

Daring to Imagine More

Series: Daring Faith
Brad Bailey – October 6, 2018

Imagination: A Key to Living by Faith

1. My imagination (inner mind) is _____ to living by faith.

John 4:24 (CEV)

Faith... is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. – Heb.11:1 (NLT)

“We set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see. What we see will last only a short time, but what we cannot see will last forever.” - 2 Corinthians 4:18 (NCV)

2. My imagination _____ my life ...so I should manage it wisely.

“Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.” - Proverb 4:23

3. My imagination is capable of imagining both that which is neither true nor good...as well as that which is true and good.

Keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable, or commendable. - Philippians 4:8 (GW)

4. My imagination does not have the power to _____ itself ...but does have the essential power that leads to _____.

5. My imagination aligns with faith when it transcends both _____ (of simply accepting “what is”) and _____ (of simply expecting “my wants.”)

How can we develop our imagination to serve our faith?

1. Focus on the direction of _____ and purposes.

Jesus told the people: I tell you for certain that the Son cannot do anything on his own. He can do only what he sees the Father doing, and he does exactly what he sees the Father do. - John 5:19 (CEV)

“May God enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see the hope that his calling holds for you.” - Ephesians 1:18 (NJB)

2. Listen to what God is saying...for _____ comes from _____.

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. - Romans 10:17 (ESV)

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper who will be with you forever. That helper is the Spirit of Truth . . . you know him because he lives with you and will be IN you!” - John 14:16-17 (GW)

3. Expect God’s vision to be more spiritually _____ and _____ than what I envision.

4. Accept that faith must often begin in you _____, as God will often give us vision for something _____ it is shared with others.

It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, your faithfulness in the evening. Psalm 92:2 (NLT)

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Intro

Today we are continuing in our Fall venture “Daring Faith.” There are lots of ways we have described the nature of faith. In the largest of ways...I have said that: Faith is how the we as finite beings enter into the larger reality of the infinite.

There is a larger reality that is beyond our finite nature to fully understand...let along control. As finite beings we need the infinite to reveal itself to us... and God has done that.

Jesus reveals ...this world has become separated... darkened...but what human beings represent... is revealed in him... restored through him. And he provides the path for the human heart to follow.

For some listening... maybe this venture into a wider world has just begun. faith has brought you here... **first step.**

For some... that bigger world opened up long ago... caught the dream...but perhaps you feel the **stagnation**... **familiarity** has made your life **too settled.**

Maybe you your vision has been leaking.

I want to **begin with a brief experience**... I'd like to ask us all to spend just one minute with our eyes closed. Would you relax...and join me in closing your eyes.

Imagine you have never had visual sight. It simply was not a part of your physical make up.

With your eyes still closed...consider... do you believe that this room still exists?

How would you move through this room?

[Open eyes... discuss]

When your eyes were closed...did the room exist?

It would be a little harder to navigate. Perhaps you found a certain comfort that you were sitting in place. If you were to have been told to move step out... and move...how would you seek to navigate?

Likely... by what you hear...and by trusting what others who are familiar.

What this can **help us appreciate** is the **nature of faith.**

The **room exists**... it is **simply navigated** by **different senses.**

Reality was not bound by **what you saw** by your **physical eyes.** Your awareness was guided by the voice of another...and by what you could imagine...or see in your inner mind.

And that is a way of understanding faith.

Today... I believe God is **daring us** to **imagine more.**

Your imagination is simply your inner vision.

One of the greatest gifts that God has given you is the gift of imagination.

It is the ability to see things in your mind, to think and to create with mental pictures in your mind. God gave you this gift of imagination. [1]

Albert Einstein said...

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. Logic will get you from A to B; imagination will take you everywhere. There's no limit to imagination. The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination." - Albert Einstein

Erwin McManus

"Every man and woman has been given the most vital, foundational tool for creative work: the human imagination. It is the one way you can see the ideal, go to places you've never been, step into experiences you've never known. In your imagination, you have unlimited resources, unlimited capacity and an unlimited range of influence. In some ways, in our imaginations we are most like God. Unfortunately, the material for our imaginations is primarily filtered through our hearts. When our hearts are separated from God, our imaginations can be corrupted. As we draw near in intimacy with our Heavenly Father, our imaginations can be the birthplace of the dreams of God for our lives."

You were given the gift to see what is more ideal...to see what has yet to come.

Our imagination is a key to living by faith. I want help us clarify the relationship between imagination and faith....and then how we can develop it.

Imagination: A Key to Living by Faith

There is a vital relationship between imagination and faith.

First and foremost, God wants me to understand that ...

1. My imagination (inner mind) is essential to living by faith.

The unseen is engaged by what transcends the visual. God is Spirit. As Jesus said...

John 4:24 (CEV)

God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth.

God is Spirit. God is not bound by the same physical state. He speaks to our inner being...and that involves our imagination.

As was reflected by having closed our eyes...and imagining life without that sense... living by faith involves your inner mind.

As you may recall from recent weeks together... he starts off Hebrews

Faith... is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. – Heb. 11:1 (NLT)

God gave you two ways of seeing. He gave every human being two ways of seeing. First you can see through your physical eyes. That's one way of seeing. And second you can see by the imagination in your mind. You can picture things in your mind.

So God engages our imagination to see what He is doing...to see what we have not yet seen.

For instance, God says to Abraham “Abraham, you’re ninety years old and you have no kids. But I’m going to **change your name** from Abram to Abraham which means “father of a great nation.”

Then he says I want you to go outside, Abraham, **I want you to count the stars at night.** That’s how many grandchildren and great grandchildren, how many you’re going to have in your family tree. That’s going to be the nation of Israel. That’s going to be how many Jews there are in the world. **Count all the stars.**

What is God doing when he tells Abraham to go count stars? He is **activating his imagination.** He’s saying I want you to visualize what I’m going to do in your life.

And the **unseen** may be **MORE real** and lasting than what we naturally see.

“We set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see. What we see will last only a short time, but what we cannot see will last forever.” - 2 Corinthians 4:18 (NCV)

2. My imagination shapes my life ...so I should manage it wisely.

The Bible says this in Proverb 4:23..

“Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.” - Proverb 4:23

My imagination shapes my life. In other words the way you think is going to affect the way you feel and the way you feel is going to affect the way you act. And if you want to change the way you act you need to change the way you think. [2]

“Be careful how you think”... because have ability to reflect and re-work what we imagine.

And that leads to this point...

3. My imagination is capable of imagining both that which is neither true nor good...as well as that which is true and good.

Imagination can get a bad rap...because it can be associated with the worst of what consumes us inside.

What is worry...if not negative fear based imagination.

What is greed...and vanity...if not fear based imagination.

What is lust... if not an exploitive use of imagination.

In fact...we seem to understand the negative use of imagination better than the positive.

That is why the Bible encourages us...

Philippians 4:8 (GW)

Keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable, or commendable.

Keep your thoughts...what is he talking about? Your inner thoughts...what shapes your heart.

4. My imagination does not have the power to create itself ...but does have the essential power that leads to creating.

Some go so far as to imply that we can imagine something into existence... or actually create reality through our imagination. [3]

It's helpful to understand that we are entirely different from God in this regard.... God creates from nothing...we do not.

I appreciate how influential our imagination is in terms of influencing our experience...but I don't believe that we create something just by imagining it...or speaking it.

Our imagination does not itself create reality... **but does have the essential power that leads to creating.**

Everything starts with imagination. Nothing becomes reality unless first somebody thinks it up.

- This building did not become reality until somebody had to think it up in their mind first. Every great business, every great company, every piece of art, every musical note somebody imagined it before it became reality. Nothing happens unless somebody imagines it.
- And without imagination you couldn't even make decisions. When you start to make a decision you imagine what would happen if I did this, what would happen if I do that? And then you make the decision.
- Everything that has been created on planet earth by human beings started in the imagination of somebody's mind. This is a gift from God.

One final point of summary...

5. My imagination aligns with faith when it transcends both passivity (of simply accepting "what is") and presumption (of simply expecting "my wants.")

Faith is trust in God's purposes and power....so faith will not simply be bound by "what is". But faith will also trust God's will over my own.

Imagining is **neither** the magical "**made to order**" idea ("Just imagine it and it is yours.")...nor the meaningless (It's just his imagination")

> Imagination refers to that which can **lead us outside** the false constructs of "**what is.**"

How can we develop our imagination to serve our faith?

1. Focus on the direction of God's will and purposes.

Faith is all about believing INTO... what God is doing.
Jesus... "I have finished the work YOU GAVE ME..." he said that is what he sought...to see what this Father in heaven was doing... to hear what his Father in heaven was saying.

John 5:19 (CEV)

Jesus told the people: I tell you for certain that the Son cannot do anything on his own. He can do only what he sees the Father doing, and he does exactly what he sees the Father do.

Human existence is going to expand to the glory of God.

We can try to get the universe reversed so that God orbits around us...but unlikely.

So maybe it **isn't surprising** that I have **experienced God's leading most dynamically** when **sharing about Christ...** and **when leading the church to new ventures.**

If a dream is from God, it will be connected somehow to expanding his Kingdom...and His plan for the world.

Most people are missing God's dream for their life because they are **just trying to live in their dream...**unconnected to what God is doing...unconnected to what God wants you to do.

It is faith fueled imagination that calls us to be part of something than ourselves.

Nobody is naturally a great person. You don't just pop out of your mommy being a great person. No. You become great by attaching your life to a great cause, a great purpose or a great dream. You need something bigger than yourself to draw you out of yourself to make to you grow better than yourself and that's what makes you a great person.

Greatness comes from what you attach yourself to. You need something bigger than yourself that pulls you out of yourself centeredness that makes you great.

During *Daring Faith* I want to help you unlock your imagination. And I want to help you become a greater person. I want you to dream and visualize and think about how God wants to use your career. How God wants to use your future, your finances, your family, your giving, your ministry, you career.

My prayer for you is actually this next verse on your outlines.

"May God enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see the hope that his calling holds for you." - Ephesians 1:18 (NJB)

Notice this: May God enlighten the eyes of your mind. What's he talking about there? The eyes of your mind. **He's not talking about your physical eyes. He's talking about your imagination.** He's saying I pray that your imagination will come alive and in faith you'll be able to see God's dream for your life, God's vision for your life, God's purpose and plan for your life. God's calling on your life.

God has a calling for you. Most people miss their calling in life. Why? Because they're following *their* dream instead of *God's* dream.

If you want significance in your life, if you want satisfaction in your life, if you want fulfillment in your life here's what you've got to do. You've got to stop following your dream for your life and you've got to start following God's dream for your life.

2. Listen to what God is saying...for faith comes from hearing God.

Every one of those listed as heroes of the faith... responded to that which they heard.

We live in a **culture** that is so enamored with our individuality...that our highest value is **"Hey, I am my own person."** Now while there is a very healthy aspect of thinking for oneself... we are all formed by the assumptions that we have accepted about reality.

Our hope lies outside ourselves... beyond our finiteness. [4]

Romans 10:17 (ESV)

Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. [5]

The idea of hearing from God can raise some discomfort.

- Perhaps... you don't think you hear God speak like others.
- Perhaps you have had someone presume they were right about something because they claimed God had spoken.

The Scriptures are the living Word of God. They are a foundation of knowing God's will...and that forms the reality of faith.

It is living...and the Spirit which spoke and speaks through it... can also speak into our lives. As Jesus promised...

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper who will be with you forever. That helper is the Spirit of Truth . . . you know him because he lives with you and will be IN you!" - John 14:16-17 (GW)

3. Expect God's vision to be more spiritually significant and challenging than what I envision.

God's dream for my life is bigger than my dream. [6]

Faith will lead us into what is bigger than we imagine...in a spiritual manner.

We have dreams of being superheroes... rock stars... celebrities... all of which is defined more by what is sensational than substantial.

When Jesus broke into the world...they all had a dream... that of overthrowing Roman empire...restoring them as nation...that is big... what Jesus brought was infinitely bigger... and appeared smaller.

There are a lot of dreams, you can have big dreams but they wouldn't be significant. You could dream of **being a millionaire** by a certain age or dream of being a **billionaire**. For what purpose? Do you think God put you on this planet to live for yourself?

God's dream for my life is bigger than my dream. It's exponentially bigger. It's far larger. It's eternally significant.

God's dreams are always more CHALLENGING than my dreams.

My dreams are always focused on the end... the moment of success... of fulfillment.

Story of the process of purchasing property that reflected :

- Focusing on what God wanted... to reach more lives.
- Hearing from God.
- How it was both more significant...and challenging.

Hit by increasing uncertainty... time for natural maturity.

First big step... Raised only a tiny fraction... values skyrocketed.... Limitations were wearying. 13 years after that initial fundraising launch... this property snuck out to us. Both bigger...and harder.

4. Accept that faith must often begin in you personally, as God will often give us vision for something before it is shared with others.

God will often give us vision for something before it is shared with others... so that our faith is forced to begin on a personal level.

I can only imagine **what Abraham faced.**

For about a decade Abraham still has no kids. So he goes to a local restaurant: "A table for two." What's your name? "Father of a great nation?" Wow! How many kids you got? None! It'd be pretty embarrassing to be named father of a great nation and you don't have any kids. But God always calls things that are not as though they were. He names it in advance.

Continuation of building process: Final step...we get news just couple hours before our Board meeting...sellers state they have other competing offers and all parties are to submit their highest offer the next day. Wow. They were going to getting highest amount by creating competition. I went out to my car by the offices... shortly before Board meeting...I was frustrated but could not have been clearer for me... if we did not get this property we would continue to face far higher prices that would be impossible ...so we would need to go as high as possible and just accept that we would not have all we need to do a complete rehab.

Then I heard God speak to my inner mind... “What are you trusting in?” I wanted to say... “Hey...I’ll trust you and pay whatever it takes.” But God was very clear... he wanted my NOT to trust in what we might be able to secure with money...but just the opposite... to trust he would secure it without it. To give the least. I said... no way... 13 years of my life invested in this are on the line. I can’t keep at his... I need us to secure it and we can do it. I was mad. And I had to hold onto what I knew God was saying. Our meeting proceeded...I shared what they had presented...which led everyone to the same conclusion...lets give the highest we can. Eventually I shared what I believed God had spoken to me. They joined in trusting that Word...it wasn’t easy for any of us.

The next day we responded offering nothing higher or significantly higher.

The next day...I returned home from early pre-school run... message on the machine. They had accepted our offer...against a higher offer.

Closing:

So I want to challenge us today...to create space to hear God speak... by His Word...and Spirit. We read in Psalms of great descriptions of how one lives by faith.

Psalm 92:2 (NLT)

It is good to proclaim your unfailing love in the morning, your faithfulness in the evening.

We need to set our perspective in the morning...and reaffirm it every evening. I want to challenge each of us to create such a pattern. [7]

[Closing Prayer.]

Resources: This message is part of a church wide series based on the Saddleback Church Daring Faith campaign / series. We have adapted that set of messages by Rick Warren to fit our thoughts and way of approaching these topics, while maintaining the broad themes and some specific points. This message draws upon Rick Warren’s message Daring to Imagine (April 11-12, 2015)

Notes:

1. Other statements about imagination:

Here’s one, the famous playwright and poet: “Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire. You will what you imagine. Then you create what you will.” George Bernard Shaw

“Imagination is the organ of meaning.” C. S. Lewis

“Imagination rules the world.” Napoleon Bonaparte

“Imagination decides everything.” - The philosopher Pascal

“If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it!” William Arthur Ward

“You can’t do it unless you imagine it.” - George Lucas

“Disneyland will never be completed. It will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world.” - Walt Disney

2. Also: Proverb 23:7 “For as a man thinks in his heart, so he is.”

3. Some confuse God's power to speak of what is not yet as if it is, with our ability to do the same. They often draw upon Romans 4:17 which states, "As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not."

God spoke of Abraham's descendants when as yet there were none. God truly has the ability to speak of impossible things and, in the speaking, make them possible.

Abraham heard God's promise and believed it. That faith was credited to Abraham as righteousness (Genesis 15:6) and provides the example of all who would later exercise faith in God (Romans 4:11). Looking into the future, God can speak of things that do not exist as if they do exist. God has power over death and the ability to create life. Abraham believed this, and so do we, if we are spiritual descendants of Abraham (see Galatians 3:29).

Some Word of Faith groups misuse Romans 4:17 to teach the name-it-claim-it doctrine. According to this false doctrine, we can speak God's Word over our finances, our bodies, our automobiles, etc., and see miraculous results to our benefit. But Romans 4:17 does not speak of what Abraham issues in will or words...but rather in trusting what God's will...and God's very specific promise. (Drawn from <https://www.gotquestions.org/call-things-not-as-though-they-were.html>)

4. Humankind cannot trust their own view of what is true and good.
Proverbs 21:2 (ESV) - *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.*

5. It should be noted, that the context of Paul's words: Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ"... is that of salvation being in faith in Christ rather than fulfilling the law...and therefore the need for preaching Christ. The general principle would affirm that one needs to hear God's truth as a foundation to respond in trust.

6. "God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by his Spirit working deeply and gently within us." Ephesians 3:20 (Mes)

7 Other examples of the Psalmist referring to the morning.

"The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, so I know what to say to all these weary ones. Morning by morning he wakens me and opens my understanding to his will."

Isaiah 50:4 (NLT)

1 Chronicles 23:30 - They are to stand every morning to thank and to praise the LORD, and likewise at evening.