

Dear Walt,

I've missed hearing from you! Sounds like work is overwhelming. Your latest project is fascinating. Who would've thought about illustrating symphonies through cartoons.

I believe your project started with a simple question, "What if cartoons could illustrate classical music?" "What if" is **imagination**, the indispensable tool in the artist's, and the disciplinemaker's, toolbox. Imagine what could happen in ministry if we asked, "What if?" Here's an example of imagination.

The city managers in an Italian town had acquired a sixteen-foot-high block of white marble to be carved into a figure to top a government building. Two well-known sculptors had worked on the stone, butchering it before the marble was put into storage. Forty years later, the project surfaced again and the city managers hired a twenty-six year old sculptor to salvage what was left. This young man saw something more than a defaced piece of stone. He imagined the spectacular figure of a young King David emerging from the marble. The sculptor's name was Michelangelo.

This act is a wonderful illustration of our heavenly Father at work. He sees beneath our marred stoney exteriors and imagines what we could be if we're born anew in Christ.

Imagination is the ability to see and create something from nothing. An early church leader, Ambrose, wrote that the material world offered "not gods but gifts," a catalog of creative opportunities for mankind. Unlike the classical Greeks, who accused bold inventors or grand discoverers of "imagining themselves wiser than the gods," Christians embraced their God-given ability to be creators and asked, "What if?"

"Why is it that professed Christians dutifully sit in church . . . and then go out to live like pagans?" asked author Warren Wiersbe. "I have a suspicion that one factor is the starved imagination. The truths of Scripture have never permeated their imaginations."

Wiersbe describes imagination as the "image-making faculty in our mind, the picture gallery in which you are constantly painting, sculpting, designing, and sometimes erasing." The Puritan preacher and philosopher Jonathan Edwards wrote, "[Imagination] can enable the mind to grasp circumstances never actually experienced." Like other Puritan preachers, Edwards wanted to evoke *savitas* (Latin for "sweetness") in people's souls as they heard the gospel. How is this sweetness experienced? Through appealing to the imagination.

Without imagination, walking with God would be like losing the color in our televisions and returning to the 1950s black and white sets.

Unfortunately, the church often lives in a black and white world, content with the predictable and the routine. We need to disciple people in the use of their imaginations, giving people the freedom to ask, "What if?"



"There's no use trying," said Alice. "One can't believe impossible things." "I dare say you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for a half hour a day. Why, sometimes, I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

In the early 1930s, two men met in the Los Angeles hills, before dawn, to pray for their youth ministry. After several days of praying for high schoolers, they began praying for the state of California, then all forty-eight states, and then the world. For thirty days they prayed, claiming Jeremiah 33:3, asking God for impossible things before breakfast.

After WW2, one of the friends, Dawson Trotman, noted that his ministry to servicemen had reached people for Christ from all forty-eight states. Praying impossible things before breakfast birthed The Navigators.

What could happen if we invested thirty minutes a month, using our imaginations to trust God for new ways of reaching our neighbors, to help somebody study the Bible, or to solve a community problem? Who knows what we could imagine before breakfast, Walt.

In his essay on the sanctified imagination, A.W. Tozer writes,

I long to see the imagination released from its prison and given its proper place among the sons of the new creation . . . The stodgy pedestrian mind does no credit to Christianity.

Walt, let's make it a goal to stir up people to become masters of the imagination. Until next time.

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