

SRMBC Family Bible Study
“I Can Only Imagine” - Discovering the Father’s Love
September 19, 2018
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Week 2 – Imagine Reemption – Luke 15

This week, we are continuing with our I Can Only imagine study. Each week we will watch and discuss a short video, read through a passage of Scripture from one of the gospels and discuss How God reveals Himself to us through the life of Jesus.

Group Discussion

Would you describe yourself as an imaginative person? What role does imagination play in your life?

Yes – Definitely. Sometimes (as my wife and church can testify) my imagination for certain things can run wild!

Imagination in My Life	
At My Job	In Ministry
Being Able See Solutions to Technical Problems Quickly	In Preaching/Teaching 300+ Sermons Bible Studies
Able to Think Outside the Box	To Use Various Sources for Illustrations And Concepts
To Visualize A Project’s Completion Before It Starts	Quick Thinking – Innovation for Solving Problems (Parking Announcement at SRMBC Play)

The truth is that God has gifted each of us with imagination – the ability to visualize a thing before it becomes a thing or before we see it or experience it. It even helps us to know and understand who God is – even though we don’t see Him with our physical eyes. (Romans 12:3; Hebrews 11:1, 6).

READ Luke 15:11 – 20

This week’s video is about 12 minutes, and then we’ll discuss. EPISODE 2: Imagine Forgiveness

1. Why do you think Bart’s full sense of imagination – including Art and music – helped Him endure a painful childhood?

- It helped him to find a “place” where he could escape from the pain of his dad’s treatment.
- It helped him imagine having the ability to overcome adversity and take risks in his life.
- It helped to imagine a better “Father” - a better father – son relationship.

Bart’s father held a negative view of ambitious dreams and imagination, even in children. Bart says” he was definitely bitter toward anything that seemed unrealistic. And to him everything was unrealistic.

2. Have you experienced bitterness from your parents, teachers or others? How has that bitterness affected you growing up how does it affect you today?

- **In my childhood** - I was bullied and made fun of – because I wasn’t one of the “cool” kids (smart, wore thick glasses, dorky, etc.)
- **In the Army** - I was ridiculed and berated by Drill Instructors and supervisors.
- **At work** – I had a boss and a co-worker that were ruff!

I have learned to enjoy who I am and to be prepared and do my very best at everything. Sometimes I do find it hard to trust and get close to people.

3. How do you relate to Luke 15: 11 – 20? Have you ever had a period of life where you ran away from God? What happened next in your life?

Yes – there was a time when I far away from God – trying to live my old life while still belonging to Christ.

I started to experience a lot troubles:

- Lack of closeness to God/Worship (Isa. 59:2)
- Heaviness of Spirit/Conviction (Psalm 32:3 – 4)
- Extreme Hardships/Consequences (Gal. 6:6 – 7)

When I came to myself:

- Confession – I admitted I was wrong and that God is right (I John 1:9)
- Restoration – God restored me and my joy (Psalm 40:1 – 3)

Read Luke 15:20 – 24

4. Jesus’ parables show us the heart of God. He is a kind, forgiving Father. How does this challenge or encourage your view of God? Does the Father in this parable come to mind?

Challenges

- When the hardships in life come my way.
- When my prayers either are not answered or take longer than I want
- When I have blown it big – time and think that I could/should never be forgiven.
- The evil and trouble in this world – and how everyone is affected.

Encouragements

- No matter what happens – good or bad my Father will take care of me
- My Father knows and wants the best for me.
- My Father is always there to forgive – even when I fail. He always will love me.
- My Father has everything under control.

5. Some people hold a view of God as stern, demanding or distant. Why do you think that is? Have you ever viewed God this way?

- The relationship with our own fathers. Some of us have grown up with overbearing and demanding dads and that clouds our vision of the Lord.
- Sometimes it may be the way God was presented to us at church (fire and brimstone).
- Looking at the problems and difficulties we deal with and face in this world.

While we need to understand that God is Holy and Righteous – we also need to understand that He is a loving, kind and gracious Father – demonstrating that love through Jesus Christ.

6. In the video, Bart responds to his Dad, “God can forgive you, I can’t” What do you think of that response? Have you ever held that response toward someone who hurt you?

- While this is not the Christian/Biblical response, I can understand the feeling – especially when the hurt is real and deep.
- The truth is that forgiving as we are commanded is difficult (even impossible) but it can only be done through the grace of God (Matt. 6:9 – 15).
- One thing that can help us to forgive others is remember how much God has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32)

Read Luke 15:25 – 32

7. How are two brothers different? How are they the same? How does the father show his love and acceptance to both?

The Younger Son:

- Non-Religious disloyal to his father
- Working for his father was not important
- Lost – Selfish
- No real, true love for his father
- Repentant

The Father’s Love & Acceptance:

- He gives both son’s inheritance
- He sought both “lost” sons
- He sees both sons as family
- He loves and seeks the best for both
- He desires the sons to be brothers

The Elder Son:

- Religious/pious – loyal to his father
- Unrepentant
- Working for his father is important
- Lost – Selfish
- No real, true love for his father

8. Do you identify more with the younger brother or the older brother?

Younger Brother

- I can definitely identify with making my own decisions and making a serious mess.
- Especially now – when seeking to serve and minister to this church – I am desperate to know Him.
- As I reflect on how the God the Father forgave me and gave me another chance.

Elder Brother

- There have been times in my life when I have just like a Pharisee overly critical and judgmental.
- I too had a season where I was “angry” with God when things in life didn’t go my way.
- When I first heard this parable, I sided with the elder brother – but I discovered he was just as lost as the younger brother

9. What does it mean to you that God celebrates when we return to Him?

- It is so much better not to leave His side. Obedience not only brings blessings – but avoids unnecessary hardships.
- It is so great to know that forgiveness is always available when I willing to repent and return it will be to His open arms.
- As I reflect on the Love of God through Jesus and His Sacrifice for me - I want to know Him – Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for this message of God's forgiveness. Let us truly believe and feel your forgiving presence this week. We love you and trust you. Amen.