

Experimenting With Prayers Of Imagination

The Bible says, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” *Hebrews 11:6*. Faith is defined as, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” *Hebrews 11:1*. In other words, faith requires that we be able to envision (in our hearts and minds) realities that have not yet come to be.

That’s where our imagination comes in. God has given us the gift of imagination, which can be harnessed to create powerful prayers, especially when we ask God to guide our imagination.

This kind of prayer can be especially powerful for those who have active, restless, creative minds – and for those who are more visual than verbal. The only way you’ll know if this kind of prayer is life-giving for you (and your unique personality) is if you experiment with it. This week, we invite you to join the rest of us in experimenting with the following prayer exercises.

Exercise One: Jesus The Healer

1. Picture a person or situation that needs healing. Take a moment to envision the actual situation in vivid detail. Picture the person(s), the room they’re in, the challenges they face.
2. Next, imagine the brilliant presence of Christ entering that space.
3. He is waiting patiently for us to center our attention on him – so focus on him. What do you see? Smell? Hear? Feel? Sense?
4. Picture him as he now moves toward the one(s) who need healing.
5. Imagine him laying his hands on that person, and watch the light from Jesus flow into him or her. See that light/energy from Jesus destroying the bad things inside that person and bringing whatever kind of healing he sees fit.

6. Close by asking God to let this vision come to pass.

This exercise can also be used if you, or a group of people, are actually in the presence of the one who needs healing. In this situation, when you lay hands on the person, imagine Jesus laying his hands on top of yours.

Exercise Two: Personalizing The Scriptures

There is much that God wants to say to us – to help us. One of the principal ways God can speak to us is through the Scriptures. Don’t just read the Scriptures passively. Use the gift of imagination to enter directly into them.

1. Select a passage of Scripture – for example John 9:1-41.
2. Begin by asking God to guide your imagination, as you ponder this Scripture.
3. Read the Scripture through once carefully.
4. Then read back through it. But this time, as you read, imagine yourself actually in the story. What’s the weather like? What’s the situation? What noises do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel?
5. Where are you in the story? Which character are you?
6. Play out the situation step by step like a movie unfolding in your mind. (If it helps you, talk out loud to yourself, like you’re telling the story. Speak out loud the dialogue in the story like you’re an actor on stage.)
7. Once you have “lived through” the story in this way, talk to God about how it makes

you feel and what you think God might be wanting to say to you through it.

8. Next time you go through the story, pretend you are a different character and see what that feels like – and what you learn from that character's perspective. (For example, dare to pretend you are Jesus in the story, and consider what you learn from practicing being like Jesus.)

Exercise Three: “Pre-Viewing” A Difficult Situation

Think of a situation you will soon face that you're concerned about. Perhaps you are about to meet with someone you're very angry with and you're concerned how you might act. Or maybe you have to have a meeting with your boss to discuss a delicate subject. Or maybe you are going to visit a friend who is very ill and you're not sure what to do.

Don't wait until you get into the situation to wing it! And don't just pray blandly, “God help me to handle the situation well.” Ask God's Spirit to guide you, as you walk through the experience in advance in your imagination. Imagine the encounter in great detail as it unfolds from start to finish. See yourself (as guided by the Spirit) behaving in the way you imagine God wants you to. Do this several times, as you prepare for the encounter, and at the end of each time, ask God to help you to live into the vision you have been given when the situation actually unfolds.

Exercise Four: Emptying and Filling

Maybe you are carrying stuff inside you (memories, negative feelings) that are weighing you down – that you wish you could get rid of. Or maybe you lack something inside you (confidence, peace, serenity, strength, hope, love, etc.) that you need to face a challenging situation.

Don't just accept what you have—or don't have. Let God's Spirit partner with you to transform your inner landscape. If there is something inside that needs to go, picture yourself sitting in the presence of Jesus.

1. Focus for a bit on the image of Jesus God gives you at this moment.
2. Then picture the yuck inside you flowing out of you. Imagine the yuck vividly. What does it look like, feel like, smell like, sound like, as it streams out of your body and is absorbed into Christ?
3. Repeat this vision of the yuck flowing out of you several times, each time asking God to make this emptying a reality in your life. Confess by faith that this yuck is being removed from your life. Repeat the exercise until it becomes your new reality.

If there is something you lack inside that you need, go through the same exercise about, except picture what you need flowing into you from Christ. Again, vividly imagine what this good thing you need looks like, feels like, smells like, sounds like, as it streams into your body from Christ.