

Imagination

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Just use your imagination! Parents tell this to their children. We tend to associate imagination with children. However, adults possess imagination. We all can conceptualize in the mind things which do not presently exist. The imagination is the eye of the heart (Eph. 1:18). By our imagination, we express our hearts creatively. Therefore, our imagination is essential to reflecting God's glory.

Imagination is a characteristic of the Creator. He imagined a loving relationship with humans before He made the world (Eph. 1:1-6). God knew the joy of a relationship with humans. By filling Creation with His love, He hoped that humans would imagine the unending joy of a relationship with Him.

Sadly, humans rejected God and sinned. By Satan implanting lies in Eve's mind, she imagined a better life without God. She enacted her imagination and sinned. In time, she came to understand that what she had imagined was wrong. Ultimately, God would provide redemption for humans through the Seed of Woman, the Messiah (Gen. 3:15).

The world is both an ugly and beautiful place. We confront its ugliness and beauty daily. Yet, somehow, we are to imagine and create beauty in the world. But, how do we do this? After all, isn't beauty in the eye of the beholder? What is beautiful to one is ugly to another. Therefore, imagination must be properly trained.

Imagination and Resurrection

The imagination has an important function in our redemption. The world appears irredeemable. Yet, God was able to redeem the world through a crucified and risen Savior. This was and remains unimaginable for some: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (1 Cor. 1:23). Yet, by giving life to the dead, God shows us what is possible if we believe.

The resurrection of Jesus refocuses our imagination to new possibilities. For example, Jesus had a conversation with Martha about resurrection and her recently deceased brother, Lazarus. Jesus assured Martha that Lazarus would rise again. She concurred that he would rise again on the last day. This reflected her present understanding of the end of the world. Yet, Jesus persisted on the subject by interjecting a new truth: "...I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).

Jesus was not talking about something that would happen at the end of time. He was speaking about Himself being raised from the dead and the consequence of His resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus would create new possibilities for the world. Of course, Martha did not have the slightest understanding of what Jesus was conveying. She responded by saying, "...Yes,

Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world” (John 11:27). In time, Martha would realize what Jesus was teaching.

The resurrection deeply changes the imagination. This event enables us to reimagine the world and our place/purpose in it. Paul prayed that the resurrection would enlighten the eyes of the hearts of the Ephesians (Eph. 1:18). The eyes of the heart are the imagination. The resurrection gives a new understanding to the eyes of the heart. New possibilities are brought to light by the resurrection. The saints at Ephesus could imagine a better, hopeful life. Through this renewed understanding, they could embark on creating a new life.

The Imagination and New Life

When we become Christians, our lives begin changing. Our attitudes and behaviors begin changing. We are to use our lives to fill the world with God’s glory. But, how? Just use your imagination!

Finding ways to fill the earth with God’s glory can be challenging. Certainly, worship and teaching the Gospel are clear ways to glorify God. Yet, there must be more ways to glorify God than two activities!

The Bible uses expressions that are indicative of imagination. The Bible wants us to think about how we can use our lives in totality to glorify God. For example, Paul wrote, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil. 4:8).

This is one of the best-known verses of Paul; yet, it may be one of the least understood. We are to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praise-worthy. Yet, Paul does not specify a list of “things.” Only an imagination transformed by the resurrection of Jesus can conceive of such things. Once we have imagined the kinds of things in this passage, we can begin to create and promote them in the world.

When our imagination is trained to function according to this text, everything we attempt to do and create will be motivated to reflect the glory of God. If we approach life in such an imaginative way, even the routine and mundane activities of daily life will be transformed. The quality of our work will improve. We will not look to cut corners, cheat, and deceive. We will become more self-giving to our fellow man. We will become fair and equitable. We will stop being conceited and ego-driven. We will become hopeful that our efforts will be profitable and beneficial to all.

Conclusion

Our imagination matters. How it is trained and how it is used has far-reaching consequences. Like the generation of Noah, if our imagination is used for evil, we will incur the wrath of God. If we use our imagination to bring about a new creation by faith in the resurrected Lord, we will share in God's glory eternally.

We cannot be transformed by the Gospel without using our imagination. Paul explained that our present existence is like looking into a dim mirror. As Christians, we are dim reflections of what we will become one day. Or, as one theologian puts it, we are shadows of our future selves and/or broken signposts pointing into a fog.

Yet, there is a new day coming when we will not need imagination. Everything we have longed for will break forth in an unimaginable, unending day in the glorious ray of God's love.

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

1 Corinthians 3:12