



## IMAGINATION: WHAT IF

Faith is an act of the imagination. And a healthy, vibrant imagination is crucial to the Christian life. Imagination is not the opposite of reality or the enemy of truth. Our problem is not an overactive imagination. The real threat is a lack of imagination, or an imagination stunted or misshaped by our experience. Some of us are stuck in *"if only"* living marked by regret, feelings of guilt, fear, and doubt. But God can turn your *"if only"* mindset into a *"what if"* attitude, where your faith looks forward to the future with holy confidence. The Bible calls us to adopt an active imagination that helps us look beyond our experience like those who modeled a fearless faith before us!

Highland Colony Men's Roundtable  
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### IMAGINATION: WHAT IF – An Agent of Grace

July 27, 2023

God has a plan for your life! To find it, requires imagination – transforming your *if only* regrets into *what if* possibilities.

**Bible Verses:** Romans 8:1,2 - Matthew 5:43-48 - Matthew 6:14,15

**Music:** Pat Benatar & Martina McBride - 'Hit Me with Your Best Shot' [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3srnQu\\_hUHc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3srnQu_hUHc)

**Video:** Dallas Willard on CS Lewis - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJv2L1tfzYM>

**Resources - Book:** IF – Trading Your IF ONLY Regrets for God's WHAT IF Possibilities by Mark Batterson. **Book:** IMAGINATION REDEEMED – Glorifying God with a Neglected Part of Your Mind by Gene Veith, Jr.

### IMAGINATION: *What If* – Imagination is Crucial to the Christian Life.

1. **PROPHETS** → When the biblical writers call us to faith, they are calling us to reject this view of the world and, instead, foster an active imagination that can see what God sees. When the prophets looked around them, they too saw injustice, sin, and unrighteousness. The rational response to this sort of experience is despair. But the prophets called the people—and us—to hope.
2. **JESUS** → Jesus calls us to an even more demanding act of imagination. He stood in the line of the prophets, but he radicalized their message. "The day is coming," they had said. He changed the tense. He says, "The day *has come*."
3. **THE APOSTLE THOMAS** → The apostle Thomas lacked imagination. The other apostles had seen the risen Lord, and they told him so. But Thomas only trusted his own experience. "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were," he said, "and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25).

### IMAGINATION: *What If* – *If only* - An Agent of Grace

1. **PRISONERS OF OUR PAST** → Even if we've confessed our sin, we still feel condemned. And that feeling of condemnation undermines the fact that God is *for* us. We keep beating ourselves up. We keep sabotaging ourselves. The only exit is fully accepting, understanding, and believing the life-changing truth that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.
2. **ONE ACT OF GRACE** → Grace is the catalyst that turns guilt into gratitude. One act of grace can turn the worst moment into the defining moment of someone's life. You can be that agent of grace. Grace can turn your greatest *if only* regret into a wonderful *what if* possibility.
3. **GET THE PAST OUT OF YOUR PRESENT** → Sometimes you have to travel 381 miles just to get the past out of your present. God can deliver you in one day, but it may take years to break old habits or build new habits.
4. **LABELED BY YOUR SIN** → Many of us label ourselves or others by sin. We live in a self-imposed hell of guilt or shame. And it makes us feel better about ourselves by looking down on others for their sin. If God turns a blind eye to confessed sin, shouldn't we? The Apostle Paul is explicit in Romans 3:23 – all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is no graduation. Sin was nailed to the cross and that is a crossroad. It's the cross that turns *if only* regrets into *what if* possibilities.
  1. We're either *in sin* or in *Christ*.
  2. We're either *guilty* or *forgiven*.
  3. We're either *sinners* or *saints*.
5. **MAKE A DIFFERENCE** → At Calvary's cross, Jesus broke the chains, broke the curse, and broke the code. My sin debt is paid in full, and I'm fully forgiven. But that's only half the gospel—the glass-half-empty gospel. This half-empty mindset causes us to focus on forgiveness, but Jesus didn't die on the cross just to forgive you. His aim is to change you—to be an agent of grace—to be an agent of change.

### ACTION: Journal This!

1. What if you are one decision away from a totally different life? What if you started acting like an agent of grace—looking for opportunities to love people what they least expect it and least deserve it?
2. What if only regret might be God's invitation to your *what if* possibility?
3. Who do you need to forgive?

## Bible Verses – The Message

**Romans 8:1,2 - 1** With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. Those who enter into Christ's being-here-for-us no longer have to live under a continuous, low-lying black cloud.**2** A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

**Matthew 5:43-48 - 43** "You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.'**44** I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer,**45** for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives

his best - the sun to warm and the rain to nourish - to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty.**46** If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that.**47** If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.**48** "In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.

**Matthew 6:14,15 - 14** "In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do. You can't get forgiveness from God, for instance, without also forgiving others.**15** If you refuse to do your part, you cut yourself off from God's part.

## "Hit Me with Your Best Shot" By Pat Benatar and Martina McBride

<p>You're a real tough cookie with a long history Of breaking little hearts like the one in me That's okay, let's see how you do it Put up you dukes, let's get down to it Hit me with your best shot Why don't you hit me with your best shot Hit me with your best shot Fire away You come on with it, come on You don't fight fair That's okay, see if I care</p>	<p>Knock me down, it's all in vain I get right back on my feet again Hit me with your best shot Why don't you hit me with your best shot Hit me with your best shot Fire away (solo) You're a real tough cookie with a long history Of breaking little hearts like the one in me</p>	<p>Before I put another notch in my lipstick case You better make sure you put me in my place Hit me with your best shot C'mon! Hit me with your best shot Hit me with your best shot Fire away Hit me with your best shot Why don't you hit me with your best shot Hit me with your best shot Fire away!</p>
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