



Theology of Beauty and Imagination: A Guide to Wonder

with Dr. Junius Johnson

Lesson 4: Imagination

Outline:

The Imagination

- We have gained more than a sense of impossibility. We have gained a sense of possibility.
- The myth that we are the heroes of history stirs up excitement and resolve.
- The myth that we are history's janitors arouses disappointment and despair.
- We are so often blinded by our inability to find a way forward that we fix our eyes on the impossibility that is a shadow of kaleidoscopic possibility.
- Possibility has a very important role in opening new worlds for us.
- How long can a nation be torn by two competing visions? How long are the people willing to accept that there are only two possibilities?
- We are oppressed by a certainty that keeps us from being creative and seeing new possibilities.
- **The imagination is the organ of possibility. Imagination is the human faculty that is created for the purpose of conceiving and engaging in possibility.**
 - The imagination looks at the actual as the possible (imagine that it is snowing right now).
 - Imagination deals with everything that ever could have been and could possibly be. It also deals with everything that is.
 - Actual things are possible. Possibility is an antecedent condition of actuality.
 - Imagination includes in its scope some impossible things. There are some impossible things that could be conceived of as possible.
 - Some impossibilities cannot be looked at as possible – a round square, a married bachelor. These things do not belong to the scope of the imagination.
- **The disease of our culture is a lack of possibility that is brought about by excessive certainty. Certainty presents a danger to the imagination.** Certainty brings conversations to a close. This will keep us from looking for other possibilities.
 - When you reach certainty, you lose curiosity.
 - The imagination is not just for poets and theologians, it is also for philosophers and scientists.



- The mind has to judge something as possible before it can treat it as actual. You cannot test what you do not have.
- What about the theology of the imagination?
 - The imagination is meant to lead us on a great journey of discovery through God's creation.
 - This is a journey of moving from beauty to beauty as we recognize the way each thing images God.
 - The imagination is trying to draw us through life.
 - The imagination is the human faculty that drives us toward the transcendent.
- Reasoning about God is the most difficult kind of reasoning because God excels our intellect.
- C.S. Lewis: The imagination is the organ of meaning.
- What each thing is, is the image of God.
- **Imagination was made to be the place where humans would commune with God within themselves.**