

Your Dream Can Make a Difference

Pastor Eric Johns

What does it take to make a difference? I believe if you want your life to make a difference, you must have a dream. Your dream can make a difference.

A dream lifts you out of yourself, into another self, which is greater than yourself. You will never know what your capacity is until you have a dream.

A dream is a God-given gift. The ability to dream is what makes us different than animals. God has given us the power to create, dream, visualize, plan, and imagine great things.

A dream can be used for good or for evil. Napoleon said, "Imagination rules the world. Nothing starts happening until someone starts dreaming." Einstein said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."

Everyone has a dream. It may be positive or negative. What is your dream for the next ten years? Most people cannot answer that question. They can tell you what they do not want to see happen in their lives. But they find it difficult to specifically tell you what they want to see come to pass.

A dream creates a picture in your mind. The human mind cannot differentiate between a good dream and a bad one. The Bible teaches us through the life of Job that what we fear comes upon us. Fear is really a negative dream. That negative dream creates a picture in your mind that comes to pass.

Many people begin with a big dream but eventually it shrinks down to size due to situations. There are people who say, "We have never done it that way before." They also say things like, "We can't afford it." Sometimes you just have to ignore people like that. If you listen to them they will rob you of your dream.

We need to learn to dream bigger because there is power in a dream. The Bible says in Ephesians 3:20 that God is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think. God doesn't laugh at our big dreams. He only laughs at our small ones.

How do you begin to see the impossible come to pass in your life? Begin with seeing the invisible. You cannot accomplish the impossible until you first see the invisible. An example of this can be found in the ministry of Jesus. Standing before Him were five thousand hungry people. After breaking the bread, He lifted His eyes up to heaven, above the crowd. This is exactly what

you have to do when you have a dream from God. You have to lift your eyes above the circumstance, hurt, negative people, and your financial situation. Sometimes you have to look beyond reality and see through the eyes of faith!

Faith begins with catching a dream. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

If you don't have a dream for your life, you are dying. A dream is a psychological necessity.

There is no such thing as a great person, but only ordinary people committed to great dreams. Great people are really ordinary people who refuse to quit. When an ordinary person is committed to a great dream the dream makes the person great.

How can you be sure that your dream is God's dream for your life? The first question you need to ask yourself is this – Is the dream bigger than you? It seems like everyone is

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allowed to dream big except for Christians. Donald Trump can dream big. Hollywood can spend one hundred million dollars on a movie. But when a Christian has a big dream even other Christians put him down. They say things like, "We have to pray that God will humble that brother."

Christians should be the biggest dreamers! If the dream is not big then you probably don't need God for the dream to come to pass. A big dream requires God's involvement.

If it is God's dream you will not be able to let it go. Most people let go of their dreams because of delay. One thing we must understand is that delay does not mean denial. If you will hold onto your dream it will come to pass.

If it is God's dream you will die for it. The cross is not only a place where Christ died; it is a place where I die. I die to my own selfish dreams and agendas. I lay down my life.

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream.

He gave his most famous speech about his dream. I have a dream too. My dream is for the advancement of God's Kingdom. My dream drives me. It causes me to give up some of the pleasures of life and pursue a higher life.

I have a dream that in Buffalo, and every city in America, God will raise up a people who have laid down their selfish ambitions for the sake of God's kingdom.

I have a dream that through The Buffalo Dream Center we will reach the overlooked, the least of these, in our society. I have a dream for a local church to break all religious and social tradition, inviting the homeless, the prostitutes, and the drug addicts to attend church with the business man, the suburbans, and the politicians.

I have a dream that someday we will be able to feed the hungry after ever service.

I have a dream to have a discipleship ministry. When people addicted to drugs and alcohol or the homeless give their lives to Jesus – I have a dream to have a residential discipleship program. Those people can have a place to live for one year as they are mentored and loved by a staff of people that will feed them, give them a place to live, and dedicate themselves to see others set free from bondages.

I have a dream that all over our great city people will be able to hear the sounds of children playing and singing at Kidz Club programs, as their lives are changed by the power of the gospel.

I have a dream that these same children will have the privilege of attending church every Sunday because of a giant fleet of buses and dedicated drivers that will pick them up and drop them off. These same buses will provide transportation to the Kidz Club After-School program – where children can get a hot meal, have fun, get assistance with their homework, and hear the message of the Gospel.

I have a dream to be the "church of all nations" – that the Buffalo Dream Center would be the church refugees from the west side of Buffalo would come to find Jesus Christ.

I have a dream for a Master's Commission Bible College here in the inner-city of Buffalo, New York. Master's Commission would offer "hands-on-training" to young people with a desire to serve God in the ministry full-time.

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Boxes of Love Makes an Impact



The crunching of the snow could be heard under the tires of the three large trucks that pulled into the east side neighborhood on a frigid Saturday afternoon in December. People from the neighborhood struggled to stay warm as they formed a line down the sidewalk. Volunteers shoveled pathways in the snow, set up tables, and took their positions at the trucks, which were filled with toys, bags of groceries,



and turkeys. When the long extension cord was finally plugged into a neighboring house, Pastor Eric took the microphone and shared with the people in the community about the love of Jesus Christ. After praying with everyone, the distribution began. Single moms were grateful to walk back to their homes with wrapped Christmas gifts – probably the only gifts their children would receive. Elderly men and women took home food. Volunteers could be seen walking grandmothers back to their homes, carrying their food for them.

That was a typical scene at one of the many Boxes of Love distribution sites last December. But it all began in November – the week of Thanksgiving.



On Monday, November 24 Pastor Eric Johns left his home for the tenth year in row with a sleeping bag, a backpack with a few items, and a few dollars in his pocket.

He was on his way to spend a week living on the streets of Buffalo with the homeless. During the week he ate meals in soup kitchens. He slept nearly every night under an expressway overpass. Joining him under the overpass was a homeless man known affectionately as Speedy. The five-foot tall Mexican man, with three-foot long hair, showed up from time to time to sleep under the bridge.

The week on the streets brought attention to the Buffalo Dream Center's Boxes of Love program. Financial support began to come in. Donations of food and toys were also abundant. The only thing missing was warehouse space.

"It seemed like everything was falling into place except the warehouse space," said Pastor Eric.

After looking at several possible places to base the huge undertaking of packing 2,500 bags of food and wrapping 4,000 gifts, Pastor Eric could not find a good warehouse. Nester Hernandez, director of the Belle Center, a community center in the poorest neighborhood of Buffalo, read an article about Pastor Eric's need for a warehouse in the Buffalo News, Buffalo's only major newspaper. The Belle Center hosted Camp Adventure with the Buffalo Dream Center last summer. Nester wondered how he could help the Buffalo Dream Center. He offered space at



the Belle Center to wrap gifts.

With a place to wrap gifts, volunteers began the long process of wrapping thousands of toys. However, Feed the Hungry, a ministry based in South Bend, Indiana, had a semi-truck full of food headed to Buffalo to supply food for the thousands of Boxes of Love that still had to be packed.

"They called a couple of times and asked for the address to drop off the food," said Pastor Eric. "I didn't have a place for them to drop it off. I didn't know what to do."

Jim Turner, a local businessman and friend of Pastor Eric, was looking every day for a warehouse. An acquaintance told him about someone with warehouse space. Desperate, Jim called. The warehouse owner got excited about helping. He told Jim to bring Pastor Eric with him and go directly to the warehouse space. Not only did Boxes of Love get a

warehouse, it was given absolutely free! Employees of the warehouse even unloaded trucks and moved pallets of food around the warehouse with their forklifts.



For nearly two weeks gifts were wrapped and food was packed in bags. John and Shirley Tasch brought a team of young people from all over America. They dedicated one week to pack bags of food and wrap gifts. They also held Christmas outreaches at homeless shelters, a seniors' home, and the Kidz Club after-school program. Most importantly the team was a part of the largest Boxes of Love distribution site held at the Belle Center. Three hundred eighty families were served at the Belle Center on a Friday afternoon. The distribution began at 3:00 p.m. People began waiting in line at 10:00 a.m. The need was great in Buffalo's poorest neighborhood.

Boxes of Love held twenty distribution sites located in Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Batavia. The Buffalo Dream Center was even able to provide food to a church in Cleveland, Ohio. Paul and Cindy Grodell, outreach pastors at Church on the Rise, caught



the vision of Boxes of Love and planned on reaching out to nearly one hundred families in Cleveland. The only thing they didn't have was a source for food. The Buffalo Dream Center was able to meet the need so Pastors Paul and Cindy traveled to Buffalo with an empty van and took food back to Cleveland.

History was made this year. On the final weekend of Boxes of Love a major snow storm hit Buffalo. Everything was shut down. Vehicles could not even drive on many of the snow-covered streets. The final distribution



site for Boxes of Love was cancelled. Feeling bad about all of the families that did not receive a Box of Love, Pastors Eric and Michelle decided to hold the distribution site after Christmas. On January 3 volunteers gave away food and toys to the families, showing them that they were not forgotten.

Boxes of Love is a testimony of the church uniting to make a difference in a city. Churches of different denominations all took part by sending volunteers, hosting distribution sites, and financially supporting the ministry.

There are several businesses and

foundations that supported Boxes of Love. Feed the Hungry, Feed the Children, and the Food Bank of Western New York all helped supply food. The John Oishei Foundation provided a grant that helped purchase turkeys and chickens. The Belle Center's AmeriCorps program, West Seneca AmeriCorps, and the Buffalo City Mission all supplied trucks to haul food and toys to distribution sites. Employees



from the Talking Phone Book collected money and went shopping at Wal-Mart. They provided thousands of dollars worth of toys. Hunter's Hope Foundation, founded by former



quarterback for the Buffalo Bills, Jim Kelly, provided more than two hundred stuffed teddy bears. A special thanks goes out to the West Side Businesses and Taxpayers Association and the Walker Risk Foundation for providing funds to make Boxes of Love possible. There are hundreds of individuals, families, and churches that gave to Boxes of Love as well.

When all was said and done, Boxes of Love assisted 2,500 families. More than 4,000 gifts were given to children in need. The city of Buffalo experienced the love of Jesus - and that love came in a box.

Christmas Eve Dinner Gives Hope to Many



For the third year in a row, the Buffalo Dream Center and Hearts for the

Homeless formed a partnership and reached out to the homeless and inner city families of Buffalo with a free turkey dinner on Christmas Eve.

Hearts for the Homeless has been feeding homeless people with its mobile soup kitchen for 19 years. The Hearts for the Homeless RV can be seen five nights per week in downtown Buffalo serving men, women, and children a hot meal. This takes place throughout the entire year, in all kinds of weather.

For many years the ministry made a special meal on Christmas Eve and served the people from their RV. Although the meal was delicious, the winter weather of Buffalo made it difficult for people to stay and enjoy their Christmas dinner together.



When Pastor Eric heard about what Hearts for the Homeless was doing he called Ron Calandra, the director of the ministry, and made the suggestion that they form a partnership on Christmas Eve and serve a turkey dinner at the Buffalo Dream Center. That was three years ago and the tradition continues.

More than one hundred volunteers helped serve the turkey dinner. Those who volunteered their time came from several churches and businesses throughout Western New York and Canada. Parents brought their children and served others.

Before the meal was served everyone enjoyed a program complete with music, drama, dance, and free prizes. The Dream Team performed a powerful drama about being free from bondage. The drama set the stage for Pastor Eric to communicate the life-changing message of the Gospel. When an invitation was given to the audience to give their lives to Jesus Christ, several people responded, including some of the volunteers.

All of the food for the hot turkey

dinner with all of the trimmings was donated. Lou and Joanne Williams, professional chefs, prepared the meal as a donation to the ministry. About two hundred fifty people enjoyed the meal. Homeless men and women walked in right off of the streets. Refugee families from the west side of Buffalo were transported by vans. Single moms, children, and families all enjoyed being served as volunteers waited on tables just like in a nice restaurant.

Fifty meals were placed in Styrofoam containers and delivered to elderly people. All of the leftover food was donated to the Buffalo City Mission, a homeless shelter for men.

The Christmas Eve dinner was a great way to end all of the outreach that took place in the month of December at the Buffalo Dream Center.



Look What Happens When a Church Builds Relationships

What does it take to change a life? Pastor Eric and Michelle Johns learned a long time ago that elaborate church programs do not change lives. The key to seeing lives changed is building relationships. This is especially true with children. The Buffalo Dream Center has been reaching children in the same neighborhoods for thirteen years.

Because of this dedication to being consistent and building relationships the Buffalo Dream Center has seen lives changed forever. Joshua started attending



the Buffalo Dream Center when he was seven years old. His brother, Niko, was only six. Tomaine went to Kidz Club in a west side park and heard the Gospel for the first time when he was nine.

All three of these boys became a part of the Buffalo Dream Center. They grew up in the children's ministry. They graduated to youth group but continued to help with Kidz Club. They became a part of the ministry team as they were mentored and trained by Pastor Eric and Michelle. They

traveled and performed with the Dream Team. Last summer they took part in fifty outreaches.

Where are they today? They have beaten the odds that were against them. They went away to Bible college! Joshua and Tomaine are students in Master's Commission in Los Angeles, California. Niko joined the Master's Commission in Fort Myers, Florida. All of them recognize God's call on their lives to work full-time for Him.

Where would they be if there were no Kidz Club programs? Where would they be if nobody built a relationship with them? Look what happens when a church builds relationships!

Magdalene Project Hits the Streets with the Gospel

Joanne Lorenzo Sherwood has always felt compelled to take the Gospel to the streets. Involved for years feeding the homeless and holding programs for inner city children, Joanne began reaching out to a prostitute named Karen.

Joanne quickly developed a relationship with Karen. After becoming friends, Karen died of AIDS. Today Joanne continues to share the love of Christ with women like Karen through her ministry – The Magdalene Project.

Every Saturday night Joanne and a team of volunteers invade the streets of Buffalo and Niagara falls. They bring toiletries and food to give away to the women and others who are on the streets late at night. They also bring roses and stuffed animals. When they give one of the women a rose they tell them that God loves them.

Recently someone donated an RV to the Buffalo Dream Center. It was given to Joanne for the Magdalene Project. Someone else donated funds to repair it. Another donor

provided one year's worth of insurance!

When the ministry first began the team drove around the city looking for women. Now that they have an RV, volunteers park in certain areas and the people come to them!



Boxes of Love in Other Places

Boxes of Love has grown over the years to include other places outside of Buffalo, New York. The following are some of the stories about Boxes of Love in other places.

Cleveland, Ohio

Paul and Cindy Grodell are the outreach pastors at Church on the Rise in Cleveland, Ohio. They traveled to the Buffalo Dream Center for two mission trips. They caught the vision of Boxes of Love on one of those trips. Taking the idea back to Ohio, they held their first Boxes of Love outreach. They were able to assist ninety families and give gifts to nearly three hundred children.

"We had the opportunity to deliver boxes personally and go in to the homes of families and pray with them," said Cindy Grodell. "It was powerful!"

New Jersey

Heather, a single mom with three small children, recently lost her job. When she arrived at the distribution site, held by Pastor Brad Gray, she was greeted by a team of people. After being treated with love, kindness, and compassion, Heather burst into tears. She was overwhelmed by God's miraculous provision for her family. Right there at the distribution center, amongst the

noise and busyness of families crowding around to receive toys, Heather received Jesus Christ as her Savior.

"This was our first year doing Boxes of Love," said Pastor Brad. "We were able to provide for about sixty families and more than one hundred fifty children. With God's help we believe we can double that in 2009."

Guntur, India

The orphans at the Center of Hope in Guntur, India had a special Christmas. Not only did they receive new clothes, they also reached out to the Hindu children who live near the Center of Hope.

"On Christmas we held an outreach in the evening," said Pastor Sagar, director of the Center of Hope. "Our children invited the neighboring children and gave them gifts. They also put on a program which included songs, dances, and a skit about the birth of Jesus."

Albania

Pastor Tori Muca has been reaching the people of Albania for many years with the Gospel. The love of Jesus has been displayed to the people through ministries that provide for their needs.

The Buffalo Dream Center provided a

financial gift to Rilindja Church to reach out to families during the Christmas season.

"Our Christmas celebration was great," said Pastor Muca. "People were saved! Your gift came at the right time to meet the needs of our Christmas celebration."

Tirupati, India

Pastor Arul is the director of the Center of Hope in Tirupati, India. Tirupati, home of thousands of Hindu temples, has been impacted by Pastor Arul's ministry throughout the years.

Some experts estimate that nearly half of the population of Tirupati is HIV positive. This epidemic has caused thousands of children to be orphaned. With their parents dead, Tirupati's streets are filled with children begging for their daily necessities. Pastor Arul has given a home to nineteen of these girls at the Center of Hope.

The Center of Hope provides a place to live, food, an education, and love to the orphans. As a special gift at Christmas, the girls each received two new dresses.



Volunteer Reminded About the True Meaning of Christmas

The following is a portion of an email received by someone who volunteered their time to deliver Boxes of Love to families in Buffalo.

I loaded up my car with food, turkeys, and toys and started out. I made the deliveries and my heart was warmed to see how happy the families were to receive the Boxes of Love. This may be all they received for Christmas. This may be all each child gets – one present. As I looked around some of the houses that I delivered to, many of the homes had nothing. There was no furniture. There were no Christmas trees. There was not much of what you would be used to. As I delivered the Boxes of Love to these families who barely had anything, I was struck at how happy and appreciative they were.

One little girl sticks out in my mind and brings tears to my eyes. When I entered the apartment with the Box of Love, the little girl jumped for joy! I had three presents. One was for her and the other two were for her siblings. She was so excited over the one present that she

began dancing around. As she danced, she was yelling, “Happy Christmas! Happy Christmas!”

I delivered sixteen Boxes of Love that night. After my final delivery, my car broke down. I blew and outer tire rod. Most people would have gotten upset. But, as I stood next to my car, all I could think of was that little girl and here smiling face as she yelled, “Happy Christmas!” It made me understand that no matter how bleak things look and how bad the economy gets, there is one thing we can all hold dear – Christmas! No matter what our troubles are, it could always be worse. We all have to find the one thing we can be joyful about this Christmas. Whether it is that loved one in our lives, our children, a roof over our heads, or food in the refrigerator. Maybe it is that certain someone who was born that gives us the whole Christmas thing to begin with. I say to each and every one of you, “Happy Christmas! Happy Christmas!”

What Others Are Saying About Boxes of Love

Boxes of Love distribution sites were held at churches, community centers, and street corners. The following are some of things people had to say that led a site or received a Box of Love.

“We were blessed to supply one hundred seventy five families with bags of food, chickens, and Christmas presents. It was exciting to see the happy faces and hear the remarks from those receiving food and toys. The Gospel was shared with everyone. About thirty people dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ. We also had the opportunity to pray for many to be healed.”

Pastor Bob

“Our site went wonderfully. One hundred seventy families received Boxes of Love. We received extra food, so every family was given two bags. Another church partnered with us and brought along their band. They had just received tragic news that one of their members, a college freshman, was killed in a car accident. I was surprised that they brought twenty-five volunteers! They performed music the entire time, creating a great atmosphere. Several people from the community were prayed for. It was a great experience for the families we served and our church congregation.”

Pastor Mark

“I just wanted to say “thank you” for the wonderful gifts given to us. Before all of this was given to us, my kids and I did not know what we were going to do for Christmas. I have been out of work for a while and my utilities kept getting shut off. My rent payments were always late. You gave us so much that we have decided to take half of what was given to us and give it to a refugee family from Burundi, Africa. We were blessed, so now we want to be a blessing to someone else! Thank you for everything!”

A Single Mother

“I didn't know what I was going to do. You are a blessing and this Christmas is going to be a good one.”

Father of four children

“We had the opportunity to help more than thirty families.”

Pastor Pat

“At our site we had a father show up with his two children. He was not previously registered, but we had enough extra gifts so that his need was met. Boxes of Love is a great way to reach out to your community!”

Joanne

“We had the opportunity to deliver boxes personally and go in to the homes of families and pray with them. It was powerful. Ninety families received a Box of Love.”

Paul & Cindy from Ohio

YOU CAN MAKE A
DIFFERENCE
IN THE LIFE
OF A CHILD
PROJECT
HOPE

The following are just two examples of children who *desperately* need sponsors...they need you!



This is Pavan. He is 9 years old. His parents could not take care of him so they contacted Pastor Sagar and now lives at the Center of Hope in Guntur, India.



This is Brulah. She is 5 years old. Her parents could no longer afford to take care of her so she now lives at the Center of Hope in Guntur, India. She is currently in kindergarten.

If you would like to sponsor one of the above children or want more information about sponsoring a child through Project Hope, please contact the Buffalo Dream Center at (716) 854-1001

Your Dream Can Make a Difference...continued

This one-year program would have a second optional year on the mission field. Young people who choose to go for their second year would live in India – preaching the Gospel in remote villages and serving the Indian church to see the nation saved!



I have a dream to continue training pastors in India through pastors' conferences and by establishing Centers of Hope all over the nation. They would also be Bible training centers by which new churches would be planted in India's 600,000 villages. These Centers of Hope would be places for India's orphans to have a family, receive an education, and discover a relationship with Jesus Christ. I have a dream for a ministry to Muslims. I

have dream for a ministry to gang members. I have a dream for a more and more ministries that meet the needs of people.

I have a dream for a ministry that teaches young people of the arts of dancing and drama.

I have a dream for a facility that can house mission teams that come to Buffalo from all over the nation and for a warehouse that can be a year-round food distribution center – or a “Christian food bank”.

I have a dream that God will raise up our church to be a place where those that have no dream, or have lost their dream, can come and find their dream again. A place where everyone is welcome, no matter how they look or what their background is. A place where God's kingdom is first and foremost.



The Buffalo Dream Center

Is in Need of the Following Things:

- Laptop Computer (Pentium 4 or higher, 128 MB video processor or higher)
- 2 Desktop Computers (Pentium 4 or higher)
- An iPod for the Dream Team to use when they are out ministering
- 15 passenger van for the Joseph Project Mobile Food Pantry

If you are able to donate one of the above items or would like to contribute toward the purchase of one, please contact the Buffalo Dream Center at: (716) 854-1001. FYI - Donations can be made with a credit card when you give online.

www.buffalodreamcenter.org



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Urban Impact Youth Service
 Fridays at 7:00 PM

Kidz Club After School Program
 Thursdays at 4:30 PM

Adult & Teen Discipleship Bible Studies
 Tuesdays at 7:00 PM

Dream Center Information
 Worship Service
 Sundays at 11:00 AM

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