

August 10, 2020

*“I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God. It changes me.” C.S. Lewis*

*Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved. Matthew 9:17*

We are beginning a new type of podcast from Bishop Curry. Rather than talking about different theological concepts, he is having conversations with various spiritual people. I have been looking forward to these conversations. Be warned: some of these conversations may be uncomfortable, they may challenge some of our beliefs. But they are good conversations to be had. At the conclusion of these conversations, we can agree to disagree or they can cause a slight change in our journey.

Today's podcast participant is Jen Hatmaker. She grew up in the Southern Baptist church and began to take more prominent roles within the Church as an adult. Hatmaker has made a platform for herself as a prominent Christian influencer. She currently has over 800,000 Facebook followers and more than 500,000 followers on Instagram. She's written many books, including the bestselling *For the Love* and *Of Mess and Moxie*, and is the host of the *For the Love* podcast. Much of Jen's audience are Evangelical Christians, and her platform was built on her faith. In 2016, she made public statements critical of Donald Trump. Add to that her public statement that she supports same-sex marriage, and Hatmaker quickly made an enemy of her audience. She received many death threats from her followers, with some sending her damaged and burned books of hers in the mail.

I found this podcast insightful, but one part of the conversation was very fascinating to me just about how we walk with Christ:

Jen Hatmaker tells us that “Jesus’ story about wineskins has been so instructive for me. No matter what, the wine is good. It has been good from generation to generation.

It will last. It is eternal. But the wineskins change. They reached a point where they have stretched as far as they can go. They are brittle. They are unable to expand one more millimeter. We have to reimagine the form; we have to reimagine the container. But the wine remains unchanged. That’s how I imagine a growing faith. I don’t see it as a scary change. I see it as maturity. I see it as asking better questions and hopefully a fuller knowledge of Jesus.” Bishop Curry adds that the Apostles changed over the course of Jesus’ ministry. Jen Hatmaker concludes that an evolution of our faith is expected as a normal natural process. It’s okay to ask questions. We can press really, really hard on the Gospel and it will hold.

How has God transformed you over your lifetime?

A friend of mine sent me a story about the death of The Rt. Rev. Sam B. Hulsey, former bishop of the Diocese of Northwest Texas, and assisting bishop in the Diocese of Fort Worth who died on August 6, 2020. Some of you may have experienced the ministry of Bishop Hulsey. There were two things in the announcement of his death that I wanted to mention.

The first made me smile:

His longtime executive secretary, Carolyn Hearn, wrote, ““When he sent his updated burial instructions to the office after he moved to Fort Worth, he noted that he wished his ashes to be scattered in two places. I sent him a note that I got a chuckle out of that because it was so like him to want to be in two places at once. He didn’t think it was funny.” she wrote.

The second thing (and the thing that is much more serious), Bishop Hulsey wrote “Spirituality is messy and untidy, with few straight paths, but we are new creations every day.”

This March, as the ailments caused by cancer led him to spend more time in bed, his daughter Ashley asked him what he thought about when he lay in his bed. He told her, “I am trying to figure out what I am supposed to be learning.” I suspect that we’ve asked ourselves this question during the pandemic.

God is doing some incredible work during these difficult times through men and women like you and me.

God is constantly providing us with new vessels to facilitate transformation. Do we try to live in the cramped space of our known life or do we stretch our faith and continue to move into new wineskins? We are new creations every day!