first catch the vision and dream so we can offer it to others. In fact, **our theme for this year 2009 is: "Sharing God's love and life."**

Now if you looked at the Jan/Feb 2009 issue of *Together* you will see that theme discussed. And in our January issue of *The Vine*, Pastor Glen has written an article giving more information about the meaning of our theme. Since late last year the Pastoral Team has been wrestling with and praying about what this year's theme should be. That's included in the article as well.

Sharing God's love and life is what this life is about. As we come together, we share and experience God's life. Not only that, we also share that with all those we come in contact with because we are stewards of the image of God. Now it's not about sharing doctrine with others. That's what we did in the past. But rather it's about having God's life and love flow out from us and right into them. Doctrinal teachings can come later. First we have to connect them to God.

The last half of **John 10:10** goes along with our theme. Jesus said, "**I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full**" (NIV). That is the very life of the Godhead coming down and flowing into a person. That life can be obtained and experienced by everyone even in the middle of a trial.

John 10:10 in the Message Bible says, "**I came so that they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.**" Eternal life, not our physical life, is the real life. We can experience God's life flow into us now in this life.

Pastor Glen has a dream that we as a congregation will share that with everybody we possibly can. When we get the opportunity this year, we need to be thinking how can we share God's love and life – how can we share God's dream.

So will we be good stewards? It involves our finances and how we manage our money. It involves how we're spending it and how much we're giving it to the church. It also involves the responsibility of the church of how it's spending this money effectively to fulfill all of this through its ministry leaders.

How we connect with our children, and how we connect with our parents, and how we connect with the people around us – all of that is stewarding the dream of God. Who around you doesn't yet know God's dream? Pastor Glen hopes we see it clearly enough that we can share it with others. Will we multiply what God has given us? We will dress and keep the earth? Pastor Glen believes we will.

We need to read that *Vine* article and pray – God show us the way, God bring us church planters, God bring us future pastors, God brings us Sunday school teachers and others that we need. For example, we're going to be asking some of you to be volunteers to sit in children's church so we can have an extra person in every classroom. You won't have to teach but just be there in case you are needed to help in an emergency.

We currently have a need for someone to be in charge of VBS this year. So we will be looking for people to step up as part of our stewardship to accomplish what God is laying out before us as a congregation. Jesus, at the end of his life, said, "I have completed his Father's work." May we be able to declare the same thing – that we have accomplished what God has set out for New Hope.

Pastor Glen has a dream for us that he would like fulfilled just like the dream that God put in Martin Luther King, Jr. which is now being fulfilled before our very eyes at the inauguration this coming Tuesday.

And Jesus is rejoicing because we've moved mankind further down the road toward him. And may we continue that process of moving mankind further down the road fulfilling God's dream.

Key Scripture: Genesis 2:15, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it (to dress it and keep it)."

General Group Question: What is the dream of God the Father? When was it initiated and when will it be completely fulfilled? What does this tell us about God?

Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.

1. What role does Jesus fulfill in the Father's dream?
2. How would you describe the Dream of God to those who don't know God very well?
3. How did the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr. fit into God's dream for mankind?
4. What does it mean that we need to be good stewards?
5. What areas of our life do we need to exercise good stewardship?
6. What is our church theme for 2009?
7. What impact should it have on all of us?