



Vision and Viewpoint

Joan Chittister

October 16, 2017

A questioning heart

In a room where people unanimously maintain a conspiracy of silence, one word of truth sounds like a pistol shot. —Czeslaw Milosz

The quality of life as we know it has changed radically in our lifetime. When I was a young woman, the world—my world—was an exercise in answers. We had absolute answers for everything: who was going to heaven and who was not. The number of planets and how they went together. The age of the earth and how it developed. But now things have changed. Now, it seems, life is more an exercise in questions than a catalogue of certainties. It is the unending process of an expanding universe and its expanding knowledge with it. Nothing, it seems, is not now open to question.

When we consider yesterday's answers more important than today's questions, we fail both the past and the future. In the first place, the past was for its own time; in the second place, it is meant to prepare us to face the future.

Never refuse to ask a question however unwelcome the question may be. In the end, it may be the only thing that saves us from our own ignorance. To keep growing, it is imperative to keep asking the forbidden questions.

When we try to stop thought by stopping people from asking forbidden questions, we only prove the paucity of our answers. What is true will hold up to scrutiny—however much untruth is around us. If an idea be of God—like love and goodness and openness and respect and tolerance and compassion—it will thrive in the most godless environment.

—from [*Aspects of the Heart*](#) by Joan Chittister (Twenty-Third Publications)