

he hoped they would accept me. They did, and I edited the college newspaper, asking more questions. During a summer job in an engineering office, one of the older men said that I asked so many questions I could probably take over his job.

Questioning has been at the heart of my Christian experience and of yours as well, I hope. If we don't ask such questions as "Why?" or "Why not?" or "What if?" we might never understand the key issue of our spiritual lives, the beginning of the discovery of God's plan for us.

Hosea 10:1-15; Psalm 102; Luke 6:12-26

Saturday, October 1

Hosea 11:1-9 *I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them.* (v.3)

An exciting part of a life of prayer is that you want to know the spiritual adventures of everybody you meet. The frustration is that it is not always possible.

I had heard about Suzanne for years. She had been a top Hollywood model in the 70's, appearing on many magazine covers. She was now happily married to a high-income investor and the mother of two girls. When she was 45 and still the epitome of beauty—perfect smile, perfect skin, blond, tall, thin, and grace-filled—I met her at a reception, where she was surrounded by concentric rings of admiring friends. I was in the outer ring.

As the social event progressed, other parts of her life began to emerge from the small talk. She had been a Hollywood swinger, drug user, and social butterfly. Addiction and depression took control of her, and for several years she did not leave her apartment.

How did this druggie overcome addiction and depression? I was hungry to know how God touched her life. Surely, He must have had a hand in redeeming this woman of extreme beauty and grace.

Unfortunately, I never even penetrated the outer ring of admirers. The phone rang. Her private plane was ready. Maybe I'll get the whole story next time.

Psalms 107:33-43, 108; Acts 22:17-29; Luke 6:27-38

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Sunday, September 25

James 3:1-13 *"They are guided by a very small rudder"* (v.4 NRSV)

At 200 miles per hour, the pilot said, "Pull the stick back into your lap." I did. Two small fins on the tail of the airplane bit the air, the plane rose up, pointed at the sun, made a complete 360-degree loop and resumed level flight in a few seconds.

Another smaller fin (called the tongue) requires virtually no airspeed to make us perform more loops than I could sustain in a lifetime of flight.

"Hypocrite" an associate called me in a violent disagreement years ago. This had the same effect as pulling back the stick to loop the airplane. I looped and have continued to loop for ten years every time I think of that one little movement of an angry man's tongue. I can be described in many ways, but I am not a hypocrite, and I bitterly resented being called one.

I have long since forgiven the associate who uttered those unkind words. But that one little movement of his tongue certainly got me looping. Fortunately, we Christians wear a parachute called prayer to help us escape the loops and crashes caused by the tongues we encounter daily.

Hosea 2:2-14; Psalms 66, 67; Matthew 13:44-52

Monday, September 26

Psalm 89:1-18 *"For our shield belongs to the LORD."* (v.18)

Sometimes God has to demonstrate to others that He places a strong shield around us when we serve Him.

Each week I pray and conduct worship with a small group of prisoners in a glass-walled room at the jail. A guard (locked in a separate glass and steel closet) watches constantly from outside. In addition to being (sometimes violent) criminals, these men are psychotic, neurotic, suicidal, and depressed.

I enter, have fellowship with each man, assure him that God loves him and has a plan for his life and wants him forgiven and renewed. The most violent act I witness is joining hands in prayer or hugging to exchange the peace.

Last week Officer Roberts, a new guard on duty, denied me entrance. "For your own safety," he said. In my rebuttal, I reminded him that when I was in the room I was shielded by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was not buying that. Fortunately, a Lieutenant who knows me came by and approved my entry.

Officer Roberts has been on duty for several weeks and we have become friends. I can sense, however, as he looks at me curiously through two

layers of bullet-proof glass, he is trying to see my shield. He can't, and I know it is frustrating him.

Hosea 2:14-23; Acts 20:17-38; Luke 5:1-11

Tuesday, September 27

Luke 5:12-26 *Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen strange things today."* (v.26)

Years ago, I was one of only a dozen white people invited to a giant banquet honoring Hartford Seminary's Black Ministry Program. I was also the first to race up and embrace Henry Price when he received their top recognition award. I knew Henry when he was a prisoner.

Twelve years before, Henry killed a man while making a drug deal with another addict. He was caught, convicted, and sent to jail for 50 years. Christ touched his life behind bars, he was converted, attended college and seminary, and was allowed to leave prison each day to work as a drug counselor. After 12 years he was given an official pardon.

During the opening invocation, God reminded me of a prayer from 12 years before. The Billy Graham Crusade was just organizing in Hartford, and we had a critical meeting on the top floor of the Holiday Inn. Awaiting an important phone call, I looked out the window, down onto our north end, where drugs, crime, poverty, unemployment, and poor schools were a part of daily life. I asked God to let me and the Crusade be agents of change for this poor section of town. Unbeknown to me, right down below, Henry Price was selling drugs, using drugs, and killing a man.

Just as Luke reported: "We have seen strange things today."

Hosea 4:1-10; Psalms 97, 99, 100; Acts 21:1-14

Wednesday, September 28

Hosea 4:11-19 *"They sacrifice on the tops of the mountains, and make their offerings upon the hills."* (v.13)

Saint Augustine was even more right than perhaps he realized when he wrote about the "still small voice" we each hear inside of us.

A friend of mine visited a recently-discovered, pre-historic tribe of Ethiopian natives, living deep in the jungle and accessible only by helicopter. A missionary discovered them and is now living there, bringing them the gospel.

Shortly after his arrival, a violent thunder and lightning storm destroyed the medicine man's hilltop hut and he vanished. The medicine man was the tribal chief, dispensing healing, food, and justice. He was also their god.

Now, a few of the tribe have begun to worship Jesus as Lord. Imagine how difficult it is for the missionary to transfer allegiance from one god to

another in a jungle culture that has only a crude, limited language, no education, and no history. But the missionary knows about the "still small voice" or he would not be there. He also knows the natives can hear it.

This experience has proven to me that even if you never heard of St. Augustine, were born in New York City or Ethiopia, God speaks in that inaudible voice, anywhere in any language.

Psalms 101, 109; Acts 21:15-26; Luke 5:27-39

Thursday, September 29

Luke 6:1-11 *But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.* (v.11)

In a time of relative world peace, the struggle of good versus evil still rages, perhaps with evil gaining?

Our church has collected clothing, medical supplies, and school-books. We have paid all expenses to ship them to the needy in Africa and the Middle East. That was the easy part.

The hard part was convincing the recipient nations to let our gifts enter their borders. A normal Christian person would think poor nations would welcome free gifts to improve the health and welfare of their hurting citizens. Not so. In fact, nations seem to create barriers and tariff walls to keep gifts out.

Some politicians fear the poor and displaced gaining power, and don't care if they die of diseases our medicine could save them from. Other nations are hopelessly corrupt, and the government or military want to steal our gifts for their own use.

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus has just done what he does best—healing and restoring life. This act of kindness and love wasn't good enough for the leadership. They feared Jesus because his gifts of loaves, fishes, and healing might catapult him and the poor into political or even military power. Then, as now, only the grace of God can overcome plots to destroy.

Hosea 5:8—6:6; Psalm 105:1-22; Acts 21:27-36

Friday, September 30

Acts 21:37—22:16 *"Brother Saul, receive your sight."* (v.12)

One day, while clinging to life in the hospital's intensive care unit, I asked the nurse to give me my glasses, so I could see what the surgeon looked like when he came to examine my incision. "That's the day I decided you would live," the doctor told me later. That was the day my curiosity returned.

As a youngster, I never thought much about having the gift of inquisitiveness, but I was always asking questions. I reported for the high school newspaper, again asking questions. I remember my father's impassioned speech in front of me and the college admissions officer in which he said they had done the best they could with me and that I had a sense of curiosity, and