

## Reimagining the future

Acts 10:11 – 23, John 13:3 – 17

Reimagine: to reinterpret something imaginatively

That's what I'd like us to do a little work on today. Every person has creative abilities. We are made in the image of our creator God. God created out of nothing.

I'm not going to ask you to create out of nothing. Take a moment now to think of something that irks you. What is one thing in our society that just isn't right? Maybe you get mad when you think about it. I invite you to think about that thing for a moment. .

Now please keep that issue in the back of your mind while I talk.

24-7 is celebrating 20 years of youth work. It came about through a guy named Dwayne Major who was a youth pastor in Christchurch. You might remember him in buying Awaroa beach at Abel Tasman. This is Dwayne in a the West Spreydon School swimming pool:



When Dwayne joined the West School Board the school pool needed restoring. They got busy and re-opened the pool five days before the earthquakes. Disaster. But then he and the team raised a further \$550k to reopen again. Re-open they did.

Dwayne also organised for two houses in Spreydon to be bought. One was done up and sold for cost back to a school teacher, who was paying high rent and planning to leave the country because of that.

Dwayne is someone who is able to reimagine future and actually do something about making those imaginings come to fruition.

So some years back Dwayne worried about kids in high school. He'd been a teacher. Instead of just

worrying he began to reimagine what good stuff could happen for those students. He wondered why Christian youth workers couldn't be part of helping the students develop positively and make better choices.

And 24-7 was born. Our Youth Leader - Joshua Allan-Johns, is part of 24-7 in Waimea College.

1. What are the aims of 24-7?
2. What difference do you think the program makes in Waimea College?
3. Tell us one story where you personally have made an impact.



We can be really proud of Josh's involvement in the College. Before Josh, Antonio Sardella worked for 24-7 and before that was Maria Takai. I'm really proud of them all and of us for financially and prayerfully supporting their work.

Dwayne Major's imagination resulted in over 100 churches (nine denominations) working together to supply 180 youth workers to 71 local schools. How cool is that!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.24-7youthwork.nz](http://www.24-7youthwork.nz)

Every good thing that happens in this world occurs when someone pauses and asks what could be different. That ability to reimagine the future and to act on it is God-given.

The Lord made us with a sense of justice and the desire to make a difference when there is injustice. Of course we can allow prejudice to suppress that.

Saint Peter had his inbuilt prejudices; his ideas of how God does and doesn't work. And those things would take some shifting.

It took a dream repeated three times to get Peter to understand the Lord's bigger picture of the Good News for everyone. Even then did he really understand? While he was pondering the vision/dream (whatever it was)? After his dream

the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three<sup>2</sup> men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

Whether he understood or not, he answered the call to go to Cornelius' house.

I had never before noticed in this passage that Peter is called 'Simon' sometimes:

V 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs.

...

Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

Maybe I am reading too much into the text but I wonder if the old Simon is freed to be Peter after he agrees to go to the Gentiles and share the Good News with those outside his comfort zone.

Perhaps he is 'Peter' when he obeys and steps out in obedience? Is he still 'Simon' when he stays with his own group?

Anyway, he acts of what the Lord showed him and the Gospel goes out into the wide world.

Next let's turn to Jesus and him washing his mates' feet. Most of you will know the story very well.



So what is the point of it? Why is it in the Bible?

Why do some churches re-enact the event on Maundy Thursday?

It's too easy make this a symbolic act; something Jesus did so his followers felt accepted. That is a mistake!

Jesus told them:            Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus was turning their world upside down. Only servants had washed feet before this time. But Jesus tells them "No servant is greater than his master" and he lives that out.

To paraphrase his words: From now on everyone is equal. There are no more servants and masters, no more tax-collectors and wage earners, no more sinners and good people, no more heterosexuals and homosexuals and on we could go. The whole of society is to be transformed into one where everyone gets a fair go!

St Paul picks up that theme:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:28

To be sure Paul writes to the churches and he writes about being baptised into Christ and therefore all equal in God's family.

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<sup>2</sup> The number varies depending on the original manuscripts.

However it is very clear that the Lord's plan has always been for all of creation, not just for the Jewish people, not just for Christians, but for the whole world.

When Jesus washes his mates' feet and teaches them about equality for all, he then says "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

You will be blessed if you do them. You will be blessed if you work for equality for everyone.

So, I invite you to recall what you thought about earlier. What would that issue look like if it was resolved positively? You've noticed something is wrong. How will you re-imagine that? What will you do about it?

Are we Peter, with a mind-set of how things have always been? Or are there others like others who could hold us back?

What can we do? You are just one person. I am just one person. Dwayne is just one person. Peter was just one person – one person filled with the Holy Spirit. We too, have the Holy Spirit.

Feeling daunted? That's normal. My challenge has been sheer busyness that has taken me away from who I believe God has called me to be. My re-imagining is about having time to simply to be with people. I could do that on the Camino. I want to do that far more. I wonder what else that will lead me to.

Dwayne's re-imagining led to exciting things. Majors of this world to change things around, right? He could only do those things because of the Spirit and because he gathered other people around him – people who could also re-imagine a better future.

What about your re-imagining? I find it very easy to bemoan the way things are. It's easy to see injustice. However, if we think and pray on those things we might re-imagine positive outcomes.

It's not easy to be the change we want to see in the world. But we certainly can be that change in our immediate surroundings at least.

What resources, people or otherwise, might we need to get things moving?

Remember that issue you noted at the beginning? I invite you to come up with one simple thing you could do that might make an impact on that issue

However small an impact you think that one thing might be; do it anyway.

Pray about it. Gather the resources you need and do it!

Who knows where it might lead!!!