

# The Human Imagination and its Diseases

## The Faculty of Imagination

*A study by Eugene Prewitt*

### Introduction

The faculty of "imagination" is one that is often enslaved, enfeebled, corrupted, or otherwise poorly developed.

In the two volumes of *Mind, Character and Personality* we find an entire chapter (pp. 587-595) devoted to the topic and titled, aptly, "**Imagination.**"

This study, drawn from that chapter and other references, is organized, briefly, into three parts. The first examines principles related to the imagination and its healthy or unhealthy development. The second suggests keys for diagnosing problems with the imagination. The third suggests approaches, gleaned from a careful reading of the first section, that a counselor might take in helping someone with what Ellen White calls "a diseased imagination."

Many of Ellen White's statements could justifiably be included in all three sections. To save space they have been located under one of the three heads only.

### Section One – Principles

#### *Healthy Uses*

1. *Grasping Illustrations and Metaphors:* "Through the imagination He [Christ] reached the heart. His illustrations were taken from the things of daily life, and although they were simple, they had in them a wonderful depth of meaning. The birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the seed, the shepherd and the sheep--with these objects Christ illustrated immortal truth; and ever afterward, when His hearers chanced to see these things of nature, they recalled His words. Christ's illustrations constantly repeated His lessons." – 2MCP p. 587
2. *Submitting to the Discipline of the Will:* "Few realize that it is a duty to exercise control over the thoughts and imaginations. It is difficult to keep the undisciplined mind fixed upon profitable subjects. But if the thoughts are not properly employed, religion cannot

flourish in the soul. The mind must be      preoccupied with sacred and eternal things, or it will cherish trifling      and superficial thoughts." 2MCP p. 587

3. *Thinking of heavenly things and noble      pictures, preparing one to guide conversations into healthy channels.*      "Had you trained your mind to dwell upon elevated subjects, meditating upon heavenly themes, you could have done much good. You could      have had an influence upon the minds of others to turn their selfish      thoughts and world-loving dispositions into the channel of      spirituality." 2MCP p. 593
4. *Cooperating with research in an effort      to grasp the wonders of redeeming love:* "How blessed will be the lot of      those who enter into that glorious abode where there will be no more sin,      no more suffering! What a prospect is this for the imagination! what a theme for contemplation! The Bible is full of the richest treasures of      truth, of glowing descriptions of that heavenly land. We should search the      Scriptures, that we may better understand the plan of salvation, and learn      of the righteousness of Christ, until we shall exclaim, in viewing the      matchless charms of our Redeemer, "Thy gentleness hath made me      great." There we shall see his infinite compassion. The imagination      may reach out in contemplation of the wonders of redeeming love, and yet      in its highest exercises we shall not be able to grasp the height, and      depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God; for it passeth      knowledge."
5. *Determine to think only pure thoughts      and God will help:* "Here is a wide field in which the mind can      safely range. If Satan seeks to divert the mind to low and sensual things,      bring it back again and place it on eternal things; and when the Lord sees      the determined effort made to retain only pure thoughts, He will attract      the mind, like the magnet, purify the thoughts, and enable them to cleanse      themselves from every secret sin. "Casting down imaginations, and      every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and      bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2      Corinthians 10:5)." 2MCP 595
6. *The will, the reason, the judgment, may      bring diseased imagination under control:* "Dear Sister F, you have a diseased      imagination; and you dishonor God by allowing your feelings to have      complete control of your reason and judgment. You have a determined will,      which causes the mind to react upon the body, unbalancing the circulation      and

producing congestion in certain organs; and you are sacrificing health to your feelings. {5T 310.2} You are making a mistake, which, if not corrected, will not end with wrecking your own happiness merely. You are doing positive injury, not only to yourself, but to the other members of your family, and especially your mother. She is very nervous and highly sensitive. If one of her children is suffering, she becomes confused and almost distracted. Her mind is becoming unbalanced by the frequent fits of hysteria which she is compelled to witness, and great unhappiness is brought upon all around you. And yet you are capable of controlling your imagination and overcoming these nervous attacks. You have will power, and you should bring it to your aid. You have not done this, but have let your highly wrought imagination control reason. In this you have grieved the Spirit of God. Had you no power over your feelings, this would not be sin; but it will not answer thus to yield to the enemy. Your will needs to be sanctified and subdued instead of being arrayed in opposition to that of God." {5T 310.3}

7. *Risk something by giving principle a chance; deny your feelings, for the benefit of others. Value their life as more than their own. These are thoughts of suggested therapy for a diseased imagination:* "Invalids, I advise you to venture something. Arouse your will power, and at least make a trial of this matter. Withdraw your thoughts and affections from yourselves. Walk out by faith. Are you inclined to center your thoughts upon yourselves, fearing to exercise, and fearing that if you expose yourself to the air you will lose your life; resist these thoughts and feelings. Do not yield to your diseased imagination. If you fail in the trial, you can but die. And what if you do die? One life might better be lost than many sacrificed." – 2T 534

8. *Study the Bible:* "If the Bible were studied as it should be, men would become strong in intellect. The subjects treated upon in the Word of God, the dignified simplicity of its utterance, the noble themes which it presents to the mind, develop faculties in man which cannot otherwise be developed. In the Bible a boundless field is opened for the imagination. The student will come from a contemplation of its grand themes, from association with its lofty imagery, more pure and elevated in thought and feeling than if he had spent the time reading any work of mere human origin, to say nothing of those of a trifling character. Youthful minds fail to reach their noblest development when they neglect the highest source of wisdom--the Word of God. The reason why we have so few men of good mind, of stability and solid worth, is that God is not feared, God is not loved, the principles of religion are not carried out in the life as they should be." {CG 507.1}

## ***Unhealthy Uses***

9. *Aggravating illness, suppressing the immune system*: "Disease is sometimes produced and is often greatly aggravated by the imagination. Many are lifelong invalids who might be well if they only thought so. Many imagine that every slight exposure will cause illness, and the evil effect is produced because it is expected." 2MCP p. 587.

10. *Unfitting persons for useful life*: "From what the Lord has shown me, the women of this class have had their imaginations perverted by novel reading, daydreaming, and castle-building--living in an imaginary world." 2MCP p. 588

11. *Sensitive Paranoia*: "You must overcome this disease of the imagination. You are extremely sensitive, and if a word is spoken favoring an opposite course from that which you have been pursuing, you are hurt. You feel that you are blamed and that you must defend yourself." 2MCP pp. 588-589

"He [a father] has treated small offenses with too great severity. This has had an influence to wean, in a degree, the affection of the son from the father. During his sickness Brother S has had a diseased imagination. His nervous system has been all deranged, and he has thought that his children did not feel for him and love him as they should; but this was the result of disease." – 2T p. 98

12. *Controlling the Reason*: "You are capable of controlling your imagination and overcoming these nervous attacks. You have willpower, and you should bring it to your aid. You have not done this, but have let your highly wrought imagination control reason. In this you have grieved the Spirit of God. Had you no power over your feelings, this would not be sin; but it will not answer thus to yield to the enemy." 2MCP p. 589

13. *Vivified by Stimulants*: "Tea, coffee, and flesh meats produce an immediate effect. Under the influence of these poisons the nervous system is excited, and in some cases, for the time being, the intellect seems to be invigorated and the imagination to be more vivid." 2MCP p. 589

14. *To Excite Men in Religious Exercises:* "Popular revivals are too often carried by appeals to the imagination, by exciting the emotions, by gratifying the love for what is new and startling. Converts thus gained have little desire to listen to Bible truth, little interest in the testimony of prophets and apostles." 2MCP p. 590
15. *Interacting with the Theater's Drama:* "Low songs, lewd gestures, expressions, and attitudes deprave the imagination and debase the morals. Every youth who habitually attends such exhibitions will be corrupted in principle." "There is no influence in our land more powerful to poison the imagination, to destroy religious impressions, and to blunt the relish for the tranquil pleasures and sober realities of life than theatrical amusements." 2MCP p. 590
16. *Contemplating morally low or unrealistically ideal scenes:* "You have indulged in novel and story reading until you live in an imaginary world. The influence of such reading is injurious to both the mind and the body; it weakens the intellect and brings a fearful tax upon the physical strength. At times your mind is scarcely sane because the imagination has been overexcited and diseased by reading fictitious stories." "The lust of the eye and corrupt passions are aroused by beholding and by reading. The heart is corrupted through the imagination. The mind takes pleasure in contemplating scenes which awaken the lower and baser passions. These vile images, seen through defiled imagination, corrupt the morals and prepare the deluded, infatuated beings to give loose rein to lustful passions."
17. *Masturbation and Fantasizing:* "Impure thoughts seize and control the imagination and fascinate the mind, and next follows an almost uncontrollable desire for the performance of impure actions." 2MCP 591. (See Sec. 1, #3 for the next sentence)
18. *Imagining Self as a Hero in Grandiose Scenarios:* "If the thoughts, the dreamings of the mind, are of great purposes in which self figures, there will be revealed in words and actions self-exaltation, a lifting up of self." 2MCP 592

19. *Allowing the imagination to run riot wherever it chooses*: "Your imagination was not given you to be allowed to run riot and have its own way without any effort at restraint or discipline. If the thoughts are wrong, the feelings will be wrong; and the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character." 2MCP p. 593
20. *Greedy paranoia*: "He has suffered imaginary pecuniary want while surrounded with plenty. Satan has taken possession of his mind and, exciting his organ of acquisitiveness, has made him insane upon this subject." 2MCP p. 594
21. *Health paranoia*: "I have been shown mothers who are governed by a diseased imagination, the influence of which is felt upon husband and children. The windows must be kept closed because the mother feels the air. If she is at all chilly, and a change is made in her clothing, she thinks her children must be treated in the same manner, and thus the entire family are robbed of physical stamina. All are affected by one mind, physically and mentally injured through the diseased imagination of one woman, who considers herself a criterion for the whole family." 2MCP p. 594
22. *Day-dreaming and romantic castle-building and thinking about one's own delicacy*: Many have a self-complacent feeling, flattering themselves that if they had an opportunity, or were circumstanced more favorably, they could and would do some great work. These do not view things from a correct standpoint. Their imagination is diseased, and they have permitted their minds to soar above the common duties of life. Day-dreaming and romantic castle-building have unfitted them for usefulness. They have lived in an imaginary world, and have been imaginary martyrs, and are imaginary Christians. There is nothing real and substantial in their character. This class sometimes imagine that they have an exquisite delicacy of character, and sympathetic nature, which must be recognized and responded to by others. They put on an appearance of languor and indolent ease, and frequently think that they are not appreciated. Their sick fancy is not helping themselves or others. Appropriate labor, and healthy exercise of all their powers, would withdraw their thoughts from themselves. {HR, March 1, 1872 par. 14}
23. *Imaging Star-Wars-type conflict between good and evil, rather than conflict of principles for the heart*: Those who are exalting education above everything else, may become

much more intelligent in regard to the work that is going forward in this high contest of the two opposing forces between the principalities and powers. They need not imagine a battle going on in some distant field with celestial pomp, in all the terribleness of superhuman strength, but bring the imagination down to the reality of the war and conflict in the domain of the human heart, and give this battle the character of a moral conflict, a struggle between principles supported by opposite parties which appear as combatants. They must consider they are either to become champions of falsehood or of truths. But this view of things is not poetical enough for the fancy of very many who are fighting with Satan the game of life for their souls. {RH, July 19, 1887 par. 9}

24. *Thinking of one's own depravity and weakness, or even more generally, thinking of 'self':*

There are persons with a diseased imagination to whom religion is a tyrant, ruling them as with a rod of iron. Such are constantly mourning over their depravity and groaning over supposed evil. Love does not exist in their hearts; a frown is ever upon their countenances. They are chilled by the innocent laugh from the youth or from anyone. They consider all recreation or amusement a sin and think that the mind must be constantly wrought up to just such a stern, severe pitch. This is one extreme. {AH 493.1}

Amusements excite the brain more than useful employment. Physical exercise and labor have a more happy influence upon the mind and strengthen the muscles, improve the circulation, and give the invalid the satisfaction of knowing his own power of endurance; whereas, if he is restricted from healthful exercise and physical labor, his attention is called to himself and he is in constant danger of thinking himself worse off than he really is, and of having established with him a diseased imagination, which causes him to have continual fear that he is overdoing, overexercising, and overtaxing his power of endurance. At the same time, if he should engage in well-directed labor, using his strength and not abusing it, he would find that this physical exercise would prove a more powerful and effective agent in his recovery of health than even the water treatment he is receiving. {5MR 395.1}

25. *Superficial reading of stories leading to magnification of little difficulties:* I am personally acquainted with some who have lost the healthy tone of the mind through wrong habits of reading. They go through life with a diseased imagination, magnifying every little grievance. Things which a sound, sensible mind would not notice, become to them unendurable trials, insurmountable obstacles. To them, life is in constant shadow.

Those who have indulged the habit of racing through exciting stories, are crippling, their mental strength, and disqualifying themselves for vigorous thought and research. There are men and women now in the decline of life who have never recovered from the

effects of intemperate reading. The habit, formed in early years, has grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength; and their efforts to overcome it, though determined, have been only partially successful. Many have never recovered their original vigor of mind. {CE 186-187}

26. *The Constant Working of the Mind Diseases the Imagination:* Let students with their mental studies call into exercise the physical and moral powers. Let them work the living machinery proportionately. The constant working of the brain is a mistake. I wish I could express in words just that which would express the matter. The constant working of the brain causes a diseased imagination. It leads to dissipation. The education of five years in this one line is not of much value as an all-round education of one year. {SpM 95.3}

27. *To think ill of other's planning ability may disease the imagination:* This same character of spirit is found here in Europe. For years Elder Andrews held the work back from advancing, because he feared to entrust it to others lest they would not carry out his precise plans. He would never allow anything to come into existence that did not originate with him. Elder Loughborough also held everything in his grasp while he was in California and England, and as a result the work is years behind in England. Elder Wilcox and Sister Thayer have the same spirit of having everything go in the exact way in which they shall dictate, and no one is being trained in such a way as to know how to get hold of the work for himself. What folly it is to trust a great mission in the hands of one man, so that he shall mold and fashion it in accordance with his mind, and after his own diseased imagination. {PC 384.1}

28. *Exaggerating problems, or reacting hastily, when suffering under sickness (especially indigestion):* Now, Bro. Fargo, if you did go from that conference and make such statements to Elder Butler, have you had no evidence to change your mind? and how could you represent this as you did to Elder B. who was broken in mind and diseased in body, who was in a condition to exaggerate every statement made? How can God look upon this work of my good ministering brethren? If you have acted a part because of blindness of mind in helping Eld. Butler to remain under a deception, making statements to him which his diseased imagination would construe into the worst possible light, God will not look on this work with any favor, for if this, your work, is of God, then He has not been leading me. {1888 294.2}



Could your eyes have been opened as you with others sat in counsel, you would have discerned the unseen Watcher marking your words and noting the hasty, overbearing spirit which controlled your decisions, especially when something took place to arouse your combativeness. A sufferer from indigestion, you have brought the results of this into council meetings and board meetings. You have presided when, owing to your diseased imagination, you were not fit to preside. You were not always in this frame of mind, but at times were conciliating and conceding. Angels of God were present to help you when you did wish and strive to do the will of God.--Letter 41, 1898. (To A. R. Henry, May 6, 1898.) {5MR 443.2}

29. *Chronically diseased imagination of wife may discourage and weaken spouse:* All through your life, Sister Lay, you have had, to a greater or less degree, a diseased imagination. God designed your affliction for your good, that it should remove from you many things detrimental to you and which had proved a leaden weight to your husband. You have not realized your condition or the effect both your physical and mental infirmities have had upon your husband. They have made him a weak man, in every sense of the word, when he might have been strong. He has suffered in mind intensely when it all might have been saved had you viewed calmly, rationally, and as a Christian wife should. [Note: context shows God worked to change Mrs. Lay's condition and that such a change was hopeful.]
30. *Mistreatment may lead individuals into a state of diseased imagination, of prejudicial paranoia:* He feared to yield and give up the oversight of matters lest he should lose his influence. The chief cause which led to this error on the part of Dr. Lay, was the course pursued toward him when he first engaged in his efforts for the Institute. He knew there was jealousy and prejudice existing toward him. This made him jealous and suspecting in return. His continual fear was of prejudicial influences working to injure his standing in the Institute. This was, much of it, the fruit of a diseased imagination. He was constantly wrestling with enemies which existed only in his imagination. {PH097 42.2}
31. *Cherishing the "disagreeable" excites "a nervous irritability" which lies at the foundation of "diseased imagination":* God does not bind upon any one burdens so heavy that at every step he must complain of the load he is obliged to bear. It is the friction, and not the constant motion that wears the machinery. It is the continual worry, and not the work they do, that is killing these persons. They covet some blessing, either real or imaginary, which is just beyond their reach; but if they were to gain this cherished

object, it would only excite a desire for something else. The present is clouded because they under-value the good that they enjoy. They look away from the honors they possess that they have not earned, and the love that they have not merited, and want to stand a little higher. They cherish the disagreeable, and by their thoughts and conversation, excite a nervous irritability which lies at the foundation of a diseased imagination and real suffering. God does not propose to work a miracle for this class. He is not pleased or glorified when his sons and daughters, members of the royal family, take this course; for they neither enjoy rest and peace in his love themselves nor permit others to do so. Let none of us think that our work is greater and more taxing than any others are doing. This same work has been done in the past, and can be done again. {ST, June 12, 1884 par. 6}

32. *Superstition in health matters is fruit of diseased imagination and of the trump of experience over science and reason:* Feelings are a poor criterion at any time, but especially when under the control of a diseased imagination and strong will. Invalids of this class are almost sure to continue to be invalids. They generally have some fault to find with the course of all who try to help them. They are seldom willing to be guided by the judgment of those who understand the human system and who have long experience in treating disease. Physicians cannot, by their counsel, or treatment, help the sick unless the invalids give them their confidence. If they take their cases into their own hands, and do not recover health, they should not charge the failure upon the physicians. Genuine experience is in harmony with the unchangeable principles of nature. Superstition, caused by diseased imagination, is frequently in conflict with science and principle. And yet the unanswerable argument is urged, "I must be correct, for this is my experience." {HR, June 1, 1872 par. 12-13, see also paragraph 11}

33. *Incapability of well appreciating the atonement or of well appreciating the exalted nature of God's work, or of losing a meek and calm frame of mind in doctrinal discussion, is fruit of diseased imagination:* If their moral and intellectual faculties are beclouded, they can not appreciate the value of the atonement or the exalted character of the work of God, nor delight in the study of His word. How can a nervous dyspeptic be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear? How soon would such a one become confused and agitated, and by his diseased imagination be led to view matters in altogether a wrong light, and by a lack of that meekness and calmness which characterized the life of Christ, be caused to dishonor his profession while contending with unreasonable men? Viewing matters from a high religious standpoint, we must be thorough reformers in order to be Christ-like. {TSDF 188.1}

34. *Dissatisfaction in marriage, a result of a diseased imagination:* You know not the deceptions of the human heart. You know not the devices of Satan. Some who have drawn largely upon your sympathy have a sickly, diseased imagination, are lovesick, sentimental, ever eager to create a sensation and make a great ado. Some are dissatisfied with their married life. There is not enough romance in it. Novel reading has perverted all the good sense they ever had. They live in an imaginary world. Their imagination creates a husband for themselves such as exists only in romances found in novels. They talk of unrequited love. They are never contented or happy, because their imagination pictures to them a life that is unreal. When they face the reality, come down to the simplicity of real life, and take up life's burdens in their families, as is woman's lot, then they will find contentment and happiness. {2T 302.1}
35. *Foreboding danger and problems; thoughts leading to distrust of God and spouse:* But the enemy took the field and his suggestions were followed. You entered upon a work which God could not and did not approve. A way was contrived by the enemy to strike at you both and block your way. Adelia was a timid soul, feeling pain deeply, easily discouraged. That imagination which, if devoted to and exercised upon the truth, would have become a power for God, was now to be used as a hindrance, easily excited in a wrong direction to forebode evil, to see things in a distorted light, to feel that there is danger when there is none, to distrust God, to distrust her husband.{DG 139.4}

## Section Two: HELPS IN DIAGNOSIS

1. I want to recognize **paranoia** as a sign of a diseased imagination. While severe cases are named "schizophrenia" by modern science, Ellen White identifies the disease in its earlier and more curable stages.
  1. Autoimmune disorders: From all that EGW has written it appears that many of the illnesses referred to today as autoimmunity may be symptoms of a diseased imagination. See Sec. 1, #9.
  2. Hypersensitivity to hurtful words, opposition, correction. See Sec. 1, #11.
  3. Combinations of illness with *feelings* of being unloved by family. See Sec. 1, #11.
  4. Feelings of "imaginary pecuniary want" while surrounded with "plenty."
  5. Health paranoia and superstitious belief in health myths because of "experience." See Sec. 1, #21, #32.
  6. Feelings of not being "appreciated" and of requiring special and peculiar sensitivity on the part of those speaking to them. See Sec. 1, #22.

7. Prejudicial paranoia, the idea that others are against you or are out to undermine your influence or work. See Sec. 1, #30.
8. Talk of unrequited love (unreturned love, of a spouse that does not love in return) is an evidence of a diseased imagination. See Sec. 1, #34.
2. Persons that grew up watching TV or reading fiction or true love stories are likely diseased in the imagination. This means, of course, nearly our entire nation. May God help us. See Sec. 1, #16.
3. Does the counselee think or day-dream about him/herself being the one that saves the day or solves the problem in some grandiose imaginary scene? Such activity is a symptom of one type of imagination disease.
4. Does the counselee have inexplicable languor and a love of indolent ease? See Sec. 1, #22.
5. Does the counselee constantly mourn over his own depravity and groan over "supposed evil"? Does he bristle at the sound of an innocent laugh and think all amusement to be a "sin"? These are symptoms of a diseased imagination. See Sec. 1, #24. [Key word is "constantly." The Day of Atonement demands a healthy dose of mourning over one's own "spiritual declension."]
6. In my mind, as a counselor, I would want to understand why it is that many seem incapable of appreciating the value of the atonement or of remaining in a calm frame of mind in controversial doctrinal discussion. The reason? Diseased imagination. This makes me realize that my own imagination is not entirely healthful. See Sec. 1, #33.
7. Dissatisfaction in marriage may be a symptom of diseased imagination. See Sec. 1, #34.

### **Section Three: COUNSELING APPLICATIONS**

1. *Start with the imagination in cases of moral weakness. Suggest healthy meditation on the Word and on noble themes. Read the following statement to the believing counselee. Encourage discipline in bringing the imagination "back" when it wanders.*

It is the special work of Satan in these last days to take possession of the minds of youth, to corrupt the thoughts, and inflame the passions; for he knows that by so doing he can lead to impure actions, and thus all the noble faculties of the mind will become debased, and he can control them to suit his own purposes. All are free moral agents, and as such they must train their thoughts to run in the right channel. The first work of those who would reform is to purify the imagination. Our meditations should be such as will elevate the mind. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." [Philippians 4:8.] Here is a wide field in which the mind can safely range. If Satan

seeks to turn it to low and sensual things, bring it back. When corrupt imaginings seek to gain possession of your mind, flee to the throne of grace, and pray for strength from heaven. By the grace of Christ it is possible for us to reject impure thoughts. Jesus will attract the mind, purify the thoughts, and cleanse the heart from every secret sin. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God; . . . casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." [2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.] {CTBH 136.1}

1. *Spend time outdoors in contemplation of nature while asking "What is God teaching through these things?"*

The burden of sin, with its unrest and unsatisfied desires, lies at the very foundation of a large share of the maladies the sinner suffers. Christ is the Mighty Healer of the sin-sick soul. These poor, afflicted ones need to have a clearer knowledge of Him whom to know aright is life eternal. They need to be patiently and kindly yet earnestly taught how to throw open the windows of the soul and let the sunlight of God's love come in to illuminate the darkened chambers of the mind. The most exalted spiritual truths may be brought home to the heart by the things of nature. The birds of the air, the flowers of the field in their glowing beauty, the springing grain, the fruitful branches of the vine, the trees putting forth their tender buds, the glorious sunset, the crimson clouds predicting a fair morrow, the recurring seasons--all these may teach us precious lessons of trust and faith. The imagination has here a fruitful field in which to range. The intelligent mind may contemplate with the greatest satisfaction those lessons of divine truth which the world's Redeemer has associated with the things of nature. {CH 202.1}

1. *If the counselee will be thinking of heavenly things and noble pictures, he will be prepared to resist temptations to masturbate:*

"If the mind were educated to contemplate elevating subjects, the imagination trained to reflect upon pure and holy things, it would be fortified against this terrible, debasing, soul-and-body-destroying indulgence." 2MCP 591

1. 4. *As a counselor, I want to use encouraging words and references to eternal realities to reach the hearts of persons with diseased imagination.*

When Christ ate with publicans and sinners, the priest and rulers made all the capital possible out of his action. But Christ did this that He might speak to erring men the words of encouragement that the priests and rulers were not willing to speak. He would satisfy the inmost longings of the soul, and help the sore-troubled ones, who needed guidance and encouragement. His words were always spoken with wisdom. They always exalted the truth. He presented principles that searched the recesses of the hearts of those who listened. He said that which reached the diseased imagination, and drew the mind out after eternal realities. . . . {15MR 168.4}

1. 5. *I want to find an opportunity to share with the counselee the true force of the will in bringing diseased imagination under control. See item number 6 in section one (from 5T 310) for the inspired source.*
1. 6. *Continuing with the idea number five, I want to advise weak persons to withdraw their thoughts and affections from themselves and to risk something to benefit others, even at the possibility of great loss. I want to encourage them to think of the lives of others as more valuable, because more numerous, than their own. See 2T 534.*
1. 7. *As part of regular treatment of needy people I want to help get them into habits of thoughtful and meditative Bible study. Whatever their problems may be, this is therapy of the highest order.*
1. 8. *I want the counselee to recognize his moral responsibility to use his reason to control his imagination. He should recognize that he may grieve the Holy Spirit by a neglect to restrain himself in this way. See Sec. 1, #12.*
1. 9. *For persons with an over-active imagination, I want to counsel abstinence from "tea, coffee, and flesh meats" and from other stimulants that tend to vivify the imagination. See Sec. 1, #13.*

1. 10. *I want to be aware, as a pastor and Biblical counselor that I do not want to aggravate problems with the imagination by exciting and emotional and sensational appeals. See Sec. 1, #14.*
1. 11. *For all persons, and for persons suffering from sexual addictions in particular, I want to counsel them to avoid the TV, the theater, Youtube, country music, other sensually suggestive songs, reading, etc. These "deprave" the imagination. See Sec. 1, #15, #16.*
1. 12. *I might let a counselee read this study. For him to realize that his imagination must not be allowed to run "riot" may be entirely eye-opening to him. It was to me when I learned it. See Sec. 1, #19.*
1. 13. *I want to counsel woman to give up castle-building and thinking about their own delicacy. Such use of their mind makes real life difficult. It brings on a type of paranoia regarding their not being appreciated. See Sec. 1 #22.*
1. 14. *I may not explain this to the counselee, but I want to give him directions and ideas that will get his mind off of himself. Whether I put him to work or give him an assignment or do something else, I want "useful employment" to be on my side in helping to cure him. See Sec. 1, #24.*
1. 15. *I will want to encourage reading of deeper materials and challenging essays. The counselee's tendency to "magnify" little grievances is often a result of superficial reading (or of TV viewing in our day). Passive experiences (as one has when reading exciting stories or watching drama) unfit the mind "for vigorous thought and research." See Sec. 1, #25.*
1. 16. *I will counsel students and parents of students that constant study diseases the imagination (and, as Solomon says, "is a weariness to the flesh."). Persons involved in too much mental work and too little physical exertion need a change. See Sec. 1, #26*

1. 17.            *For persons in administrative roles I would counsel a healthy dose of optimism regarding the ability of others to handle responsibility. It appears that many good and effective men hindered the work of God through a type of lack-of-confidence-in-others paranoia. See Sec. 1, #27.*
  
1. 18.            *For persons in administrative roles that struggle with combativeness and control issues I would interrogate them regarding their eating and digestive history. See Sec. 1, #28.*
  
1. 19.            *For persons who are physically ill I will recognize (internally) that physical healing is an essential and integral part of helping them in my counseling session. Physical illness leads persons to exaggerate problems, to react hastily.*
  
1. 20.            *For marital problems I would investigate whether one spouse's diseased imagination might be discouraging and weakening the other. I might not discuss this, but I would bear it in mind. See Sec. 1, #29.*
  
1. 21.            *I might explain to a prejudicial paranoid person how he has reacted to unjust prejudice against himself (if this is the case). To repent of his tit-for-tat imagination would be a helpful step in recovering health. See Sec. 1, #30.*
  
1. 22.            *In my mind, as a counselor, I would want to understand the three-step cause-and-effect of first cherishing "disagreeable thoughts", then becoming nervous and irritable, and finally of becoming diseased in the imagination. Find a way to prevent step one would help alleviate step three. See Sec. 1, #31.*
  
1. 23.            *I would want to counsel dissatisfied spouses to "face the reality, come down to the simplicity of real life, and take up life's burdens in their families, as is woman's lot" as*



recommended in Sec. 1, #34.

1. *Prescription – Physical work and exercise and the use of the will; Prognosis – Cure possible*  
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Once I was called to see a young woman with whom I was well acquainted. She was sick and was running down fast. Her mother wished me to pray for her. The mother stood there weeping and saying, "Poor child; she cannot live long." I felt her pulse. I prayed with her, and then addressed her, "My sister, if you get up and dress and go to your usual work in the office, all this invalidism will pass away." "Do you think this would pass away?" she said. "Certainly," I said. "You have nearly smothered the life forces by invalidism." I turned to the mother and told her that her daughter would have died of a diseased imagination if they had not been convinced of their error. She had been educating herself to invalidism. Now this is a very poor school. But I said to her, "Change this order; arise and dress." She was obedient, and is alive today.--Lt 231, 1905. . . . The light given me is that if the sister you mention would brace up and cultivate her taste for wholesome food, all these sinking spells would pass away. She has cultivated her imagination; the enemy has taken advantage of her weakness of body, and her mind is not braced to bear up against the hardships of everyday life. It is good, sanctified mind cure she needs, an increase of faith, and active service for Christ. She needs also the exercise of her muscles in outside practical labor. Physical exercise will be to her one of the greatest blessings of her life. She need not be an invalid, but a wholesome-minded, healthy woman, prepared to act her part nobly and well. All the treatment that may be given to this sister will be of little advantage unless she acts her part. She needs to strengthen muscle and nerve by physical labor. She need not be an invalid, but can do good, earnest labor. Like many others, she has a diseased imagination. But she can overcome and be a healthy woman. I have had this message to give to many, and with the best results.-- Lt 231, 1905. (MM 108,109.) {2MCP 683}

1. *I would want to help persons understand the purpose of the imagination, how God intended it to work, and how Satan has worked to direct it into other paths, as illustrated in the story of "Adelia" in Sec. 1, #35.*

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Other ideas for the vespers talk – Meditate (1Ti 4:15) is "imagine" in Ac 4:25

1Ti 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in

conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

Ac 4:25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

Imagination competes with a knowledge of God

To know God is life eternal – John 17:3

By knowing God we receive all things that pertain to life and godliness – 2Pe 1:2-4

Unrestrained imagination exalts itself against my life and godliness – 2Co 10:4-5

Purpose of the Imagination: To help us grasp illustrations and metaphors. 2MCP 587. As a tool for the mind it is to be directed. It was not intended to give directions or to charge forward on its own. (587)

The imagination, as a tool, prepares us to intervene in unproductive or ill-themed conversations. By thinking on noble themes and heavenly subjects with our imagination, our mind will be lifted to where it can exert an influence. (593).

The imagination brings a time of no more sin and no more suffering near. When used in conjunction with Bible research, the imagination brings God's love to life in our mind. It was created to help us internalize truths. {ST, May 30, 1892 par. 5}

**God watches our use of the imagination**, or its use of us, and intervenes in our spiritual battles when he see us making determined efforts to retain only "pure thoughts." (595)

Imagination and will often unite to make the body sick. From congestion of blood in certain "organs" to improper circulation, from indigestion to degenerative nerves, from languor to death, the power of the imagination to sicken the body exceeds what man would suppose. (5T 310)

A diseased imagination may be treated by taking small risks for the benefit of others. Thoughts that center on self may receive a benign name "introvert", but if that means more than "quiet", if it really means thoughts are often on self, it is a disease of the imagination.

The imagination was created to be an aid to intellectual growth. How ironic that Satan uses the undisciplined imagination to enfeeble the mind. Trifling stories supplant the place of lofty imagery. The reasoning powers lay dormant while the imagination is occupied with a love story. Bible study, and Bible stories,

--- Outline of talk 2

1. For two classes: Gave this morning; will give this evening
  1. Will tell what God has done and is doing
  2. Will tell what Satan has done and is doing
2. The Imagination
  1. God has given us a faculty of imagination
    1.
      - i. To repeat his lessons  
*2MCP 587*
    1. To grasp distant truths
    2. To enable the power of truth by bringing it to our attention  
*Ju 1:5-6; 2Pe 1:12; 1Co 15:1*
      1. Preparing us to have influence  
*2MCP 589*
      2.
        - ii. To serve the will  
*2MCP 587*
      3.
        - iii. To solve problems  
before experiencing them
        1. Genius inventors put things together, take apart, test them
        2. Genius musicians have listened to their compositions
  2. Satan has taken worked to capture the imagination  
*2Co 10:4-5*
    1.
      - i. To repeat his lessons
    1. To grasp old lies
    2. To enable the corrupting power of falsehood
    3.
      - ii. By bringing disease on the imagination
      1. So that it runs ahead of the will
      2. So that the mind is attracted to low and sensual things  
*2MCP 595*
      3. So that feelings take control; congestion of blood, etc.  
*5T 310*
  3. God is suggesting therapy
    1.
      - i. Think on heaven
    2.
      - ii. Risk something, denying self, for the benefit of others  
*2T 534*
    3.
      - iii. Study the scripture – neglect is

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|---|--|
| why so few men of worth                   | CG 507                                 |
| 4. Satan is suggesting diabolical therapy |  |
| 1.  | i. Sensual images for the men          |
| 2.  | ii. Love stories for the ladies        |
| 3.  | iii. Violence and love of mastery for  |
| men                                       |  |
| 4.  | iv. Worry about the future, about      |
| health, for the ladies                    |  |
| 5.  | v. Television and Movies               |
| 6.  | vi. Cherishing the disagreeable        |
|   | ST 6-12-84                             |
| 7.  | vii. Masturbation                      |
| 8.  | viii. Constant brain-work without      |
| regular periods of exercise               |  |
| 5. Symptoms of a Diseased Imagination     |  |
| 1.  | i. Incapability of appreciating the    |
| atonement                                 |  |
| 2.  | ii. Difficulty to retain calm frame of |
| mind in doctrinal discussions             |  |
| 3.  | iii. Dissatisfaction with marriage     |
| 4.  | iv. Some autoimmune disorders          |
| 5.  | v. Hypersensitivity to hurtful words,  |
| correction                                |  |
| 6.  | vi. Lack of confidence in others       |
| (Andrews, Loughborough, Wilcox) PC 384    |  |

WORD VERSION: [The Faculty of Imagination](#)