

- E. We must intentionally shape our imagination with the Gospel story. Around here, we call this *Gospel formation*, with the goal of having a *Gospel culture*.

## Conclusion

- A. The Gospel is the most powerful story ever told, but until we believe it enough to live it, it remains powerless.

- B. Forging a kingdom imagination will take intentionality.

## LIVE THE STORY

*The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- Can you think of ways in which we've seen the power of imagination for good or evil? How about in your own life?
- Why is imagination so powerful in shaping our lives? How do we see this in Hebrews 11? What is a biblical term for "imagination"?
- Do you agree with what Yuval Noah Harari said about money being the most successful story ever told? Why or why not?
- Why is it essential to apply faith to a sanctified imagination? How does that change things?
- What is the most powerful story ever told? What has to happen in order for the power of the story to be effectual in our lives?
- Wendell Berry writes, "The possibility of change depends on the existence of people who have the power to change." How do we become that people?
- What are some false stories that have shaped your life? How does the Gospel change that story?

## Imagining the Kingdom *Harnessing the Power of Sanctified Imagination*

Jerry Cisar — May 7, 2023

Text: Hebrews 11:1-16

## Introduction

- A. *Imagination is a powerful thing.*

- B. God wants us to harness the power of sanctified imagination.

## I. Imagining What We Do Not See (11:1, 8-12)

- A. What do we hope for?

- i. Faith is the confidence that what we hope for, this future city, Christ's kingdom, will become a reality. It is the assurance that, though we do not see it, though it may *feel like* we labor in vain, it will surely happen.

- ii. A City Whose Builder and Maker is God

*What we are longing for is not the world's coolest space, but a love-filled, peace-filled relational community which lives in the peace and love which can only exist under Christ.*

- B. *That* is the city that will one day come in fulness, but for which we hope now. But we must be able to imagine it, truly hope for it, in order to truly wait for it, and therefore live for it.

## II. Living for What We Imagine (11:4-9)

- A. “Where does faith come in?”
- i. When faith is applied to what we hope for, it enables us to live in the “future” kingdom now. *It changes how we live.*

*Faith in this hope of the already/not yet kingdom changes how we live, increasing the already!*

- ii. We see this in the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham.
- a) Abel: *Faith in this hope changes how we give to God.*
- b) Enoch
- c) Noah
- d) Abraham

- B. We see this explicitly in Hebrews 6:10-12.

Wendell Berry: “How can we have something better if we do not imagine it? How can we imagine it if we do not hope for it? How can we hope for it if we do not attempt to realize it?”

“The possibility of change depends on the existence of people who have the power to change.”

- C. Faith calls us to act... to live according to the ways of the city to come, now!

## III. Forging a New Imagination (John 8:31-32)

- A. We must identify the stories we believe that are false and replacing them with the stories we embrace by faith.

NET Bible: “If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

*As we put Jesus’ teaching into practice, our vision of the kingdom, our imagination, is constantly forged (sanctified). We can’t merely learn our way into the truth!*

- B. “We do not speak great things but we live them.”

Cyprian: “We are philosophers not in words but in deeds... we know virtues by their practice rather than through boasting of them; we do not speak great things but we live them.”

- C. Our imaginations have been shaped by our culture in ways we are *not fully aware of*, and in ways we are *completely unaware of*. These false stories are *internal idol factories* orienting our lives to the false gods of *mammon, sex, and self*.

- D. Then there are the stories that *directly* impact our relationships.