IMAGINATION

Darren Wright

“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for January 18–24, 2016.

MAKING THE CONNECTION
Henri J. M. Nouwen wrote, “Just imagine that there was no longer fear among people, no longer rivalry, hostility, bitterness, or revenge. Just imagine all the people on this planet holding hands and forming one large circle of love. We say, ‘I can’t imagine.’ But God says, ‘That’s what I imagine, a whole world not only created but also living in my image.’”

“I’m often looked to as the imaginative one, who might be able to think outside the box and to think of alternatives. When I was younger, they used to call me a daydreamer.

“The imagination is a powerful part of our humanity and our spirituality. Sometimes we Christians say it’s OK to imagine, as long as we have a biblical or spiritual reason. When did it become bad for us to use our imaginations for fun or play?” —Darren

MEET THE WRITER
Darren Wright is a Uniting Church Youth Worker serving in the Riverina Presbytery in New South Wales, Australia, as the Presbytery Education and Discipleship Worker. Darren has previously worked in congregational ministry, high school chaplaincy, and local government as a youth worker. His interests include music (Radiohead, Ben Harper, The National, Of Monsters and Men, Ryan Adams, Laura Marling, All India Radio, Florence and the Machine), film (Avengers, MegaMind, Harry Potter, How to Train Your Dragon, Scott Pilgrim, Big Hero 6), TV (Chuck, Doctor Who, Big Bang Theory, Community, Agents of SHIELD), theology, pop-culture, working with young people in at-risk areas, and connecting the church and theology with pop culture. Find out more about Darren and his work at www.digitalorthodoxy.com.

STUFF YOU WILL NEED
• lots of Legos
• video: “Praying with the Imagination in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLQOJ5x5ftU&feature=youtu.be)
• pens
• pencils
• crayons
• paper
• Bibles
• candles
• The Lord’s Prayer ([https://vimeo.com/channels/justprayers/65874894](https://vimeo.com/channels/justprayers/65874894))

**PLUGGED IN**

**Books**


+ The Parishes of the Diocese of Niagara have developed a liturgy focusing on imagination; some of the reflections and prayers are worth a look. ([http://niagaraanglican.ca/uploads/YM%20Sunday%20Worship%20Resource%202014.pdf](http://niagaraanglican.ca/uploads/YM%20Sunday%20Worship%20Resource%202014.pdf))

**Picture Books**

+ *Suri’s Wall* ([http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/26878968-suri-s-wall](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/26878968-suri-s-wall)) is a beautiful story that explores the role of imagination in the human spirit and its power to bring hope and joy to others.

+ A series of books (*Imagine . . . a Day, a Place, a Night, a World*) by Robert Gonsalves ([http://www.goodreads.com/author/list/302079.Rob_Gonsalves](http://www.goodreads.com/author/list/302079.Rob_Gonsalves)) explores the imagination and its power to take us anywhere we want to go.

+ *Imagine*, by Alison Lester is another beautiful book that explores the imagination and introduces readers to the world around them. ([http://alisonlester.com/collections/picture-books/products/imagine](http://alisonlester.com/collections/picture-books/products/imagine))

+ *Use Your Imagination*, by Nicola O’Byrne begins with a bored rabbit and a hungry wolf, who suggests they write a story. ([http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/25241591-use-your-imagination](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/25241591-use-your-imagination))
Video
+ “Annie Lockhart: Imagination as the Starting Point of Youth Ministry”  
  (https://youtu.be/-e1oB3qtB4Y)
+ “Praying with the Imagination in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius”  
  (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLQOJ5x5ftU)
+ “Lego Shape of Imagination” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOKr9Aflfyk)

CHECKING IN
Before the group arrives, set up the room to be inviting and comfortable.

Place the Legos around the room; and as people arrive, invite them to play. (If you don’t have Legos, have available bread dough, blocks, paint and paper, or clay.) Tell group members that their play has no aim or reason other than to have some fun. They can build anything they want, together or individually. Encourage them to use their imaginations.

After at least 15 minutes, bring the group together for discussion:
  - What is playing with Legos like?
  - How did playing with Legos make you feel?
  - What did you build? Why?
  - Do you play with Legos often? Why? Why not?

EXPLORING THE WORD
Scripture: Matthew 14:13–21 or John 2:13–25

Using an ancient Ignatian spiritual practice, we explore scripture by putting ourselves in the story. St. Ignatius invited people to use their imaginations as part of a spiritual practice. Begin by showing the group Sylvester Tan’s “Praying with the Imagination in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius” as an introduction to the practice (https://youtu.be/nLQOJ5x5ftU).

Choose to read either Matthew 14:13–21 or John 2:13–25, or choose another story that involves sights, sounds, smells, people, action.

Read the scripture aloud two or three times, leaving time for the group to write down their experiences. How did they imagine the story or scene? As the scripture is read, invite group members to close their eyes and to imagine themselves in the story. Ask them to imagine the smells, the visuals, the noise, the venue, the people, the action, the feeling of the story.

Invite discussion:
  - How did you experience the story?
  - What could you smell? taste? touch?
  - Whom did you see?
  - What did you hear?
What did the scene look like?
Would you listen to scripture in this way again?

SHARING IN PRAYER
Invite group members to say the Lord’s Prayer together. The prayer imagines a new world as God imagines it.

Use the video at https://vimeo.com/channels/justprayers/65874894 to guide the group in prayer.

TAKING IT FURTHER
• Provide art supplies—a long sheet of butcher paper, paint, newspaper, and glue. Welcome the new year by imagining God’s new world. Read aloud Isaiah 65:17–25 and/or Revelation 21:1–5. Ask group members to practice the Ignatian way of exploring the scripture and then to paint God’s new creation.
• Invite group members to sit in a circle. Have the names of familiar Bible characters written on slips of paper and placed in a hat or basket. Ask someone to draw a name. Invite people to tell the story of the character round robin. Then invite them to tell the story as if it were happening today.

—from devozine In the Habit (January/February 2016). Copyright © 2016 by The Upper Room®. All rights reserved.