

“Can You Imagine That?”

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Heb. 11:1

Words create images on the “screen” or “image maker” in our heart. Quite often these words and images come with emotions, feelings, and memories from our past experiences. Sometimes, however, we can read, see, or hear about something that goes beyond our ability to think or imagine what that might look like!



Images have a powerful effect on our faith and what we believe! There is no faith needed if we can physically see or have what we are praying about. We have to allow the words from the scriptures, another person, or our heart to create a picture. This “evidence” can then produce hope and allow us to put our faith to work on bringing it to pass in the natural! There are numerous examples throughout the scriptures where Father, Jesus, and others called things that were not as though they were. (**Rom. 4:17, Mk. 11:23, Heb. 11:3, Phil.4:13, Gen. 17:5, 2 Cor. 4:13...**) All of the great prophets saw into the future and boldly pronounced things that would take place in the years to come, like Jesus’ birth and life here on earth. Images helped Daniel interpret the king’s dreams, helped Joseph stay focused on saving his family and Israel in Egypt, and helped the woman with the issue of blood be healed!



Besides affecting our faith and beliefs, images in your heart can have a powerful positive or negative effect on yourself, your spouse, your marriage, and your family! Sue and I struggled for many years when we were first married trying to change each other and still live together in some level of peace and love. Like most people who get married, we had our own great expectations of what married life should look like. At one point, I was even considering getting divorced because I wasn’t enjoying our marriage like I thought I would! As Jimmy Evans, founder of Marriage Today said, unrealistic marriage expectations (images) are one of the biggest reasons for early divorces and remarriage when one or both spouses realize that this is not what they thought it was going to be like! He calls it the “shopping cart mentality” where you buy something and it doesn’t work the way you thought it would. So, you figure that you must have bought the wrong thing and get rid of it. Then you go buy something else!



If you’re struggling with unmet expectations in your marriage, I urge you to sit down with each other and discuss what you would like your marriage to be like in one, three, five, or ten years from now. Write the vision (images) down so that you may run with it into your new future expectations! **Hab. 2:2** As part of your plan to reach your new expectations, make a list of fun things to do with each other and your family or make a “bucket list” of places or things you would like to go or do together in the future. Then start planning how you might prepare the way for fulfilling them. Start dreaming (images) and put your faith into action because your heavenly Father wants to give you the desires of your heart! **Ps. 37:4** Father will also cause you to prosper and fulfill those desires! **Prov. 13:21 Prov. 28:25 ...**



Another way we can be challenged is how we see our spouse. We often have the tendency to focus on all the things that are wrong or irritating or frustrating to us. Because of all that happens to us growing up, we all come into our marriage with broken or wounded parts of our hearts. Hurting people hurt other people, make bad choices, and

are easily offended! On top of that, we usually marry someone who is opposite to us in so many ways! I was the quiet and steady emotional guy while Sue was the talker and very social (which really drew me to her!). While opposites attract, this also can become a source of irritation at some point in the marriage. Sue quickly started being irritating with my lack of emotions and ability to carry on a conversation or my involvement with the family! Father finally asked Sue to make a list of all the qualities she would like to see in a Godly husband. When she finished the list, Father said, "I'll take care of that list and I want you to allow me to work on you!" The list gave Sue a hope and an image that she could apply her faith towards believing for Father to change me. After a number of years Father asked Sue to look at me and remember the list. When she did, she saw how much Father had changed me into the man she always wanted me to be! This approach also can be applied to your children and family too!



The last image I want to quickly mention is "**God sight.**" I cover this in more detail in my July 2018 Marriage Encouragement, "Where is Your Focus?"

<https://abbasarmsintl.org/2022/01/11/where-is-your-focus> We need to see our spouse like our heavenly Father who sees us through the finished work of the cross cleansed of all unrighteousness and free from our past. How would we speak and treat our spouse if we saw Jesus standing behind them smiling at us?! It becomes a whole lot easier to forgive and walk in love when we see our spouse through Father's eyes!

Nobody has ever said that marriage would be without conflicts and challenges, but it can be a whole lot easier and sweeter when you walk in His love and look for the treasures in our spouse. ***Can you imagine your marriage getting better!*** What images come up on your image maker when you think about your spouse? Ask Father to help you get rid of any negative ones!

Start today to change the images of your spouse and marriage in your heart!

Dialogue Questions

1. Make a list of the character traits and what you saw in your spouse while you were dating that drew you to wanting to marry them. Now that you are married to that person, what thing would you change or add to this list? How does that make you feel? Now share all of the positive feelings and thoughts with your spouse and give everything else to the Father!
2. How have the expectations for my spouse and our marriage changed since we have been married? Don't judge yourself or blame your spouse for any changes. How does that make you feel? Discuss only the positive changes with your spouse. Forgive, let go, and give any of the negative ones to the Father! Then make a list of realistic expectations for your marriage that you and your spouse can work on fulfilling together!

Fun Night Ideas

1. Have a vision retreat either for a day or longer and talk about what you see your lives together looking like in one, five, and ten years from now. Do some dreaming and start making plans for how those images might come into reality in the future.
2. Make a list of what the Bible says who you are in Christ Jesus and what the Father sees and calls you when He looks at you. Then celebrate who you are with your favorite treat or meal!