

## What People Are Saying About Ray McCollum and *The Power of God-Given Imagination*

With the skill of a teacher and the creative edge of a forerunner, Ray McCollum releases the spirit of wisdom and revelation in his life-altering book on a God-given imagination. You need this!

—*Dr. James W. Goll*

Encounters Network

International best-selling author

In an era where we are all in need of encouragement, inspiration, and hope, I commend Ray McCollum's book with a double thumbs up! Tackling an easily misunderstood theme, the author delivers material that is well-balanced and well-written. Read it and release those dreams God has put in your heart!

—*Larry Tomczak*

Larry Tomczak Ministries

Ray McCollum has written something beyond a “really important book”; he has written a seminal book, a book capable of seeding real change. Very few concepts are more important than faith coupled with foreseen vision. This is what Ray has re-opened for many of us, the truth that eternal reality is birthed, matured, and released from its imagined reality within us. Pray as you read and may Christ re-open what may have been closed within you!

—*Dennis Peacocke*

Founder and president of GoStrategic  
(formerly Strategic Christian Services)

Everything I have been privileged to witness in the life and ministry of Ray McCollum over the last twenty years is on display in this powerful new book: clarity, vision, leadership, steadfastness, courage, faithfulness, and creativity. It really is must-reading for anyone and everyone who would dare to dream of a better day and a better way.

—*Dr. George Grant*

Pastor of Parish Presbyterian Church  
Franklin, TN

Founder of New College Franklin and Franklin Classical  
School

President of the King's Meadow Study Center

This book by Ray McCollum is a key that, when used, unlocks one of the most powerful aspects of our inner being, our God-given imagination. Through this manuscript, Ray functions as a master facilitator and a helpful enabler whose goal is to support the readers as they pursue their objectives. My hope is that you will get as “stoked” as I was from breathing in this treasure trove of inspiration. May all your dreams come true as you release your creativity.

—*Mickey Robinson*

International speaker

Author, *Heaven*

Co-founder of Prophetic Destiny International

John Milton wrote, “I am not afraid of falsehood entering into the marketplace of ideas as long as truth is presented because truth will always prevail.” Ray McCollum’s book, *The Power of God-Given Imagination*, gives a vivid picture of amazing truth prevailing against a plethora of falsehoods plaguing mankind. This book is a deep well of revelation and activation for living according to our God-given design. It will inspire, challenge, and equip you. I have known Ray for many years, and I wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone hungry for something better.

—Dr. Bill Bennot

President of BMosaic

Senior pastor, Journey of Grace, Cape Town, South Africa

Ray McCollum has emphasized a subject that has been largely ignored or castigated as New Age thinking. He has made the subject of imagination easy to understand and shows how it affects our everyday life. Someone once said, “Intelligence is not a sign of knowledge but of imagination.” I am so glad that Ray has chosen to write about our God-given ability to imagine—and how to use that ability correctly!

—Pastor Kerry Kirkwood

Author, *The Power of Imagination*

As I savored the pages of Ray's book I found myself experiencing not only inspiration to dream but also an unexpected impartation. I marveled at feeling my own dreams coming alive and gaining fresh momentum in the theater of my imagination. From my experience with Ray McCollum as a man of quality character and deeds, and through my own encounter with the power of this book, I highly recommend this timely and compelling read.

—*Dan McCollam*

Author and international director of Sounds of the Nations

Few Christians understand how to use their God-given imagination. Ray has done a masterful job of revealing the power of imagination and how to use it for the glory of God. I believe this book should be required reading for every Christian!

—*Happy Caldwell*

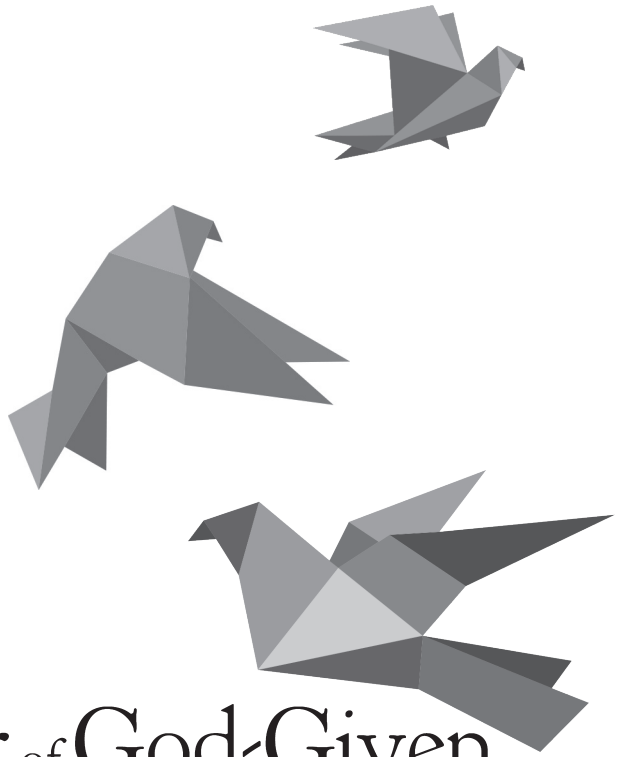
Founder and president, Victory Television Network

Author, *Unleashing Heaven's Blessings*

If you've ever looked into the eyes of a child, you have seen the sparkle of imagination. Yet, as we age, our hearts begin to dull to imaginary things and we methodically lumber through life on a steady diet of the ordinary. But we can be born again! This is the gospel message! Ray McCollum shows us in fresh and sensible ways that God has given the gift of imagination to each one of us—and it was never intended to fade away. Read this book, and just imagine....

—*James Ryle*

Author, *Hippo in the Garden* and *A Dream Come True*



The  
Power of God-Given  
IMAGINATION

RAY MCCOLLUM



WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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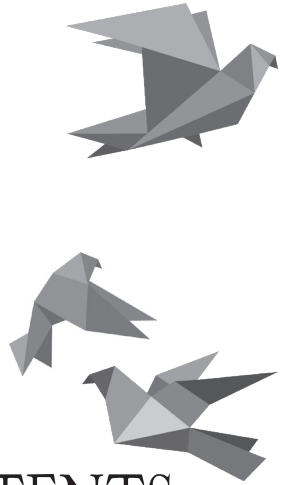
To Ted L. Snider

I went to work for Ted L. Snider in 1975, just four years after my conversion to Christ. Ted was a true “imagineer” and an amazing mentor to me. He was a model of what Christian leadership in the corporate world ought to look like. I will be eternally grateful for all that I learned during the seven years I worked for him, lessons that helped me better serve God’s people during the my past thirty-two years of pastoral ministry.

God bless you, Ted.



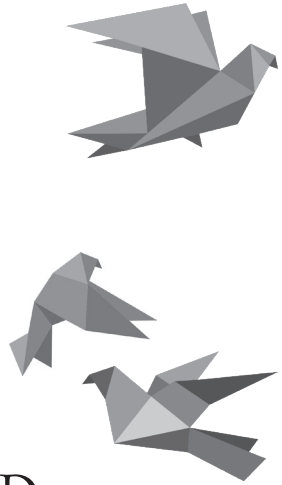




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## FOREWORD

Consider the words of the great poet, Langston Hughes:

...if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.  
...when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.<sup>1</sup>

The first revelation we have of God in the Scripture is that God is the Creator. This Creator had a clear and lucid dream of what His creation would look like when He began. While the artist always begins with a blank canvas, the artist never begins without an idea in her or his imagination of what is to be articulated on that canvas. Most great artists know the “end from the beginning,” even

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1. Langston Hughes, *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes: Works for Children and Young Adults: Poetry, Fiction, and Other Writing*, vol. 11 (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 52.

as most architects build the structures in their imaginations long before the buildings are ever constructed in reality.

This One who dreamed and created the world through six successive stages in three realms to build a three-tiered universe, a three-storied cosmic house, is the Divine Artist. Andrew Jukes tells of the creative process God manifests in the stages of creation by saying that the first three days were days of *bounding and dividing*, separating out three realms from each other, and the last three days were spent by God *furnishing and adorning* the three realms He had bounded and divided.

He culminates His artistic and imaginative handiwork by stooping down to the ground and getting His hands in its “dust.” *Dust* is used in Hebrew for our idea of “debris,” interestingly enough, implying decomposition.

So God gets His hands “dirty” with the organic components of the soil, formed by the decomposition of leaves and other plant materials by the unseen microscopic microorganisms that tell the gospel story in their own life journey of death, burial, and resurrection. The soil, the “dust,” is what scientists call “humus,” from which God forms the first “human” being, in His *image* and *likeness*.

God then takes the human He has formed and places him in a rich, luxurious, cultivated place and invites him to dream. Here the human being is to continue to dream God’s dream, and cultivate and protect what is there from the untamed wild things that could intrude on it.

Being a husbandman, a tiller of the soil, of the raw material from which Adam came, required not only the labor of his hands, it required the exercise of his imagination. Keeping Paradise looking like Paradise required an eye for aesthetics, an

eye for beauty, an eye for detail, an eye for depth, color coordination, placement, and all the rest. It required artistry and creativity. In other words, it required a sensory-rich imagination.

The Creator God had imagined the world He created, and then, from that amazing, architecturally rich and fertile divine imagination, filled with the substance of His desire, He spoke and made manifest what His imagination conceived. God cultivated what He conceived in His imagination.

So too, the creative process in the human experience is inseparable from the conceptions of the imagination. It takes a dreaming mind to fuel the flames of the creative process.

Adam was “placed” in a pristine, sensory-rich environment filled with the brightest of colors, the widest spectrum of textures, and the optimal environment for the awakening of his spiritual and physical senses to their highest and greatest potential. For what purpose, you might ask? To take the raw material of that glorious paradisiacal garden and use it to build a habitation for God’s glory to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Sadly, Adam’s opportunity to cultivate God’s dream in Paradise ended due to the choice he made to be independent of the Creator, failing to protect what God had created. Adam bought into the beastly deception of “copying” and “counterfeiting,” thereby co-opting the opportunity for dreaming and experiencing life as a nightmare instead. When Adam “died” after eating the forbidden fruit, he did not yet draw his last breath, but he did lose his spiritual sight, from which all great dreams emerge. Dead men cannot see.

In the New Creation, Jesus takes the same dust we came from, and spits on it, and places two mud-balls with His DNA

saturating it, into the empty eye-sockets of a man born blind. Jesus then tells him to go to a pool called “Sent” (Siloam), where he is “apostle-ized” (to be sent) to *wash* his eye-sockets now filled with anointed mud-balls and then *see* what happens when God works the kind of works that we were born to dream about and then do with Him.

All of us are “the man born blind” outside of Christ; all of us need Him to spit on the dust of our fallen and broken humanity and give us new eyes to see and dream with God again. We need our spiritual sight recovered and restored so that we can dream with God.

From a neurological perspective, that man born blind had no idea what it was like to see. However, he certainly had the ability, the God-given ability, to dream about it. Scientists have demonstrated that the thoughts that show up in the so-called “mental workspace” of our brain alter our perceptions of reality. In other words, imagination affects how we see and how we hear. The man who was born blind, however, couldn’t dream about what it was like to see because his imagination hadn’t experienced it—it had only experienced the sense of hearing.

The disciples spoke to Jesus in the presence of the man born blind as if he were also deaf, even though he could hear quite well. They had no regard for his feelings when they gave voice to a common yet false assumption, “*Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?*” (John 9:2). The residue of those words could easily have killed the man’s hopes or abilities to dream beyond his blindness.

The Master Dreamer quickly nullified their folly and reassured the listening blind man that God still held out for a dream for him to see. When Jesus speaks, faith comes. When faith comes, imagination awakens, dreams are revived, and vision

comes to pass. Jesus said, “Neither...*this man sinned, nor his parents*” (verse 3). What a comfort to that man’s ears and heart! This wasn’t his “fault.” Jesus didn’t stop there; He primed the pump of imagination and said that His Father set this whole thing up so that the wonderful works of His Father could be manifest in the man. This man was about to gain something he had never had: the ability to see!

Real creativity is the stuff of an imagination rooted and grounded in the Creator’s inspiring impulses, surging through the depths of the human spirit and the lens of a sanctified imagination, and then clothed with words and actions equal to the vision inspired by the breath of God. In Job we hear these words: “*It is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding*” (Job 32:8).

The anointing of God, the DNA of God’s saliva, on the dust of our disappointments, enables us to regain our sight so we can see what we have been missing in life.

If ever we needed God to “spit” on the curses in the dust of our own broken dreams, it is today. It is in the dust of former dreams long forgotten, that the potential for new dreams rise because our dust “remembers.” Memory, imagination, possibility, faith, hope, and resilience...this is the “stuff” from which dreams are made.

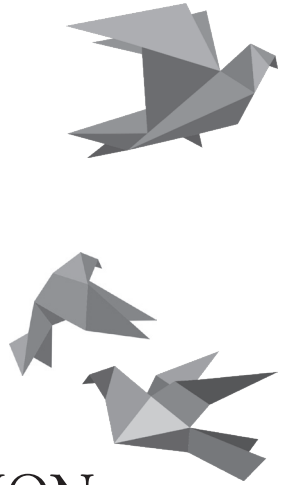
In the following pages, Ray McCollum takes you on an amazing journey of awakening the as-yet-dormant potential lying in the dust of your disappointments. He explains that God doesn’t want to just fulfill a dream for you; He wants to fulfill a dream in you and with you! When the way you see who you are changes, the world around you will change. Dreaming dreams is healthy. A God-given, sanctified imagination isn’t an option in life; it is a necessity. *The Power of a God-Given Imagination* is

a grace gift to empower you from the inside-out to see what you have been missing, so you can work the works of Him who sent you.

Drink deeply from the well that Ray McCollum has dug for you from the soil of the greatest story ever told, and start seeing what God intends to do for you, with you, and through you!

—*Bishop Mark J. Chironna, MA, PhD*  
Mark Chironna Ministries  
Church On The Living Edge  
Orlando, Florida





# INTRODUCTION: AWAKENING THE DREAMER WITHIN YOU

Sometimes the secular “prophets” say it better than the church. Singer/songwriter Carly Simon’s song “Let the River Run,” which plays in the opening credits of the 1988 film *Working Girl*, gets it right when it calls for “dreamers” to “wake the nation.” But who will awaken the dreamers?

This book is about awakening the dreamer within *you*. In these pages, you will learn how to become an “imagineer,” using the power *within* you to transform the world *around* you.

## *Basic Instincts*

All human beings are hardwired with certain basic instincts. These inborn patterns, or tendencies, are unlearned. We come by them naturally. These strong inner desires compel us to love, procreate, and even cover our ears at rock concerts.

The most basic human instinct is survival. In any given situation, we will do whatever it takes to stay alive. Lifeguards know that a drowning swimmer will do anything to save himself—even drown his rescuer! No one has to teach us how to protect ourselves from a perceived danger because the will to survive is present in all of us from birth. It’s an instinct—something we do quite naturally.

But there is another basic instinct all humans share that’s often overlooked. This book is about *that* instinct—our inborn predisposition to imagine, to envision, and to dream.

Even when marred and disfigured by sin, the human soul cries out from within for a better world and a better life. Something deep inside us simply refuses to accept life’s bitter drink. We push forward, day by day, dealing with the challenges and difficulties of life as best we can. We don’t give up, because, instinctively, we believe there is more to life than what we are experiencing. The hopes and dreams within us are like iron filings being pulled toward the magnet of a “preferred” future, a better life for ourselves and a better world for those we care about.

## *Awakening the Dreamers Who Will Awaken the Nation*

Those hopes and dreams can inspire others, as well. Dreamers really *do* awake the nation.

In fact, they already *have*. Let me give you an example that hits close to home. Our nation was founded by dreamers. History shows that our forefathers dreamed of a “New Jerusalem,” a “city set on a hill,” and imagined that it would be a demonstration of the kingdom of God on earth.

Most of the nations of the earth evolved out of people groups that eventually set geographical boundaries and developed their

distinct identity over a long period of time. Not America. We are a nation “born in a day,” the product of the imagination of a group of diverse men who came together to make their dream come true. And on July 4, 1776, it did.

But over the years, our nation has strayed away from the dream many times. The issue of slavery took America into a bloody, four-year Civil War. A few months after one of the deadliest exchanges, the Battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln rose to speak at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. His famous Gettysburg Address is still one of the best-known speeches in American history. He only spoke ten sentences for just over two minutes. So what made this brief speech so famous? Why was it so effective? Consider the opening lines:

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.<sup>2</sup>

The power of President Lincoln’s speech lay in his ability to reawaken the nation to the original dream of its founders. Many had forgotten who they were; he was reminding them of the original dream.

In the closing lines of his speech, Lincoln calls Americans to a “new birth” as the people their fathers had imagined them to be.

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2. Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address”, November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Online, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>. Lincoln delivered this speech during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

...that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that *this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*<sup>3</sup>

This would not be the last time that God would use a dreamer to awaken the nation.

The Civil War ended with the abolition of slavery. But the problem of racial inequality and prejudice continued, boiling over into the 1950s and 1960s. In 1863, God used Abraham Lincoln to awaken Americans to the American Dream. Almost exactly one hundred years later, in 1963, God raised up another dreamer to reawaken us to the noble message of equality among men. His name was Martin Luther King, Jr. Like Lincoln, he delivered one of the most famous speeches in American history. His message was simple but profound:

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. King was a dreamer who refused to accept things as they were. He *imagined* a better future and put it into words that inspire us to this day. The speech resonated with everyone, black and white, and the picture he painted was of a nation in which men were measured by the content of their character instead of the color of their skin. Dr. King was assassinated, but the images he painted with his words will live on forever.

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3. Ibid., emphasis added.

4. Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream,” August 28, 1963, American Rhetoric, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihaveadream.htm>.

Great leaders like President Lincoln and Dr. King are always great dreamers. They are not engineers; they are “imagineers,” a term coined by Walt Disney for his creative team members. Great men are great because they imagine great things. They refuse to accept the status quo. They always believe things can be better. Robert F. Kennedy said, “There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask *why*? I dream of things that never were, and ask *why not*?”

Not everyone is called to change nations. But even the most ordinary person among us can tap into the power of imagination, using the power *within* us to change the world *around* us.

### *My Dad, the Dreamer*

My dear father passed away in 1996. He was not a churchman, and did not teach me Christ. But he will always hold a place in my heart for the many good things that he modeled. Dad came from lower middle-class Irish stock. His mother deserted his family when he was little, and his father struggled with alcohol, so he and his sister ended up in foster home in New Orleans. He finished only fourth grade and left home to join the Marine Corps at age seventeen (to get in, he lied about his age).

When he married my mom, he was a mortician’s assistant at a funeral home. They lived above the mortuary for a while, but Mom made him look for another job because she couldn’t stand the smell of the embalming fluids. Dad went on to become a motorcycle cop in Victoria, Texas.

When I was born in 1944, he was working as a brakeman for the Southern Pacific Railroad, and in 1952, he bought a Texaco service station in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and moved our family there. (In those days, nobody pumped their own gas.) Dad left the house before sunrise every day, and Mom would prepare a

hot lunch for him that we would deliver daily. He worked 60–70 hours a week, six days a week, and rarely got home before 6 p.m. My most indelible impression of my Father growing up was how hard he worked! When I hear the term “strong work ethic,” I always think of my dad.

It wasn’t until after his death that I came to understand the *source* of his work ethic. My dad was a dreamer. He tapped into the awesome power of the American sociology, or “ethos.”

Ethos: the fundamental character or spirit of a culture; the underlying sentiment that informs the beliefs, customs, or practices of a group or society; dominant assumptions of a people.



The secret of America’s greatness is her ethos, her work ethic, and her citizens’ pursuit, which is commonly known as the American Dream.

### *The American Dream*

The birth of our nation was conceived, or imagined, by our founding fathers, and the American Dream is their legacy to us.

[The American Dream is] that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.... It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and

each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.<sup>5</sup>

America is truly exceptional. Yet no nation, not even ours, is perfect. I am not here to idealize the American Dream. But it is important for us to see how the imagination and the dreams of our forefathers created an environment for every generation that followed. For example, I now realize that my dad's faith in the American Dream was the power source of his amazing work ethic. He made up for his lack of formal education and financial advantage by simply *outworking* everybody else. He had many setbacks, but, eventually, in his late 60s, he started a railroad maintenance company, doing contract work at the rail yards for the oil refineries in the Lake Charles area. He didn't make a million dollars, but he paid off the mortgage on our home and died debt-free at age eighty-two. My father carried the American Dream inside himself, and there was enough power in it to keep him going until it all came true.

Dad imparted that same spirit to me. I did not have a silver spoon in my mouth, wealthy relatives, a college degree, or anybody rich and powerful to help me. But I never really considered myself disadvantaged. I always believed that I could succeed in life by being the best at whatever I set my mind to do, and I always seemed to have the energy and the pluck to outwork everybody else.

It was only after I came to Christ in 1971 that the Lord began to show me how my boyhood dreams and imaginations of future success were providing the power that helped me to get

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5. James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1931), 214–215.

there. Unfortunately, succeeding generations are being weaned away from the original dream (freedom to work hard and succeed by taking personal responsibility for one's situation) and are instead being seduced into believing that it's the federal government's job to make sure that they are happy and well taken care of. This new dream offers us security and well-being as an entitlement, whereas the original American Dream offered only the opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We need a national reawakening that restores the principles that made us great.

### *Who Will Awaken the Dreamers?*

I love America. The freedom our citizens have to hope, dream, and work to create a better life for themselves has been an inspiration that people and governments around the world still strive to emulate. But our nation is in trouble. The foundational values that made us great are under attack. We are in a moral free fall, and far too many of our young people seem uninspired or frustrated that the Dream is no longer available to them. Even the secular statisticians recognize this to be the problem. Blogger Kimberly Amadeo comments:

Even before the recession, most Americans had lost hope in the [American] Dream. A 2004 survey found that two-thirds felt the Dream was becoming harder to achieve, especially for young families. They named financial insecurity, poor quality education and even the government itself as the worst barriers. More than 30% felt they weren't living the Dream, and nearly half thought it was unattainable for them.<sup>6</sup>

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6. Kimberly Amadeo, "The End of the American Dream: Is the American Dream Still Alive?" [http://useconomy.about.com/od/grossdomesticproduct/a/American\\_Dream.htm](http://useconomy.about.com/od/grossdomesticproduct/a/American_Dream.htm).



The human heart abhors a “dream vacuum.” Our Christian forefathers imagined America to be a New Jerusalem, a city set on a hill, and a demonstration of the kingdom of God on earth. The power of those dreams gave birth to our nation and made her great. But if that dream dies, the human heart will demand that it be replaced by another dream.

President Barack Obama was elected twice on a platform of hope and change. The message of hope always resonates within us, because hope is the oxygen of the soul. Theologian Emil Brunner explained the importance of hope with these words: “What oxygen is to the lungs, such is hope to the meaning of life.” President Obama’s message of “hope” got him elected twice. For some, however, it seems as though the change has led to nothing more than an enlargement of the federal government’s role in individual lives. I fear that a growing number of Americans, especially non-Christians and young people, seem to be willing to give up their personal freedoms in exchange for the cradle-to-the-grave security being promised by an increasingly powerful centralized government. This sort of imagination is called “statism.”



Statism: the principle or policy of concentrating extensive economic, political, and related controls in the state at the cost of individual liberty.

Notice that there are two irreconcilable transcendences in this definition: control by the state and individual liberty. The American Dream idealizes individual liberty, while statism

presumes control by the state. The foundational philosophies behind these two dreams are clearly presented in the Scriptures in the following two cities: Babylon, the city of man, and Jerusalem, the city of God. These two philosophies are irreconcilable and mutually exclusive. They are now, and have always been, at war with each other. There is power in both because each imagines a future. Which dream will prevail?

Whether she knows it or not, Carly Simon got it right. We need dreamers to reawaken the nation to God's goal—the New Jerusalem, or God's kingdom “*on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10 NIV).

This is not a political book. I'm simply using political imagery to illustrate the power of inner images to shape our future. Communism, socialism, and statism have never worked anywhere, anytime. These systems fail because they suppress people's freedom to dream, imagine, and creatively invent things that will make life better for everyone. The greatest advancements in human history have come from America and other nations where individual liberty is valued and protected. The pollsters tell us that the majority of Americans today do not believe life will be as good for their children and grandchildren as it was for them. Pessimism reigns. But it's not too late. When God's dreamers wake up, they can awake the nation.

### *Your Part to Play*

As a pastor, I am grieved to see the church of Jesus Christ so marginalized and ineffective in our deteriorating culture. As a father and a grandfather, I am deeply concerned about the future of my children and grandchildren. As an American, I am troubled by what's going on in Washington.

On the other hand, my faith for another great awakening has never been higher. I am not looking for salvation from politicians, “super pastors,” or world systems. I am looking for God to raise up a new generation of dreamers to awaken the nation. I’m expecting it to begin with an awakening of the people of God—His precious church. I’m talking about *you*!

This book is about discovering the power *within* you—the power to dream, envision, and *imagine*—to change the world around you. This power is so God-like that, out of all the creation, it is only bestowed on men and women who are made in the *image* and likeness of God Himself. (See Genesis 1:27.)

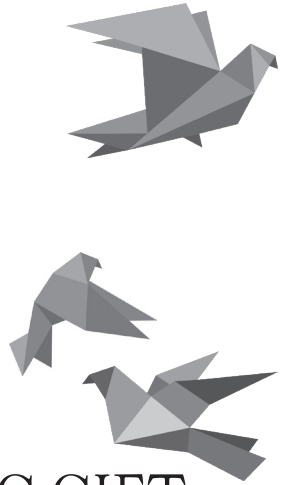
Within the pages of this book, you will discover exactly what this power is, how it works, and how you can use it to transform your personal life and to release the kingdom of God to transform the culture around you.

This is the power of God-given imagination!

—Ray McCollum



# 1



## GOD'S AMAZING GIFT TO MANKIND

Our nation was founded on the principle that “all men are created equal,” meaning that every human being has intrinsic value in the sight of God and is entitled to “certain inalienable Rights.”<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, all men are definitely not created equal when it comes to gifts, talents, and abilities. We don't get past third grade without learning that some people are just plain smarter than we are, and we learn on the playground that some can run faster than we can. As we get older, we discover that we have our own special “sweet spots.” We may notice that others surpass us in math or that we have a special knack for literature. It is an ontological fact that all men are created equal. But it's a discernible fact that *not* all men and women are gifted equally.

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7. Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence,” *Historic American Documents*, Lit2Go Edition, (1776), [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html).

We commonly refer to great athletes, actors, singers, and artists as “gifted” people, meaning they were born with special talents and abilities that enable them to do great things in their field. Excellence at anything requires hard work and discipline. But let’s face it. Few of us have the athleticism of Michael Jordan, the singing voice of Frank Sinatra, or the technology genius of Bill Gates. We all tend to admire (and even covet) the gifts of “special” people.

But there *is* a very special gift that God has given *every* human being. You have it, your children have it, your next-door neighbor has it, and I have it. In many ways, it is the most amazing and powerful gift of all. The problem is that this gift is largely unrecognized, seriously underdeveloped, and almost universally underappreciated. I am speaking about the powerful gift of imagination.

### *Mouthwatering Power*

If the thought of eating a particular food ever made your mouth water, you have experienced the power of imagination. Scientists tell us that our mouths water because the sight or thought of eating a particular food triggers our salivary glands, which is an essential function of our digestive system. Just an image inside of us, the image of eating food, has the power to make the body respond!

If you’ve ever been lost in a daydream, you’ve experienced the power of imagination. I remember the long, hot days of sitting in classrooms as a child, back in the days before air-conditioning. The teacher’s voice would fade as I thought about going fishing with my dad or heading to Little League baseball practice after the final bell rang. These little “escapes” that took place in my mind would, for a few moments, at least, lift my soul above the humdrum world of Mr. Grissom’s biology class.

If you've ever been in the midst of an unpleasant experience and consciously turned your mind to happier thoughts, you've used the power of imagination. My worst nightmare is visiting the dentist. I simply hate to recline on my back and "open wide" while someone I don't know inserts all kinds of sharp, pointy metal instruments into my mouth. To me, the worst sound in the world is the dentist's drill whirring and whining away as it vibrates my cranium. So how do I deal with a trip to the dentist? I replace what I can see with what I can't see. I use my imagination. My body may be under assault, but my mind is on the golf course. Hey, it helps. And if you've done the same thing in similar situations, you've used the power of imagination.

If you've ever been confronted with a problem that needs a quick fix, thought, *What can patch this?* and then headed inside for the duct tape, you've used the power of imagination.

If you've ever lifted your mood by looking forward to an event, you've used the power of imagination. We all love a good vacation. And for me, one of the greatest things about a two-week vacation is the three months prior to the getaway, when I am mentally *anticipating* that season of rest. In the midst of the daily grind, I can close my eyes and see myself on the beach. And it helps. If you've ever done anything like that, then you've used the power of imagination.

Imagination is God's gift to you. You already know how to use it, and you already *are* using it daily, but perhaps you haven't realized the fullness of its potential. Maybe you don't yet know that your imagination makes all things possible.

## *The Gift That Makes All Things Possible*

The fuse for the dynamite in this book was ignited many years ago during a simple devotional reading of the construction

of Babylon in Genesis 11. In a flash of revelation, the Lord showed me that imagination is the gift He has given to us that makes all things possible.

*And the Lord said, Behold, they are one people and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do, and now nothing they have imagined they can do will be impossible for them.* (Genesis 11:6 AMP)

Notice that, in the midst of man's undertaking to build Babylon, God makes an astounding statement: "**Nothing** they have **imagined** they can do **will be impossible** for them."

This is not the opinion of some business guru or New Age philosopher. This is God. *Nothing man imagines will be impossible for him.* It has always struck me as ironic that the Lord gave me this powerful revelation in an obviously negative context. These men were building something contrary to the will of God. Throughout Scripture, Babylon is a metaphor for all that displeases God. These wicked men had set about the building of what Saint Augustine called the "city of man."<sup>8</sup> In their prideful ambition, they imagined that they could make a name for themselves by constructing a "utopian" society and political system... *without God.*

The idea of building the city of Babylon was an "evil imagination." (We will talk more about "evil imaginations" in chapter 5.) God was not pleased with what they were doing, and He literally came down from heaven to stop their construction. But the story raises an interesting question: If human imagination can be such a powerful force for evil, how much more powerful can it be for good? What if we who love God and His kingdom learned to be

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8. Saint Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009).



in unity, speak the same things, and use the power of imagination to build the city of God and advance His kingdom?

God Himself says that there is enough power in our human imagination to make all things possible. Anything *that* powerful needs to be recognized, celebrated, and cultivated within us. So let's take a closer look at the imagination.

### *Imagination: What Is It?*

Words are fascinating to me. It never ceases to amaze me how looking up a word in the dictionary enriches and expands my understanding and appreciation of a term, even if it's a word that I commonly use. The definition of imagination is particularly enlightening.



Imagination: the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality; creative ability; a creation of the mind.<sup>9</sup>

Let us carefully unpack this definition:

- Notice that imagination is an “act”; it’s something we can do.
- Imagination is a “power”; as human beings, we have within us the power to form “a mental image” of something not yet present to the physical senses.

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9. “Imagination,” Merriam-Webster Online, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/imagination> (accessed August 8, 2015).

- ♦ Imagination is “creative ability”; it’s something that *precedes* the actual creation (more on this in chapter 2).
- ♦ Imagination is, first and foremost, “a creation of the mind”; we use our imagination at the metaphysical level; physical activity is not involved.

## *Imagination Comes First*

Imagination is the *primary* activity in any creative process.

Before the Babylonians set about building the city, they had *imagined* the city. Imagination (ideas, dreams) always comes first; everything we can see with our physical eyes began with an imagination or an idea in the mind. The Babylonians could have never built something they had not first imagined. So, imagination is what we might call a “first creation.” They built Babylon, but the principle they used applies to every building ever constructed.

The first time Elizabeth and I went to Los Angeles, we had a list of things we wanted to see and do. At the top of our list was visiting Robert Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. We had watched *Hour of Power* many times on TV, and I had read his book, which described how the first services at the church were held in a drive-in theater but then how eventually, Schuller began to imagine a spectacular church facility made of glass. Nothing like this had ever been built before and the challenges of constructing such a project were staggering. Many architects told Schuller that it couldn’t be done. Really, how could a person build anything that big out of glass? But Schuller had a dream, and it was built, to the tune of eighteen million dollars!

The architects drew on their considerable experience with crystalline shapes and glass-covered galleries, as well as with auditoriums. The idea is to get people as close to the performance as possible...Translated into primary geometries, it

became a four-pointed star, with free-standing balconies in three points and the chancel in the fourth. The connection with reality is maintained through ten thousand panes of glass hung on a space-frame scaffolding like a gigantic transparent tent. From the outside its quartz-like facets shimmer in one another's mirrored surfaces and reflective pond below. Inside, the mood is hushed, the filtered light lending a cool expectant atmosphere.<sup>10</sup>



*The Crystal Cathedral, Garden Grove, California.*

Schuller imagined it; architect Phillip Johnson designed it; and, four years later, in 1980, it was completed. If you've ever been there, you know what an amazing building it is. Sadly, the church filed for bankruptcy in 2010 and has moved on to less spectacular facilities. But the point is made. *Imagination comes first.*

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10. Nory Miller, *Architecture: The Buildings and Projects of Philip Johnson and John Burgee* (New York: Random House, 1979), 111.

A common term in many of Robert Schuller's messages was "possibility thinking." And while I don't agree with all his theology, I can certainly admire his creative imagination; Schuller was a creative dreamer. But we all need to realize that the gift of imagination is not parceled out to just a few; we all have it!

### *Doing What Comes Naturally*

The truth is that using our imagination comes naturally to us. It is so instinctive that we actually do it without thinking about it.

Let's say you are thinking about taking up golf. You have friends who play and want you to join them. So you begin a decision process, reasoning out the pros (it provides fellowship with friends, exercise, and is a sport you can play up into your senior years) and the cons (it costs money, it takes time, and it can be frustrating). Rationalizing the pros and cons is fine. But, at the end of the day, the determining factor will be whether or not you can *see* yourself getting into golf! Ultimately, your decision will be made in your imagination. If you can imagine yourself getting into golf, you'll discover an enabling power to purchase the equipment, take the lessons, and book the tee time! You may play golf for the rest of your life, but you would have never gotten into it unless you had first imagined yourself doing it. Doing any new thing always begins in the unseen, inner world of our imaginations.

When I say that the "seen" originates in the "unseen," some of you may think that I am advocating an unbiblical concept or metaphysical New Age philosophy. There is no question that New Agers and pop psychologists promote this same concept (read more on this in chapter 5), but I believe that they have "hijacked" biblical truth. Many have made millions using their

imaginations while leaving the Bible and God out of the equation. Non-believers routinely hack into God's programming and steal what belongs to us. Like the Babylonians, they pervert the principles in God's Word to build their empires and refuse to acknowledge Him or give Him the glory. But this doesn't change the fact that the Bible consistently teaches us that what is seen always originates in the realm of the unseen.

Indeed, this is exactly how God made the world! The Word of God confirms that the world came out of something we cannot see—the imagination of God:

*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.* (Hebrews 11:3 KJV)

Stop. Read that again. And again. This is one of the most profound revelations in all of Scripture. Don't just glance over this verse, because wrapping your arms around this great truth will become the foundation for releasing the power of imagination in your own world.

Hebrews 11:3 teaches us that everything we can see is made out of something we cannot see. This means that everything we can see preexisted in the mind of the God. Everything we see had a preexistent condition.

God imagined what He wanted to create, then spoke it into existence! (See, for example, Genesis 1:3.) There was an image inside the mind and will of God that *preceded* everything He made. A Russian religious and political philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev perfectly captured this thought when he said, "God created the world through imagination."

If imagination is the power that created the universe, and God has given this power to us, then it must be one of God's

greatest gifts! In all of creation, the power to form a mental image of something yet unseen is unique to human beings, who were created in the very image and likeness of God. (See Genesis 1:27.) Fish don't have it. Birds don't have it. Animals don't have it. Granted, there are some smart animals. We have a Maltese dog named Max who is very smart, but I'm pretty sure he doesn't sit around and dream about a better future! No, God exclusively reserved this amazing gift for *us*. The question then becomes, how do we use it?

### *We Live Our Lives “Inside Out”*

You and I have the power to dream, desire, envision, and imagine. We have the ability to form “inner images” in our minds. So let us examine how these inner images are powerful life forces that determine how we live.

The inner images we have in our minds about ourselves (our identity) and the world around us (our worldview) always set the course for how we live and make decisions. We truly do live our lives “inside out.”

It might shock you to realize that, right now, you are living your life according to the most dominant images inside you. The circumstances that you see around you have been created by the images within yourself. The world around you has been created from the world within yourself.

So how is that working for you? Not so great? Could be better? Would you like to see a change? Okay! You can get a fresh start in life by realizing that changing what you see on the inside actually has the power to create what you will see on the outside!

You may feel dominated by your circumstances and environment, by the things you can see. You may be working hard to

change all these things for the better. But that approach achieves limited results, because the fundamental problem is never *outside* of us, it is always *inside* of us!

The same power that makes your mouth water can affect greater things in your life. The right place to start is always on the inside, learning to use the power God has given us to dream, to envision, and to imagine.

Always remember that the seen world came out of an unseen world, the imagination of God. So the seen world is actually the second creation. It exists in the visible world only because it *first* existed in the mind of the Maker. This is a revelation that can literally transform your life—*everything is created twice!*