

# 5 Adaptive Muscles

## #5 Igniting Imagination Worship Resources

### Recommended Scriptures

---

#### Acts 10

Peter's vision that brings the Gentiles into the church.

#### Matthew 17

The Transfiguration of Jesus

#### Exodus 33

Moses sees the backside of God's glory.

#### Ezekiel 37

The dry bones come back to life.

#### Genesis 1

The creation

#### John 6

Jesus feeds the 5000 – scarcity vs. abundance.

#### Revelation 21

The coming of the New Jerusalem

#### Matthew 5

Jesus sets a different imagination for their religious rituals by coming back to “you have heard that it was said... but I say to you...”

#### Acts 2

The Spirit comes at Pentecost; the invitation to dream again.

### Key Themes, Definitions, Theological Ideas

---

Who can teach us what we don't know?

Who can open up a new part of the world to us?

What questions have we been asking that need to be reframed?

What does this disruption make possible?

Disruption – the process of disturbing something that is in need of change

Prophetic vision – naming the injustice we see and imagining the world as it should be

Growth mindset – the belief that there are always possibilities for growth and change

Bounded thinking – our thinking is limited to the options available to us in a particular place and time

# Worship Resources (liturgy/hymns/songs/stories/poems, etc.)

## Hymns

- “God of the Sparrow” UMH 122
- “Be Thou My Vision” UMH 451
- “God the Sculptor” TFWS 2060
- “Holy Spirit Truth Divine” UMH 465
- “For the Beauty of the Earth” UMH 92
- “Hymn of Promise” UMH 707
- “Breathe on me Breath of God” UMH 420

## Being Home, Gunilla Norris, p.14-15

Many times today I will cross over a threshold.  
I hope I will catch a few of those times.  
I need to remember that my life is, in fact,  
a continuous series of thresholds:  
from one moment to the next,  
from one thought to the next,  
from one action to the next.

Help me appreciate how awesome this is.  
How many are the chances to be really alive ...  
to be aware of the enormous dimension  
we live within.

On the threshold the entire past  
and the entire future  
rush to meet one another.

They take hold of each other and laugh.  
They are so happy to discover themselves  
in the awareness of a human creature.  
On the threshold the present breaks all  
boundaries.  
It is a convergence,  
a fellowship with all time and space.  
We find You there.  
And we are found by You there.

Help me cross into the present moment –  
into wonder, into Your face:  
that “now-place,” where we all are,  
unfolding as Your life moment by moment.

Let me live on the threshold as threshold.

## Practices of Igniting Imagination

Lectio Imago - title abstract art for an exercise. Ask participants what they see and perceive.

Exercise asking what the church should look like in 10 years.

As participants to identify what smells/sounds/touches/tastes are present in familiar bible passages.

Pick an arbitrary amount of money. If the church was suddenly given \$\_\_\_\_\_ what would we do with it?

## Sermon Outline

---

### Text - Acts 10:9-48

<sup>9</sup> About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. <sup>10</sup> He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. <sup>11</sup> He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. <sup>12</sup> It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. <sup>13</sup> Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

<sup>14</sup> “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

<sup>15</sup> The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

<sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

<sup>17</sup> While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. <sup>18</sup> They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

<sup>19</sup> While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”

<sup>21</sup> Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

<sup>22</sup> The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” <sup>23</sup> Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. <sup>24</sup> The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. <sup>26</sup> But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”

<sup>27</sup> While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. <sup>28</sup> He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”

<sup>30</sup> Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me <sup>31</sup> and said, ‘Cornelius,

## Sermon Outline (cont.)

---

God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. <sup>32</sup> Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ <sup>33</sup> So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

<sup>34</sup> Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism <sup>35</sup> but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. <sup>36</sup> You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. <sup>37</sup> You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

<sup>39</sup> “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. <sup>41</sup> He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. <sup>43</sup> All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. <sup>45</sup> The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup> “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” <sup>48</sup> So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

### Abstract

This sermon is designed to create space for imagining our church’s next big movement. Too often imagination goes unrecognized or unsupported because it can be overlooked or misunderstood. This message will act as a catalyst for permission-giving and further conversation for seeking the Spirit’s imagination for the next iteration of our church.

## Sermon Outline (cont.)

---

- I. Introduction – The God of the impossible
  - a. There are plenty of significant high points in the New Testament
    - i. Birth of Jesus, transfiguration, feeding of the 5000, Jesus instituting communion, death of Jesus, resurrection of Jesus, Pentecost, the coming of the New Jerusalem
    - ii. However, without Peter’s vision in Acts 10, it is likely none of us are here
- II. The Story
  - a. Peter is on the roof and napping
    - i. Gets a vision of a bunch of unclean animals that is told to take and eat
      - 1. Like a good Jewish man he contends with God on the matter
      - 2. God says, “don’t call anything I have made unclean”
      - 3. As happens with dreams, he reads the symbolism and makes a giant conclusion – the Gentiles are allowed in the faith
    - ii. He is instructed to see Cornelius
      - 1. Experience proves his vision and interpretation
    - iii. He makes the case to the rest of the faithful, the holy spirit comes and validates the movement.
      - 1. The conclusion is that there is no reason why the Gentiles should not be baptized into the faith
- III. The God of the unthinkable
  - a. To this point the movement of Jesus was for Jewish people only
    - i. Jesus himself barely interacts with Gentiles and even though he will affirm their faith, he does not invite them to follow him
    - ii. At Pentecost, it is Jewish people with many languages who receive the tongues of fire
    - iii. It is not until this point that Gentiles are invited
  - b. To say this is a paradigm-shattering event is an understatement
    - i. It is so paradigm-shattering that literally, the rest of the New Testament is trying to navigate the relationship of these new Gentile believers in this reformed Jewish movement
- IV. God had to use the abstract
  - a. This vision is one in the imagination
    - i. God uses the imagination and a dream to communicate something that was outside the boundaries of their imagination
    - ii. The prophets are full of imaginary language and imagery to communicate the coming of God’s blessing or judgment
    - iii. The book of Revelation is a big vision that the writer tries to describe in words that fall short
  - b. In our time artists, poets, comedians, and hip-hop artists are at the forefront of speaking prophetically describing the world as it is, and imagining it as it should be
    - i. Can those who are not expressly committed to the church teach us about who we need to be?
  - c. We know the barrier to imagination

## Sermon Outline (cont.)

---

- 1. Believing in lack of capacity, the nay-sayers, lack of community that cultivates vision, fear, comfortability, counting the cost, and on and on.
          - 1. The church has at times capitulated to all of these things
- V. Conclusion
  - a. But we serve a God with imagination
  - b. So what is our equivalent of the Gentiles' admission into the faith? What seems impossible that only a movement of God can do?
  - c. Let's imagine together
    - i. Can we become more inclusive than we ever thought possible?
    - ii. Can we be something in our community that everyone else says is impossible?
    - iii. Can we be radically committed to life together in a way that seems naïve, impossible, or impractical to today's US individualized economic realities?
    - iv. Can we be repairers of the breach in a way that our city cannot help but notice?
  - d. Maybe these are the wrong categories and someone here gets a dream or a vision? What if we are on the verge of the next big movement and the spirit is just waiting for us to say 'yes'?

## Quotes and Further Study

---

“The church’s central task is an imaginative one . . . . It is a way of seeing—a way of living—that requires a certain loosening of the grip, a willingness to be surprised, confused, amazed by the undreamt-of ways that God chooses to be revealed to us. To find the extraordinary hidden in the ordinary, we are called to participate in God’s own imagination—to see ourselves, our neighbors, and our world through God’s eyes, full of possibility, full of promise, ready to be transformed.”

– **BARBARA BROWN  
TAYLOR**

“So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

– **GENESIS 1:27**

*The idea that we are created in the image of God and we therefore are innately creative as is our Creator God. We too have capacity to create out of nothing!*

“Think Again,” by Adam Grant – the science of letting go of old ways of thinking and making room to stay curious and imagine a new thing.

“A hallmark of wisdom is knowing when it’s time to abandon some of your most treasured tools ---and some of the most cherished parts of your identity.”

– **ADAM GRANT**

## Quotes and Further Study

---

“But unless we are creators, we are not fully alive. What do I mean by creators? Not only artists, whose acts of creation are obvious ones of working with paint or clay or words. Creativity is a way of living life, no matter our vocation or how we earn our living. Creativity is not limited to the arts or having some kind of important career.”

– **MADÉLINE L’ENGLE**

“There is a sweet spot between the known and the unknown where originality lies; the trick is to linger there without panicking.”

– **ED CATMULL**

“Until people can start to see their habitual ways of interpreting a situation, they can’t really step into a new awareness.”

– **PETER SENGE**

“Imagination is not about a flight of fancy... or what is the most outrageous thing I can think up in my brain... but rather staying in touch with the presence of the Spirit... such that there is an inner freedom—an inner freedom from the drives, the addictions, the anxieties, the fears that keep our blinders on, a freedom that is required to be available to the presence of the Holy Spirit.”

– **AMY ODEN**

“When dealing with the future it’s far more important to imagine it than to be right.”

– **ALVIN TOEFFLER**