



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 – HOPR FOR THE JOURNEY!

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

Oct 12, 2023

Scripture: Romans 8:22-28; Ezekiel 1:28; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Philippians 1:3-6; Proverbs 18:15; Ephesians 3:14-21

Music: My Redeemer Lives - Nicole C. Mullen - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8Slcb2j1kQ>

Video: City Slickers Movie - Best Day/Worst Day - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1j4ITRCTJL4>

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 & God in Ezekiel 1:28.

1. _____ → People need a fresh vision of God. He alone is the starting point for a vigorous Christian imagination. What we believe about God—deep down inside what we imagine him to be—is the control lever of the human soul and the believer's life. It is not enough for us to be able to affirm right truths about God. The truths have to go deeper so as to reform what we fundamentally understand and conceive God to be. We can profess an orthodox faith while holding underneath a deeply flawed picture of what God is like. Book: *The Chariot of the Gods* by Erich von Daniken interpreted Ezekiel 1 as an ancient record of an encounter with aliens from outer space -- psychedelic seventies nonsense!
2. _____ → One of the strengths of imagination over the mind's power of reason is its ability to behold, see, and let stand. The imagination does not in itself press us to figure something out. Reason demands an explanation. The imagination itself is content with the not knowing. Ezekiel 37:1-14; 47:1-12.

IMAGINATION: *What If* – HOPE FOR THE JOURNEY! – Romans 8:22-28.

IMAGINATION: *What If* – Dreams are created twice. The first creation is spiritual. The second creation is physical. But they always start with What If? What if you knew you couldn't fail--what would you do? What if time or money wasn't an object—what God-sized goal would you so after? If you're looking for an excuse, you'll always find one. The same is true of opportunity. And if you can't find one, you can make one. Maybe it time to stop asking why. Why not?

1. _____ → How's your patience muscle? The longer you wait, the easier it is to wait a littler longer. No matter what your *what if* is, I can almost guarantee it'll take longer than you ever imagined. It'll also be harder than you thought it would be. But that's what will make it far more fulfilling. The longer you have to wait, the more you appreciate it. And it's part of the process of making sure that success doesn't lead to failure. Trust me, you don't want your gifts to take you farther than your character can sustain them. Wait for it ... the best is yet to come! Philippians 1:3-6.
2. _____ → Defining your *what if* too narrowly will rob you of your imagination. We overestimate our ability to predict the future. We think we know more than we know, so we think we control more than we control. Control is an illusion. If you aren't careful, past experience can become a barrier to what if. You stop living out of right-brain imagination and start living out of left-brain memory. That's when you stop creating the future and start repeating the past. Proverbs 18:15.
3. _____ → Nothing is impossible with God. Our prayers are limited by our lack of knowledge—we don't know what we don't know. Prayer must be in alignment with the will of God or it's null and void. “Lord, I want what you want more than I want what I want.” If it's not God' will, you're not going to get whatever you ask for. If it's God's will, God will make a way. Ephesians 3:14-21.

ACTION: Journal This!

1. What if you are one decision away from a totally different life? What would you like God to do in you or through you?
2. What if you started praying and living like it depends on God and working —being intentional —like it depends on you?
3. What if everything in your past is God's way of preparing you for something in your future?



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SCRIPTURE

Romans 8:22-28 – 22 All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. **23** These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. **24** That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. **25** But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy. **26** Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. **27** He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. **28** That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.

Ezekiel 1:28 - 28 The way a rainbow springs out of the sky on a rainy day - that's what it was like. It turned out to be the Glory of God! When I saw all this, I fell to my knees, my face to the ground. Then I heard a voice.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 - 1 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. **2** He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. **3** He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know." **4** Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!' **5** This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. **6** I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD." **7** So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. **8** I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. **9** Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath;

prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' " **10** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. **11** Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' " **12** Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. **13** Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. **14** I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.' "

Philippians 1:3-6 - 3 I thank my God every time I remember you. **4** In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 18:15 - 15 The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out.

Ephesians 3:14-21 - 14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. **20** Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

My Redeemer Lives by Nicole Mullen

Who taught the sun where to stand in the morning?
And who told the ocean, you can only come this far?
And who showed the moon where to hide 'til evening?
Whose words alone can catch a falling star?
Well, I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
All of creation testifies
This life within me cries
I know my Redeemer lives, yeah.
The very same God that spins things in orbit
Runs to the weary, the worn and the weak
And the same gentle hands that hold me when I'm broken
They conquered death to bring me victory.
Now, I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
Let all creation testify
Let this life within me cry
I know my Redeemer.

He lives to take away my shame
And He lives forever, I'll proclaim
That the payment for my sin
Was the precious life He gave
But now He's alive and
There's an empty grave...
And I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
Let all creation testify
Let this life within me cry
I know my Redeemer.
I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
I know my Redeemer lives
He lives
He lives
He lives
He lives.

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