What is Christian Imaging Prayer and Why Do I Need It?

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The Sacred Imagination



Imaging prayer is a classic Christian listening prayer. There is no better way to hear God's whisper, His still, small voice.

This type of Christian prayer never replaces the core prayers of praise and confession, petition and intercession. Imaging prayer complements the prayers that Jesus taught in the Lord's prayer. Through the sacred imagination that God created in you, you can hear Him clearly.

Why does this matter? Because imaging prayer will help you to walk in the pages of the Bible. You can talk with Jesus, laugh and cry with Jesus, listen to Him. God isn't bound by time. When we see ourselves speaking and walking with Jesus, we really are. It's really happening.

Meeting Jesus in this way is a very old form of Christian prayer dating back to at least the 4th century: simple, powerful, and life changing. You can:

- Personally encounter Jesus
- Experience healing and restoration
- Break through your blocks and resistance to Christ's work in you

Here's another way to think about it. When we were kids, our imaginations were on fire. The richness and depth and possibility of life were amazing and astounding. It was only later, thanks to a slow, destructive process that happened over the years, that we came to mistrust and repress our imaginations.

It doesn't have to be that way. Using the imagination that God gave you, join Jesus in the gospel stories: Jesus risen, Jesus alive, waiting to walk and talk with you.

No, Imaging Prayer Isn't "New-Agey"

Sometimes when people hear about imaging prayer for the first time, they worry that it's "new-agey". The fear is understandable in the times we live in. But imaging prayer new-agey? God forbid – literally.

"Imaging prayer" is a contemporary name for the classic Christian contemplative prayer of the early church. Contemplative prayer seeks to join and listen to God in silence. Using the imagination is the imaging type of contemplative prayer. Entering only silence is the imageless. Both are Christian contemplative prayers that are entirely Biblical and entirely inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Look, how do you get to know a person better? You talk to them, of course. It's no different with Jesus Christ. God loves words. His Word is the Bible. The Bible refers to Jesus Christ as the Word. The Holy Spirit speaks as the Counselor and communicates with the Father "in groanings too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). God speaks, we listen; and God invites us to speak to Him and others about Him.

To hear His words, you have to do what? You have to listen to them! But are you? When you read the Bible, are you rushing through or stopping to hear the Holy Spirit? When you pray, do you monopolize the conversation?

Because God is talking. He talks in the Bible *and* in prayer.

The Bible records hundreds of times when God spoke directly to His people.

Prophets and apostles heard directly from God. Elijah heard God's still, small voice. Peter saw a vision from God when a sheet filled with unclean animals was lowered from heaven. And Paul, who hated Jesus of Nazareth, witnessed the Risen Christ in a vision – and fell down in a dead faint. When he woke up, he was a blind man.

Humble believers heard God's voice too, like Ananias of Damascus, who listened when God told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."

Ananias was terrified at the idea of approaching blood-and-thunder Paul. He did it anyway because God told him to. He called the fearsome Pharisee "Brother Paul" and healed him.

Imaging prayer helps believers to hear God in this intimate way. The Holy Spirit never speaks in opposition to His own Word but deepens and strengthens the Word in us. And as we take the time to listen, the Holy Spirit blesses us with the strength and power and authority to act in His holy will.

Is God Listening?



People need to be heard!

How many times have you talked to someone about something important and their eyes glaze over? Or worse, they look around the room at everything but you.

How many times have you been on a conference call or a Zoom meeting and got mad because no one was listening—only to find out you were on mute?

It's funny once you realize what happened. But when people really aren't listening to you, it's not funny at all. It hurts.

The Bible is extremely clear that God listens to us. But it sure doesn't always feel like it. Are you experiencing any of these thoughts or feelings?

- You feel distant from God and alone. You're going through the motions and you're pretty tired of it.
- You're happy to follow God's will if He'll tell you what it is. (Or you're scared to follow God's will, so you would rather not know.)
- You don't feel a sense of purpose in your life.
- God is silent even though you're struggling with poor health, lost relationships, financial stress, lack of purpose.
- You just plain miss Him because you haven't experienced His presence for a long time.

You're Not Unheard – You're Loved and Listened to

But within the life of faith, imaging prayer lets you hear the Holy Spirit on a very deep and personal level. You are simply listening to God's still, small voice, His gentle whisper to Elijah.

- *Feeling distant from God?* Relax into His presence. You'll hear Him and His love for you.
- *Seeking guidance and purpose?* Let Him reveal His great will to you and grant you the courage to follow your glorious purpose.
- *Need provision and healing?* He'll hold your hand right in the middle of everything – and He'll make you stronger, wiser, and better through it all.

Imaging Prayer is Simple – No, Really



"Represent to your imagination the whole of the mystery of what you desire to meditate as if it really passed in your presence." (17th c. theologian Francis de Sales)

Imaging prayer is extraordinarily simple to do. It doesn't take much time either—for the record, the longest spiritual prayer I ever experienced was someone else's. Even that lasted about five minutes.

Interpreting the prayer may take some practice, but if the Holy Spirit gave you the prayer, then He'll give you the interpretation too. There are four basic steps:

1. Be still.
2. Visualize a starting point.
3. Wait on the Holy Spirit's action.
4. Ask God's help to interpret the prayer.

Step 1: Be still.

When you are starting out, or any time you feel disconnected or anxious, consider these easy exercises to help you relax and be ready to receive the Holy Spirit's activity in silence.

- **Breathe in, breathe out.** Take 3-5 deep breaths like this: Breathe in slowly through your nose to a count of 5. Hold your breath for a count of 5 and then open your mouth and breathe out for a count of 5. (This is a good breathing exercise for any time you're feeling anxious or stressed.)

- **Gently move in place.** Sit in silence and gently roll your neck and lift your shoulders. Gently stretch your arms and back, and anything else you want to – it's your body!
- **Hands up, hands down.** Lift up your hands and then turn them palms down, saying something like, "Lord, I release all my anxiety to You." Then turn your palms up and say something like, "I receive the peace of Christ."
- **Breath prayers.** I teach more on breath prayers on my website[1] and on YouTube. Briefly, breath prayers are a single prayerful phrase you can say during a single inhale and exhale. The most well-known of the breath prayers is the centuries-old "Jesus Prayer". Simply slowly inhale while speaking in your mind, *Jesus Christ, Son of God.* Then slowly exhale while silently adding, *have mercy on me, a sinner.* Then repeat. You can use any prayer or verse too, like *I can do all things / in Christ who strengthens me.*

Step 2: Visualize a starting point.

I found that the only thing I really need to teach about basic imaging prayer is how to get started. Because once you start, the Holy Spirit does the rest.

Starting images can come from anywhere, but I discovered that people find it easiest to start with either a gospel story or a nature image. Familiar structures can also work, like chapels and churches.

Starting Image: The Gospels

The gospels are chock full of strong images such as the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000 (different stories!), Christ's Passion and Resurrection, turning water into wine, and the parables. The Old Testament is also a rich source of imagery, such as Daniel, the Psalms, and Isaiah.

The easiest place to start in the Bible is to pick a story from Christ's life that you want to experience. It may be a story that makes you wish you had been there, like the wedding at Cana or Jesus' baptism. It may be a story that you have never really

[1] http://doctorchris.org

understood, like Jesus' violent fury against the money changers in the Temple. It may even be a story that you've been avoiding, like the Crucifixion. Any gospel story that has power for you is right for imaging prayer.

In your imagination, enter the Bible story. You might be Mary or Peter. You might be little Zacchaeus, who nearly fell out of the tree. You might be the woman with a deadly bleed. Or you might be yourself, needing Jesus and wanting to hear Him.

Once you picture your starting image, the action starts. You are not making anything up; the Holy Spirit guides the visions and narrative in imaging prayer.

Here are some suggestions for gospel starting images. You can be anyone in the image or simply yourself. Although we're not time travelers under our power, God is not bound by space and time. If you see Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee or in the garden on Easter morning, Jesus really is meeting you in the power of His Holy Spirit.

- Woman at the well
- Birth of Christ
- Baptism
- Transfiguration
- Crucifixion
- Resurrection
- Ascension
- The miracle at Cana (ex.: bride, bridegroom, steward, servant, Mary, yourself)
- Feeding of the 4000 or 5000 (ex.: disciple, listener, yourself)
- Jesus calling His disciples
- Healing the sick

Starting Image: Nature

Since God created and sustains the world, nature is a strong starting image for imaging prayer. You can imagine yourself almost anywhere, like beaches, woods,

mountains, deserts, lakes, rivers – even buildings like chapels or cabins. Then the action starts as guided by the Holy Spirit.

For example, I prayerfully imaged myself camping by the side of a forest trail. The moon and stars were bright, and I knew it was all right to rest for the time being. In my imagination Jesus came and sat beside me to share the beauty and the silence. This prayer occurred at a deeply stressful time of my life and left me with a sense of peace in Christ.

One of my favorite personal images was given to me by someone else. My friend Charlene Slaten was praying for me and saw the foundation and framework of a new house – and directing the project was Jesus in a hard hat!

- Cabin
- Well
- Lake
- Ocean
- River
- Pool/pond/fountain
- Chapel
- Church
- Farm
- Hiking trail
- Mountain
- Cabin
- Desert
- Dam
- Snow
- Tropics
- Jungle

- Pine forest
- Orchard

Sometimes your imaging prayer won't be any of these things. One of my earlier imaging prayers started in the Nativity – and ended up on a cold street in New York City.

➢ *Chris Taylor: The Manger*

In my prayer, I was homeless in New York City in wintertime. Every day I wandered the streets wearing my raggedy layers. Somewhere I had a family and a home, but I didn't know where. And where was God? How could I find Him?

The answer came: "I will find you. Keep walking towards Me. Walk towards home." I smiled and began to walk, confident that if I was seeking Him, I would walk in the right direction.

I noticed that up and down the long city blocks, the same door appeared: a small wooden door set in a stone wall. After several blocks I stopped by the tiny door, laid my cold fingers on the latch, and walked in.

It was dark, spookily so. But I knew that I was in the right place, so I stepped into darkness—and Jesus appeared next to me, glowing with light! He grinned at me and took my hand. We started forward.

Wherever I was, wherever I would go, Christ was with me; and He turned my steps towards home.

Step 3: Wait on the Holy Spirit's action.

The only other basic thing I teach besides the starting point is, "Don't push." Here's what I mean:

Imaging prayer is not you trying to imagine something happening. Instead, you start with an image, *and the Holy Spirit takes over.* You don't even decide where it's supposed to end. God will make that clear to you in the prayer. In other words, never push by daydreaming about what you *think* should happen next. That's God's job.

- *Chris Taylor: Frozen*

I read Mark 5:1-9, where Jesus sailed to the land of the Geneserenes and encountered a violently possessed man living among the tombs. I chose to enter that story.

I saw the mountain path leading to the tombs that were shrouded in a wall of fog. There was a group of us disciples with Jesus, all of us climbing the mountain, coming closer and closer to the cemetery wall.

Then as Jesus approached the fog and the tombs, I stopped moving. In my imagination, I literally could not go on and stood frozen with fear. He turned and smiled at me and held out his hand. But I could not move. He went on without me.

If I had had charge of that prayer, I would have followed Him and watched the deliverance miracle with the Twelve. But the Holy Spirit would not allow me to do so because He wanted to teach me something painful but extremely valuable: I did not go after Jesus because I was afraid of too many things in my waking life.

I had to deal with the reality of my resistance and fear. I also needed to see the look on Jesus' face when I would not follow – not judgment or disappointment but love and understanding. This image helped me to understand some of my own uncertainties about following Jesus.

I also recognized His acceptance of me and His love for me, no matter how I felt or what I feared. (And yes, I got better. In the years to come, I would be powerfully delivered from a spirit of fear.)

Now it's time to enter the story you've chosen. Picture your starting point. The narrative may take off from there, but if you are having any trouble, then use your five senses. Look around you. What do you see, smell, hear, feel, taste? Using your senses imaginatively will help you relax into the image and let the Holy Spirit act.

For example, be aware of your senses:

- What do I see? (Jesus, a crowd, a temple)
- What do I hear? (wind, voices, silence)
- What do I touch? (clothes, stone, skin)
- What do I smell? (spices, blood, ocean)

- What do I taste? (wine, food, salt tears)

Now that you sense what's around you as you enter the gospel story, let the story run itself. The Holy Spirit is talking to you; He knows what you need to hear and see from Him.

Don't worry that the gospel story is changing in your imaging prayer. The story as written in the Bible is true. It happened.

The story in your imaging prayer is the Holy Spirit presenting it to someone who wasn't there, who hadn't been born yet; someone who could not only experience the story through reading, but through the senses; someone who God wants to guide and heal.

For example, a person may come up and talk to you. You may recognize John, Peter, Joseph, Mary, or even Pontius Pilate! You may feel compelled to approach Jesus yourself, or He may be looking for you (will He find you?) or you may just watch as the paralytic decides if he wants to be well, or as Zacchaeus climbs a tree, or as the woman with the issue of blood merely touches Jesus' robe and she is healed. Who knows what you'll experience? (God does.)

Another possibility is to imagine yourself at the garden after Jesus' resurrection. You may be Mary Magdalen, or a gardener, or yourself. See the burial garden slowly take shape as the early sun rises. Look at the mist on the ground, smell the wetness of the morning air and the faint hint of burial spices mixed in the green growing things. Hear the heavy silence and experience the feeling of a great waiting, of unseen presences waiting for the rising of the sun, and with it the Resurrection of God.

Then Jesus appears, just as He did to Mary Magdalene. Hear what He says to you.

➢ *Chris Taylor: The Paralytic by the Pool*

My starting point was the paralytic by the pool in John 5:2-9. In this story, many sick people literally lived by the pool of Bethesda because every so often the water began to bubble. The first person who flung himself into the pool was healed. This paralyzed man had waited by the poolside for many years but had never been the first in the water.

During the first part of my imaging prayer, things happened just as they were recorded in the Bible. I entered the story and imagined myself as the paralytic, and the story began to move. In walked Jesus. He looked around the room filled with the crippled and the sick, and then spotted me. He walked over to me, looked down, and

was silent. I was getting awfully uncomfortable under that steady look. Then he asked, "Do you want to get well?"

I panicked! Did I want to get well? I literally had no idea what I was going to say. It would have been very comfortable to stay the way I was—a procrastinator, a discomfort-dodger, a victim of circumstances. To want to be healed—to really want it—meant to accept and practice responsibility for living.

I hesitated. He waited. Then I gathered up all my courage and said, "Yes, I want to get well."

This prayer helped me to understand some of my own reluctance about being healed and opened a new door in my life.

Step 4: Ask God's help to interpret the prayer.

This stage is where the rubber hits the road: What does the image mean? What is the Holy Spirit telling you?

Sometimes the meaning is perfectly obvious. Meg Chlebek had done some visualization prayers before but was new to imaging prayer. When I led her into her first imaging prayer, she simply saw herself relaxing in childlike trust with Jesus. In the years to come, she experienced this beautiful vision again and again – and was healed from childhood scars of neglect and abuse. (Read Meg's story of healing in Chapter 8: "Powerful Answers: Imaging Prayer Series")

Sometimes the meaning is not as plain. Kimberley Davies imaged herself in a sunny meadow – when suddenly she was slammed by a heavy burden. In her physical life, she had experienced years of abuse. God had already healed and blessed her in many ways, but now she felt there was more to do. But what?

I and other prayer partners prayerfully helped her discern what God was saying. The ultimate result was glorious freedom after many years of oppression. (Read Kimberley's story of deliverance in Chapter 8 too.)

Here's the important thing to remember when the Holy Spirit grants you an imaging prayer: He knows what He's doing, whether the meaning is obvious or takes some work and prayer. Always trust in the Word:

"So is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,

but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." (Is. 55:11)

Imaging Prayer Meets Needs



"And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words." (Rom. 8:26, NLT)

Imaging Prayer Isn't Always What You Think You Need

Sometimes you will approach imaging prayer with a burning need. That's all right! But, in general, it's best to enter imaging prayer without a specific question or issue. There are several reasons for this:

- **You should already be praying over specific issues in petitionary prayer.** Always turn to God over anything you need and tell Him what you need and what you are thinking. (He already knows, but telling Him yourself strengthens your relationship with Him.)
- **Imaging prayer is usually best when you relax into silence and let the Holy Spirit lead you.** We are often so stuck in our own concerns that we can hardly hear God speaking. By opening up to God in listening prayer, we can hear and experience solutions to our problems that we would never have thought of otherwise.
- **God may lead you in surprising ways in imaging prayer.** In imaging prayer, we are only there to hear Him – and the power of the Holy Spirit leads us into new ways of thinking and empowers us to do what we need to do for ourselves and others. Only God knows our true deepest desires of the heart, and He knows what we really want to pray but might not know how.

Having said that, it is quite all right to enter imaging prayer knowing that you need something specific. Just stay open to the Holy Spirit leading you to where you should go (and don't interrupt). You will receive the peace and eventually the answers you need.

Just be sure to stay open to the leading of the Holy Spirit because He may lead you in surprising ways! As long as what you see and experience in the imaging prayer aligns with Scripture, praise Him and go along on the righteous ride!

God Meets Needs in Imaging Prayer

God is not bound to our agendas, but He frequently speaks to us in imaging prayer about major themes in believers' lives, themes like guidance, encouragement, provision, healing, or deliverance.

Imaging Prayer for Guidance

No one should be sitting around trying to discern the will of God all the time. We already know what to do a lot of the time.

- Want to know His will for salvation (His "sovereign will")? Study the Bible.
- Want to know what being Christlike means (His "moral will")? Read the gospels.
- Want to know God's plan for your life (His "personal will")? Pray about it – including imaging prayer.

Let's talk more about God's personal will for your life, which follows His sovereign and moral will. He will never tell you to venture outside the bounds of His Word and Jesus Christ. But because God himself is supremely creative and deep and beautiful, we don't have to prescribe a very narrow path.

There's an old story of a woman who was so afraid of missing God's will that when she got up in the morning, she asked God for confirmation before choosing her socks. Then she asked God and waited for confirmation to put the first sock on her left foot. She started again on the right foot!

This silly story illustrates the dangers of being so scared to miss God's will that we paralyze ourselves.

But there are times when we do have to make important decisions, and we want and need to experience God's guidance. And we're hearing crickets.

If you are pros and cons until the cows come home and you still don't know what to do, then do this:

- Ask the Lord.
- Be still before the Lord.
- Let the Lord speak to you in His still, small voice, just as he did to Elijah.

➢ *Lori Lewis Koors: Imaging Prayer as Vision*

Lori started her wellness coaching business in obedience to God. She was seeking God's will in prayer. When the answer came, it came in the form of an unexpected image.

Lori was at home when she had a sudden vision: Jesus' giant foot and leg stepped right into her family room! She immediately knew what the image was telling her – "I'm stepping into your situation."

It was funny and compelling at the same time because she knew that Jesus is way too big to fit into a smaller life. As she works to expand her wellness coaching into churches and organizations, she remembers that Jesus is bigger than anything and anyone else.

➢ *Crystal Evans: Back to the Beginning*

Crystal lives an adventurous life. She travels the world with her kids, founding schools and other businesses. Then, after a series of personal and business betrayals, she was at a point where she wasn't sure what God wanted her to do next. She joined my workshop on imaging prayer.

She saw a door that she couldn't open. Then, in the power of God, she went through the keyhole. A series of doors opened to her then, each one glowing with different colors and exquisite designs.

In another imaging prayer, she saw herself as a nurturing tree playing with the children surrounding her.

Both prayers promised that she would have God's guidance and that her heart for children was the key.

God often sends images to change our attitudes and answer our fears. But sometimes the prayers are intensely practical.

- ***Jane Burt: Praying the Practical***

Jane was a determined businessperson, but when chronic illness struck her down, she wondered what God had for her next. God worked a miracle by shrinking a massive tumor, but the rest of her body was failing.

Jane had a night dream where she saw Jesus sitting at the end of her bed. It seemed as if He wanted to tell her something, but she woke up. We talked, and she entered imaging prayer to finish the dream. Jesus told her she was to write at least two books.

But a year of serious illness followed, and she nearly died several times; it wasn't in her to write books. But all through that terrible time, she hung on to the promise. God brought her through, and even with major life changes and continuing illness, He is always with her. And Jane is writing.

Some imaging prayers are serious, some are mysterious, and some are funny. When you think about it, Who created humor? God, of course.

- ***Chris Taylor: Motorcycles***

In 2018, God gave me a series of themes for the next three years. 2019 was "Building the Foundation," 2020 was "Everything Changes" and 2021 was "The Year of the Increase." I had this prayer in February 2021 when I was experiencing new confidence and faith in God for my ministry.

I stood by the side of a country highway, and I stared at the powerful motorcycle that stood next to me. I had never driven a motorcycle in my life, but I was dressed in black leathers and there was a helmet on the back of the motorcycle. I knew that I was supposed to get on and God would take care of me, but there was just no way!

I decided to try. I gingerly straddled the seat of the powerful machine. I wondered what color my helmet should be. In my mind, I pictured a series of colorful helmets

before landing on purple. I reached for the helmet on the bike, which was indeed sparkly purple. I put it on. Now what?

Then I heard the roar of another motorcycle coming up behind me. I looked around to see Jesus riding a powerful bike. He was also dressed in motorcycle leathers with a black helmet on his head.

He pulled his motorcycle next to mine, took off His helmet and grinned. "Come on," He said.

I was not terribly clear on how to start this motorcycle, but I realized that wasn't exactly the point. I kickstarted it and it roared to life.

I carefully walked it over onto the road next to Jesus and stopped. He started off very slowly and waited for me to lift my feet from the ground and join Him.

I did. As we drove faster and faster, I happily screamed with excitement and freedom.

IMAGING PRAYER FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

Good old perseverance is one of the most important attitudes in following the will of God. And encouragement is critical for perseverance.

When you practice imaging prayer, the importance of perseverance becomes clearer. In your waking life, you may feel anxious and wonder when something good is going to happen. When you relax into imaging prayer, you may see yourself on a backpacking trip. When you turn around to look how far you've come, the Holy Spirit shows you miles and miles of the trail you've walked and the mountains you have climbed. The image reminds you how far you have come, how far our loving God has brought you, andhowever far you still have to go. And with the encouragement of God, you persevere.

For example, many of my Christian friends are entrepreneurs like I am. That path is challenging and uncertain. It is also exciting and frequently the leading (bleeding) edge of spiritual growth.

And during the most uncertain of times, God's encouragement has saved our ministries and businesses because He enabled us to persevere.

Before she joined the workshop, I guided Crystal through her first imaging prayer. She was in the dark about where to go and what to do in her business.

She saw herself floating in a small boat down a river. There was no engine or oars; she could only sit in the boat and wait.

She saw herself approaching the mouth of a river cave. She entered darkness, and the only sound was the river current rushing along. She trusted that the Holy Spirit knew what He was doing.

She soon saw the brightly lit cave's exit, and her boat floated out into a beautiful land of blessing and opportunity.

- ***Chris Taylor: The Cave***

I was also in a place of confusion. I felt unmoored. Nothing was truly terrible, but my life did not seem to move. I was working hard on my author and speaker ministry, but nothing seemed to be happening. Stuck at home in the pandemic and stuck in my new ministry, I needed hope.

I was in a long cave corridor holding a torch. There was a door at the very end. I was scared of the darkness and clustering shadows behind me, so I sidled along the corridor towards the door with my back plastered against the wall. Then I stopped. "This is ridiculous!" I said out loud to myself. "I'm spending so much time looking backward that I can't look forward!" I decided to trust God and not be such a fraidy-cat!

I turned my back on the darkness and marched forward. I held out my hand to open the door but paused to look back at the shadows of my past.

"Thank you for everything you have taught me," I said to past events and memories. "I've come out scarred but strong, and I'm grateful. But it's time for me to move on."

I put the torch into a wall bracket and opened the door.

I stood on top of a tall cliff. Before me appeared the ocean and C.S. Lewis's land of Narnia. I thought of a phrase from *The Lord of the Rings:* "a green land under a swift sunrise." Then I grinned, laughed with excitement, and launched myself off the cliff – and I flew.

Later, I shared my imaging prayer with my prayer partner who made an immediate dive for the Bible. She read Is. 43:18,19 out loud: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." Amen, Lord.

Imaging Prayer for Provision

When you need provision, by all means ask God for it! He wants His children to pray prayers of faith for what we need.

In these cases, imaging prayer is not so much about praying for what you need. Instead, it enables you to hear God when He speaks to you about your needs. In imaging prayer, your experience with God shifts. Instead of asking God to help you, you are silent. God tells you what He wants you to know – which will be exactly what you need to hear. The Holy Spirit will open new vistas of trust and faith in prayer for you.

Believe me, I know:as a single Mom, I struggled with finances for more years than I care to remember. God always provided, but it wasn't until I realized I had a spirit of fear over money that my life changed. Imaging prayer was part of the cure.

➢ *Chris Taylor: Water in the Desert*

Even after I got control over fear and my financial life improved, I still felt like I was standing still no matter how hard I worked in my business and ministry. This is when He granted me this prayer.

I walked through a sandy desert with very little vegetation. Just rocks. I said to God, "I need You! I am seeking You." I regarded my less than half-full water skins. "I can't find more water; I'm running out."

Then I thought: "Wait, didn't God support the Israelites for 40 years in the desert? Wasn't there always water when they needed it, when they trusted God for it? Sometimes they learned the oases and knew where to go. Other times the water came as a full-on miracle. But it always came.

And their shoe leather never ran out! They kept walking, heading towards the Promised Land when God said it was time."

In the imaging prayer, I decided not to worry about the desert. God would grant me water and provision to keep going because He was with me whether I "felt" it or not!

I didn't win the lottery or get a gazillion dollar check, but I internalized God's care and provision for me, and I released my anxiety and worry to Him. And we're doing fine.

INTERPRETING IMAGING PRAYERS



Some imaging prayers are perfectly clear right away. Others take time, other people, or additional images to interpret God's meaning. The crucial thing to remember is that God gives you imaging prayers for a reason and will not leave you to just wonder about them.

Some meanings are immediately obvious.

➢ *Chris Taylor: The Gale*

I had taken my copywriting business part-time, so I had more time for writing and speaking. But nothing much seemed to be happening, and I was worried.

I huddled in a thin blanket in a cold stone cave. It was freezing cold, and a gale shrieked and blasted the snow just outside the cave mouth.

My pets were with me, but I had no food and just three thin blankets. I kept one for myself, gave one to the dog, and bundled up the cats in the last one. They went to sleep, but I was wide awake with cold and anxiety. I just stared out of the opening of the cave to the blizzard. I had no idea what to do.

Suddenly, the snow stopped, and a golden glow appeared. I was astonished. I got up, still clutching my thin blanket, and approached the cave mouth.

Instead of the impenetrable snow, the sun was rising. Golden light flashed all over the landscape, and even though it was still chilly, I threw my blanket down because I believed.

I said, "Guys, come here!" The dog trotted over to my right side and sat, and all five cats padded to my left side and arranged themselves in a row. We basked in the warmth, and I shouted my thanks to God!

The interpretation of this imaging prayer was immediately obvious. God told me that no matter what my circumstances looked like then, He was actively working with and for me and my family. The dawn, and the end of the storm, were right on my doorstep.

Other imaging prayer interpretations are not as clear. Some of them take time to live into the answer that God reveals over time. Some of them require a combination of spiritual gifts to interpret including discernment of spirits, wisdom, knowledge and/or prophecy. Still others need gifted believers to help them interpret an imaging prayer.

Interpreting Imaging Prayer

When you receive an imaging prayer and do not immediately understand what it means, then ask God to grant you the meaning. He will.

Sometimes He works through other people to help you interpret your imaging prayer and gives spiritual gifts to those believers so they can help reveal His meaning.

➢ *Emem Washington: At the Crossroads*

Emem Washington is a successful attorney with a family and comfortable lifestyle. But she was dissatisfied with work and relationships: she wanted to write and speak, and some of her relationships needed healing. What did God want her to do?

I led Emem into her first imaging prayer. She saw herself in an empty landscape at night. She was on a dirt road and harvested crop fields spread out every way she looked. The only way she could go was forward, so she walked through the empty fields and kept to the road. She walked through a large rock fall and stopped to pray over her business and relationships. Then she walked on and reached a crossroad. Where to go now?

She went straight ahead, following the path of God even though she didn't know where He would lead. It took months before she was certain what His leading meant. When she did finally glean some meaning, she embraced His will for her life.

In the weeks, months, and years ahead God clarified His will to her. She made a series of important personal decisions. Today, she has a happy family and is a full-time author, speaker, and TEDx consultant.

Once you have practiced imaging prayer regularly, interpretation comes more easily because you are building on past experiences with imaging prayer.

- ***Ruth Hendrix: The Canyon***

Ruth is a cybersecurity professional in a large corporation. She is a talented planner, administrator, and project manager, but God remained stubbornly silent when she asked Him what He wanted her to do after retirement.

Ruth found herself standing in a very high and narrow sandstone canyon. The walls were beautifully colored in pinks, reds, and oranges with gray layers in between. As she walked forward, she could touch both walls with her arms extended, dragging her hands along the rough surface.

Continuing down the path, the canyon began to narrow further until her shoulders were touching the walls and she began to feel claustrophobic. The canyon was open on the top, so she could see the blue sky, but the walls were very tall, adding to her sense of panic. She felt compelled to continue her journey, so she squeezed through that narrow spot, and as she did, the canyon began to widen again.

She finally passed through the entire length of the canyon to an opening which led to a sandy desert. She was relieved to be out in the open, even if it was a desert! She could see some fields far in the distance but was unable to make them out fully and had no idea as to what crop might be growing there: maybe it was wheat.

She walked about 200 yards straight out from the canyon opening when she suddenly came upon a river. Where had this come from? She hadn't seen it earlier and could not determine its source.

There was a waterfall to her right, with the water cascading over some flat, shale-like rocks. It was wonderfully refreshing, but it was hindering her forward progress toward the fields that she thought were her final destination. She went up to the edge of the river to investigate; it was wide and moderately swift, but certainly passable. She contemplated her crossing, and that is where the image ended.

A few days later during her morning devotionals, God impressed upon her that, like the priests crossing the Jordan, she had to wade into the water before anything could happen. She could not look back or question why. Her directive was to "press on" toward the goal (the fields) which had not yet been attained yet was visible. She, like the priests, was carrying a "holy burden," and God would make the way passable in His way and in His time.

She had been asking God for months to show her what total surrender looked like for her, and His answer through this image and subsequent meditation was to be "acceptable and pleasing" to Him; to not look back but carry her "holy burden" forward toward the goal (whatever that may be). She did not need to know the details of what, when, and, in particular, the how, but she did need to trust God to lead her and to reveal His plan for her as needed in the moment.

Ruth was able to interpret her own imaging prayer through the grace of God and long experience in Bible study and prayer.

Seeking Help for Interpreting Your Imaging Prayer

When the meaning of your prayer doesn't come quickly or naturally, then you need help to interpret. The Holy Spirit will always interpret what He wants you to know. This can happen when you are praying or might need (or prefer) the company of other believers to help you hear the Holy Spirit.

When you have other believers to help you interpret your imaging prayer, it's vital for you and them to understand that this is not a therapy or coaching session. In fact, therapeutic or coaching abilities can be a handicap because of the temptation to believe that what we already know is what God is saying at that moment to that person.

For example, as an intuitive and introverted person, I am insightful into myself. But when it comes to other people, I am about as insightful as a rock.

Yet God often brings me into positions to help others interpret their imaging prayers. I am forced to reply on the spiritual gifts of God because I would be entirely useless otherwise. Talk about a barrier to personal pride!

Read the Whole Book

Would you like to read the whole book with even more about imaging prayer for healing, the spiritual gifts involved in imaging prayer, more true stories about experiences with imaging prayer, and great study questions?

Then click here!

About the Author



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Dr. Christine (Chris) Taylor is a Christian author, speaker, storyteller, and spiritual director. She lives in beautiful Wrightwood, California, and cares for and loves one dog and what seems like a thousand cats.

In her creative spiritual direction for Christian entrepreneurs and ministry leaders, she teaches believers how to hear the Holy Spirit more clearly, and how to receive strength and wisdom to accomplish their high purpose in Christ.

Don't Miss a Thing

Sign up for Christine's entertaining newsletter and don't miss individual spiritual direction, and also online courses and group workshops coming in 2022!

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