

Imagine Scotland – The Vision

(otherwise known as The 4 Things)

We hope that through all that Imagine does, young people would encounter Jesus, and that he'd leave them with...

- **A Bigger Picture of God**

Ultimately, the whole of Imagine is about providing a place for young people to encounter God. Imagine is not a humanistic organisation. We do not believe that mankind carries the ultimate answers to the world's problems. We actually do not even believe that ultimate end of the gospel is the redemption of mankind. We believe that our God is a glorious God who deserves worship with everything we are and everything we have. The end of the gospel is about the glory of God; that when we are saved from our sin, cleaned up and set free, given the holy spirit to empower us to live like Jesus, we bring more glory to God than we did before, and that's the intention of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.

So we hope that young people would catch a bigger picture of a holy, awesome, powerful, glorious God and that a passion to live lives that bring worship to God would result. This is actually a huge antidote to the consumeristic "it's all about me" culture of our society. The world is busy telling young people to live for themselves, to take everything they can get. This ethos has spread into the church, so that we talk about my "personal relationship with God" (like he's my pet saviour), my calling, my ministry, my gifts. And actually, we want to carry a message that says "It's not about you and your value, but rather it's about God, and his value".

The flip-side of all this, is that when we revere God and live for his name and renown, he invites us into intimate friendship with him, and we discover the tender love of the Father. Clearly we want to embrace every aspect of God's character, not just his holiness, and this involves exploring his gentle mercy and benevolent love, and then receiving the healing and restoration that this brings to our souls.

Ultimately, we hope that young people would come to Imagine and go home saying "I never knew God was that big" and that they would live all-out, radical, dangerous, on-the-edge lives as a result.

- **A Bigger Picture of the World**

There are three sides to our understanding of the world and each is equally important. Firstly, we want to say that the universe was created good by a personal God who filled it with ridiculously abundant beauty. As we look around at everything that God's made, we're supposed to say "Wow". And we will never get to the bottom of just how amazing it is. As we continue to explore, we will continue to discover. But after that, creation is like a window, you can enjoy looking at the window but really you're supposed to look through the window at what's beyond it. Creation just leads us to Creator.

Secondly, we believe that God's world is our world. He gave it to us to look after, to rule over. I'm not sure that Imagine would ever become some kind of eco-green thing that sends young people out with wellies on to do pond-dipping, but environmental issues would certainly have to be in the mix somewhere, if only because global warming or use of pesticides or deforestation of rain forests are most harmful to the world's poorest people. As descendants of the "last Adam", the responsibility for ruling over and subduing creation now lies with us, the Church. It's down to us to keep the world on the straight and narrow.

Thirdly, the world is in a mess. God may have created the world good, but now it's damaged goods. Sin has, like a virus, infected every part of our world and is eating away at its very fabric. Poverty, suffering, pain, sickness, death, natural disasters, unjust government and twisted economies were not what God had in mind for his beautiful creation. But they are a reality. Often the numbers are so huge that they lose their meaning for us, and our relative wealth insulates us from the scale of the problem. But our heart is that the young people who come into contact with Imagine would be reconnected with the sheer size of the challenge. We achieve that partly with information. We work closely with the folk from Tearfund in this, to put quality resources, material and facts in the hands of young people. But it's more than information – we want them to fall in love with the world, to want to get stuck in. It's about reintroducing incarnation to people who have been taught that world=worldly and that getting your hands dirty is bad thing. We want young people to see the world as a challenge not something to hide from.

- **A Bigger Picture of the Church**

The good news is that on any Sunday, there are 570,130 Christians meeting together across Scotland. You can do a lot of damage with half a million people. We are a force to be reckoned with. The bad news is that in 10 years time, it's predicted that we'll lose about 20% of those people, and then in another 10 years, another 20%, and so on. We, Imagine, are gutted about that and we believe that God is too.

Again, our heart is to reconnect young Christians with the scale of the problem. We are on a sinking ship and it's time to look the problem square in the face and do something about it. We want to send a message to the young people that says it doesn't have to be like this. When we hand on the baton to our children and our children's children, we will be held to account for how we prayed for, nurtured, supported and loved God's church. You don't have to wait until you have grey hair and a tweed jacket to get stuck in to church and feel a sense of responsibility for it.

Part of the problem is theological. Fundamentally, we need to understand what church is for. It's not a lifestyle choice, like being a member of a snooker club or a darts team. It's not a baby-sitting service. It's God's radical, world-changing movement, the army of the meek, a family with a purpose. God looks at the problems of the world and sees the church as his divinely-appointed solution. We're supposed to declare a revolution, a *coup d'état* against pain, a true "war on terror".

Secondly, we need to understand that God hasn't just saved us into Christ, but also into his Church and his Cause. There's a danger today that we carry our secular individualism into our relationship with God. This makes church nothing more than a divine shower-cubicle that I step into, have my spiritual experiences, and then step out of again, never having interacted with people at all. You can't be a movement on your own, so God has placed us together.

Imagine is 100% committed to a passionate belief in local church. We almost want to say you can't be a Christian and not be week-by-week knitted into a group of local believers to share your life with. We want to see young people leave Imagine passionate about God's church and desperate to see a new day of growth in every sense dawn in their lifetime, being willing to place themselves at the very heart of God's activity to bring that about.

- **A Bigger Picture of Themselves**

It is important to clarify that nothing we do can earn love, grace or acceptance from God. Imagine is not primarily concerned with what the young people do when they go home, but rather *who they are*. God is not most glorified when we busy ourselves with a whole load of chores for God. As John Piper says, we are most glorifying to him, when we are most satisfied in

him. We hope that the bigger picture young people receive from God about themselves during Imagine would be as a truly loved, totally accepted, completely forgiven child of God.

However, we do want to see God turn mental assent, or even passionate beliefs into action. As we respond to all that God is and all he has done, we worship him. Not just with songs or music (although hugely important), but with our whole lives. Loving the poor, the marginalised, the broken, the lonely wanderer is our worship to him. Humbly serving our classmates, our bosses, our neighbours, our friends is also our worship.

From a young age, children are asked what they want to be when they "grow up", the hidden assumption being that you only really serve a purpose when you're "grown up". When you're 5, you think this might be when you're 11; when you're 11, it's 18; when 18, it's maybe 25. The reality is that you can serve the purposes of God no matter how old you are, or what your background is, or what qualifications you have. Our heart is that young people wouldn't waste the most energetic and enthusiastic time of their lives waiting for everyone else to recognise them as "grown up" or "ready". You can serve God today, dream big dreams today, see God do amazing things today. Why wait until tomorrow?

Clearly, as we have said, Imagine is not some kind of Christian humanism movement. We do not believe that what "man can conceive, he can achieve", or that we have the potential to sort out the world's problems. In many ways, a "bigger picture" of ourselves can only really turn out to be an infinitesimally small one. But we do believe that God is on the look-out for fragile, humble, meek servants who will act as His instruments of cosmic change.

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