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The Confessions of St. Augustine

by Carl Trueman

The cultural and intellectual influence of Augustine of Hippo is indisputable. In his own day, he was bishop of a relatively insignificant town in North Africa but his writings impacted not only the world of his day but the world ever since. His *City of God* remains a standard text in the history of political theory; his theological writings set much of the agenda for both Catholicism and, later, Protestantism; and his autobiography, *Confessions*, represented a brilliant fusion of classical culture and Christian theology and, in setting out his life as an internal psychological struggle, was a very early precursor of the modern novel.

To seek the fulfilled life is, of course, to assume that there is such a thing as fulfillment and that it can be sought. For Augustine, that such is the case is evidenced by the innate desire of human beings to transcend themselves. As with all other types of animals, human beings seek food, shelter and to reproduce. Yet there is much more. Central to human psychology for Augustine is love. Love is the desire or will to become one with its object. As men and women make love in order, as it were, to be united with each other in the most intimate way, so this is a general picture for that which drives all of human action. It is not enough for human beings simply to exist or to maintain existence. Nor is it enough for them simply to contemplate their own existence, given that certain other actions, such as eating, are necessary. They strive for other things. Augustine would say that they want to love and be loved.

Augustine saw this in his own life. He had sought to find satisfaction as a child in youthful pranks, in being part of a group, even in petty acts of theft. Later, he had sought satisfaction in training to be an orator. We might today say that that was the functional equivalent of a celebrity: he wanted to be famous and admired. Oratory also appealed because of its aesthetic qualities: he sought satisfaction in beauty. He sought satisfaction in sex. And he sought satisfaction in philosophy, in the quest for truth.

As he looked back on these things from the later perspective of his Christian faith, he was to draw two conclusions. First, he was, as he put it, in love with love. The desire to find fulfillment and satisfaction through something outside of oneself was a good thing and a natural human drive. Each of the above things—for example, the desire for social acceptance, for sexual pleasure, for some kind of transcendent truth—witnessed to the fact that human beings strive to find their fulfillment outside of themselves, in something greater than their own individual existence.

Second, he saw that each of these things actually offered only mercurial and passing satisfaction because

Table of Contents

The *Confessions* of St. Augustine ..... p. 1
True-Life Confessions ..... p. 3
The *Confessions* of St. Augustine: Seminar.... p. 6

they ultimately turned individuals back on themselves. The desire for social acceptance was really a desire to reassure the ego that it was the centre of the universe, a salve for insecurity. Sexual pleasure was ultimately at root a selfish act, a desire for love which terminated in personal pleasure rather than true self-giving to another. The quest for truth was actually more exciting than the discovery of truth because it allowed the individual thinking subject to remain the measure of all things rather than that which is itself measured.

From the perspective of his Christian faith, Augustine saw this as the result of the fact that human beings, made in the image of God, are made to image him. Fourth century Christianity had hammered out the doctrine of the Trinity and saw the very identity of God as being that of a communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit existing in an eternal communion of love. Thus, human beings, made in God's image, are made to love: what Augustine concluded was that human nature now was deeply flawed. The drive to love, to find full meaning and satisfaction through love, remains; but now it is turned inward from loving God to loving self. All roads of love ultimately lead back to the self; and the self cannot provide a truly satisfying object of love. Thus, humans desperately try to find that fulfillment in finite objects ordered to the self. But such is a fools' errand, doomed to frustration.

Such an approach allowed Augustine to make sense not only of his own autobiography but also of the world around him. Were he here today, he would no doubt point to the massive disparity between high levels of material wealth and low levels of satisfaction in Western society as an example of how consumerist materialism is not simply inadequate to meet the human desire of fulfillment but is in fact a function of precisely the human condition, a search for ultimate meaning where no such thing is to be found. On its own terms materialism is failure: the acquisition of material objects is not enough, the need for acquisition is not satisfied by the act of acquisition itself. We keep on needing more and more and more.

He would probably also see the rise of internet pornography as witnessing to both the basic place of sexual satisfaction in human existence but also at the self-absorption of human beings. Pornography is powerful because it does touch on sexuality, a thing tightly connected to the need to love, to unite with another. But it also reduces sex to a commodity, an object; it makes no relational demands upon the individual; it promises satisfaction without strings attached. It sounds like the ideal means for personal satisfaction; and yet seeing one video or owning one picture is not enough; the satisfaction such give is fleeting; and the one addicted to pornography needs to return to it again and again to find fleeting moments of fulfillment.

This brings me to the positive side of Augustine the Christian. First, as he became convinced that the Bible gave an authoritative account of the world and of the phenomena he saw therein, Augustine came to see life in this world as tragic. All human beings die. That means there can be no ultimate satisfaction in this life and thus his thinking about fulfillment and satisfaction in this life must be set within this framework. We must moderate our expectations of life in light of death. Utopianism is to be rejected in all of its forms, whether purportedly Christian or pagan.

Second, Augustine saw love of God as the means of finding transcendent meaning and satisfaction. It could not be found fully in this life; for him, the Christian life was one of inner struggle, of fighting love to self with love to God. Yet it did allow him to set this world in context. A basic distinction in his thought is that between enjoyment and use. God is to be enjoyed; everything else is to be used as instrumental to the enjoyment of God. This has led critics to say that Augustine reduces social relations, and thus other human beings, merely to the level of tools to further his own enjoyment of God. In fact, what Augustine means is that all things have merit to the extent that they can be ordered to God. I love my neighbor, not because in so doing I gain some personal advantage thereby; I love my neighbors because I see that they too are made in the image of God and are thus to be treated as such.

How would Augustine respond to modern atheism? I suspect he would say that, in its humanist form, it represents a case of wanting to have one's cake and eat it. Certainly, in its emphasis on mutual respect and altruism he would see it as an example of that search for satisfaction, for the meaning of life, which correctly sees it as lying outside of the individual's own self-constructed existence. Moreover, he would see it as witnessing to the fact that there is something bigger than the individual to which we all belong.

But I also suspect he would see it as failing to understand that, if there is no God, then there is no moral universe beyond the imagination of the individual. Thus, Augustine would have asked how the atheist Bertrand Russell could justify his indignation over the use and proliferation of nuclear arms. In a universe that is simply matter and chance, what place, then, for indignation? All metanarratives become myths whereby one group or individual seeks to impose its will over another.

He would challenge the atheist to be a true atheist, to embrace the vision of Nietzsche's Madman who

rebukes the polite atheists in the town square for killing God but wanting the universe to remain a polite and orderly place in accordance with their own tastes. If God is dead, satisfaction is not only fleeting; it really lacks any definition beyond that which you choose to give to it. That such a vision is embraced by so few would be evidence to Augustine that human beings know there is more to it than that.

Rev. Dr. Carl Trueman is Paul Woolley Professor of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary. This is reprinted with permission from Reformation21 at www.reformation21.org.The original title is, "Augustine vs. Russell" and was the opening statement given by Dr. Trueman at Saints and Skeptics*, a staged debate between Aurelius Augustine and Bertrand Russell.*

True-Life Confessions: The Precedent-Setting Revelations of Augustine's Restless Heart

by Herbert Jacobsen

Our hearts are restless until they find their peace in you.

Perhaps Augustine is best-known for these words from his *Confessions,* but they are far from being the only meaningful or intriguing words in this precedent-setting autobiography.

Though written nearly 1,600 years ago, it still remains one of the most widely read religious works in the Western world. It offers keen insights into Augustine's life and a sharp understanding of the human heart. Western theology and culture owe a great deal to this unique autobiography.

Augustine may have intended his *Confessions* as a consecration of himself for his work in the church. He wrote it between 397 and 401 A.D., shortly after being named bishop of Hippo. Repeatedly he reminds himself that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

A confession, by nature, brings an indictment against oneself before God. Appropriately, Augustine's *Confessions* takes the form of a prayer. Thus it is not merely a recital of his life story, nor does he melodramatically embellish the good in his life or deemphasize the evil. When we confess in prayer to God, who knows us better than we know ourselves, we are honest. And Augustine is painstakingly honest as he describes the profundities of the human heart. Sensitive readers will find, in his confession, a confession of their own.

The long prayer of St. Augustine consists of 13 books, or chapters, which may be divided into three major sections. Books 1–9 tell the story of Augustine's life up to his conversion and just afterward. Book 10 is a philosophical discussion of time and memory. Books 11–13 turn to the early verses of Genesis to explore the nature of God and creation and what it means to be human. Throughout each section, Augustine weaves together three major themes: the restlessness of human beings; the mystery of God; and human affection.

The Restless Heart

In the most-famous quotation from the *Confessions,* Augustine states his grand themes:

> And man wants to praise you, man who is only a small portion of what you have created and who goes about carrying with him his own mortality, the evidence of his own sin and evidence that you resist the proud....Yet still man, this small portion of creation, wants to praise you. You stimulate him to take pleasure in praising you, because you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.

Augustine begins his own story in the context of the restlessness endemic to human experience. Although he cannot relate from memory anything about his infancy, he knows these are important years. He observes the

behavior of other infants, assuming that his own experience was similar. Like the psalmist, he describes himself as "conceived in iniquity," and in need of God's mercy. Only custom and reason prevent adults from holding restless infants accountable for their self-centeredness, tempers, and jealousies. At the earliest ages, human beings crave what they cannot provide for themselves.

From his early educational experiences, Augustine discovers another aspect of restlessness, the false joy of receiving unearned awards. Like many students, he says he would not study unless driven to it. Reading, writing, and arithmetic he found boring. The only educational ventures he pursued with enthusiasm were those from which he could derive pleasure without having to work for it. He was swept away by vanity, lost in the darkness of his affections.

An even deeper restlessness emerges in Augustine's 16th year. He and some friends rob pears from a pear tree; the theft lives in the bishop's mind years later as if it had happened just the day before. For Augustine, the theft opens a window into the soul. Why did he steal? Why does anyone steal? As Augustine examines the common justifications for such an act, he realizes that they do not apply. He is not starving; he is not even hungry; and the food is not particularly tasty. He does note that, without the approval of his companions, he probably would not have done it. So why did he?

Eventually Augustine decides that his theft was a perverse imitation of God. It was not the pears he desired, but, in an arrogant spirit of truncated liberty, he tried to produce a darkened image of omnipotence.

The next decade of his life witnessed a flurry of frustrated affections, as he rehearses them in the *Confessions*. He sought the love of a woman, of the theater, of philosophy, and of a rational religion. It was a cauldron of at least four unholy loves, about which he tersely explains: "I was not yet in love, but I loved the idea of love."

Augustine gives us little historical information about the first unholy love, his relationship with his concubine. We do not even know her name. We do know they had a son, Adeodatus, and that they were together for several years. We also know that Augustine did not find this love satisfactory. When it came time to marry, he sent her away, and became engaged to another woman, one more suitable for his social standing. But before he could marry, Augustine was required to demonstrate his chastity for two years. He even failed at this. "[S]ince I was not so much a lover of marriage as a slave to lust, I found another woman for myself—not, of course, as a wife." How does one live with oneself when intentionality is so weak?

This is a deep and persistent restlessness. Even years later, the bishop is still wrestling with his sexuality. While he is able to escape the temptation to be with a woman, he is unable to escape its influence in his mind and body. In addition, he learns that continence requires not only abstinence, but also appropriate devotion to one's neighbor.

Augustine's love of the theater, another in his cauldron of shameful loves, seems short-lived. At first, he loved to see the misery of others. But the inconsistency of rejoicing in others' misfortunes, which he would detest if they were his own, eventually drove him away. The theater was a life of fantasy which threatened to usurp the enjoyment of real life.

In what he calls "the lust of the mind," Augustine began to search for truth in reason. This led him to his third and fourth unholy loves—the fables of the Manichaeans and the skepticism of some philosophers. In all of these lusts, as Augustine recalls it, he despised the authority of the church and the teaching of Scripture.

Yet, by the grace of God, Augustine heard the gospel. He approached the truth in stages. First he learned to read the Old Testament symbolically rather than literally. Then he learned to think of evil as a privation of good rather than a substance in its own right. Finally, he learned, from Ambrose and others, the limitations of human reason. Faith and authority, he found, are necessary for true understanding.

The Mystery of God

The majestic mystery of God, the second grand theme in the *Confessions*, nearly gets lost in the dramatic exposition of human restlessness. But it is only against the backdrop of this mystery that the restlessness makes sense.

Augustine speaks of his restless lifestyle in terms of life and death:

> The arrogance of pride, the pleasure of lust, and the poison of curiosity are movements of a soul that is dead—not dead in the sense that it is motionless, but dead by forsaking the fountain of life and so engrossed in this transitory world and conformed to it.

The Word of God, and God himself, is this fountain of life for Augustine. "Seek the Lord, and your soul shall live, so that the earth may bring forth the living soul. Be not conformed to the world. Restrain yourself from it. The soul's life is in avoiding those things which are

death to seek." It is God who made us and does not forget us, even though we wander far from him. It is God who redeems us and stills the heart.

"Who is this God?" and "How do I find him?" are legitimate questions for the troubled soul. In Book I, Augustine has already inquired, "Do I call upon God to know him or must I know him to call upon him?" "How do I call upon him?" "What is my God?"

The initial answers Augustine provides reflect a biblical understanding of God. He writes:

> O highest and best, most powerful, most all-powerful, most merciful and most just, most deeply hidden and most nearly present, most beautiful and most strong, constant yet incomprehensible, changeless yet changing all things, never new, never old, making all things new, bringing the proud to decay and they know it not: always acting and always at rest, still gathering yet never wanting; upholding, filling and protecting, creating, nourishing, and bringing to perfection; seeking, although in need of nothing....

Note the pairing of these attributes. Mercy and justice are linked, not in the sense that God is sometimes merciful and sometimes just, but fully both. Similarly, God is fully hidden while at the same time fully present, beautiful and strong, and so forth. God is described in paradox, mystery. And thus those beings that are made in his image might well be paradoxes to themselves as well. Against such a majesty as the divine being, it is no wonder that man is a riddle to himself. He cannot reduce his nature to any one thing, neither to the senses, nor to reason, nor even to himself. He is to some extent mystery to himself just as God is mystery to him.

Yet there is a crucial distinction: God's being is in himself; man's being is in God. Foolishly, man tries to be like God and find rest in himself. He cannot. But even his attempted flights from God are under God's sovereignty. And here the mystery of God seems to compound itself.

God shows his strength in weakness; he brings salvation through the death of his Son; he resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble; he allows us the foolishness of our ways.

In his confession, Augustine prays to God as "the controller and creator of all things in nature, though of sin only the controller." Three very important insights are drawn from this claim. First, because God is good, his creation is good. The Manichaean notion of physical reality as evil must be rejected. Second, God is omnipotent and holy, so he chastens sinful mankind. Our experiences of lust do not go unnoticed in the world created by and for God. Third, God is able to use our own sinful ways to draw us to himself. "Inside me your good was working on me to make me restless until you should become clear and certain to my inward sight."

Augustine has discovered the majesty and mystery of God as the condition for interpreting human restlessness. We will either use the restlessness to love God or to avoid God by vainly worshiping and serving something else.

The Secret Affections

The third great theme we find here is affection. As Peter Brown has put it, "*The Confessions* are, quite succinctly, the story of Augustine's 'heart,' or of his 'feelings' his affectus."

The human soul, in all its mystery, experiences restlessness because it is alienated from the ground of its being, God. Thus God, in his affection for us, calls us to abandon our wanderings, to stop pursuing other affections, to give up our hope in ourselves, and find peace in him.

What assurance do we have that abandoning hope in ourselves will give us the peace we desire? "Experience," some would say. "Others have tried this and found peace." Augustine could argue this way, if he chose to. His conversion experience is marvelously recorded for us—he heard a voice in a garden urging him to read the Bible and he opened to Romans 13:14, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in concupiscence." Immediately, he relates, his heart was filled with confidence. In a profound sense, the restlessness stopped, at least temporarily.

But it is not on this experience that Augustine grounds his assurance of salvation. In fact, he reports that his restlessness resumed after his conversion. Salvation needs grounding in God. Grounding anywhere else, even in the life of the redeemed person, is unreliable. For this reason, Augustine's post-conversion struggles are most significant.

Augustine keeps pointing the reader to God himself. "We have this promise; no one can alter or distort it: 'If God be for us, who can be against us?'" In light of the love of God, the reader is prepared to appreciate Augustine's emphasis on human love: "Things are moved by their own weights and go into their proper places.... My weight is my love; wherever I am carried, it is my love that carries me there."

To find rest, one must ground one's affections in God. Augustine writes, "Blessed is the man who loves you, who loves his friend in you, and his enemy because of you. He alone loses no one dear to him, for they are all dear to him in one who is not lost." In his early life, Augustine mourned deeply over the death of a friend. In the years immediately following his conversion, as though love itself were being tested, Augustine would grieve at the deaths of several friends, his son, and his mother. Now, however, alongside the sorrow was beatitude. Commenting on his mother's death, he says, "I found solace in weeping for her and for myself, on her behalf and on my own. So I allowed the tears...to fall,...making them a pillow for my heart, and my heart rested on them, for only your ears could hear my lament...." Peace had come.

In his *Confessions,* Augustine wants to stimulate the reader's affections toward God. Thus the book is less of an autobiography and more of a theological anthropology. Like the Apostle Paul, he can testify, "Our flesh had no rest, without us were fightings, within us were fears." His restlessness acts somewhat as a schoolmaster, or compass, to steer him away from the love of himself and other people and objects of creation. It directs him toward faith in God, the Creator. This redirection is not a matter of intellectual sophistication for Augustine, or for anyone, but of trust and humility before God, who gives grace even to those who try to flee from him.

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The Confesssions of St. Augustine: A 19-week Sunday Morning Seminar

by Terry Schlossberg

How the Seminar Was Organized

In the fall of 2012, l facilitated a seminar on Augustine's *Confessions* on Sunday mornings as one of the adult nurture classes offered at The National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. Fifteen adult church members signed up and all but one stayed with the demands of the study and discussion approach for the 19 class periods. The first two classes were devoted to introductory lectures by Dr. James Goodloe of the Foundation for Reformed Theology in Richmond, VA on the life and times of Augustine. One of Dr. Goodloe's lectures is available on Vimeo at http://vimeo.com/50793952. The final two sessions included time for class participants to make their own confessions. (The sessions have been reformatted here to still be 19 class periods.)

Our seminar used four resources. The major resource was the version of the *Confessions* translated and annotated by Maria Boulding [In *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21 Century*, vol. 1, New York: New City Press, 1997, 416 pp.] Because of the limitations of the half-year Sunday morning format, we tackled only the first nine chapters (which Augustine calls "books") comprising his testimony. In addition, we used the Bible and Reformation confessions to consider the source and application of Augustine's thought.

Because many of the characters and some of the vocabulary were unfamiliar to lay scholars, participants were encouraged to keep a glossary of people and terms for their own reference.

The sets of questions that are included here were used as our framework. My aim was to let Augustine do the teaching. I used one set of questions to help participants grasp the data that Augustine provides in each "book." I sampled the questions in class to help all get to the same starting place for our discussion. Thus, discussion began with the "data" gathering questions and those identified as "Discussion Questions" became interspersed. Participants' own questions were readily entertained, and several participants took a Sunday and led the discussion.

The class was called "seminar" to denote the expectation that participants would not hear lectures but instead would study and participate in discussion of the

book. Our purpose was to interact with Augustine, as many millions of believers had done before us, to travel his spiritual pilgrim's progress with him, and let him raise questions for us to consider together and personally.

The *Confessions* is written in the form of a prayer. Thus, we began each class with the reading of one of Augustine's prayers selected and prayed by a class member. We ended our time together with an opportunity for each participant voluntarily to make his or her confession, noting any comparisons they found with Augustine's experience. If time had allowed, I would have added a class session on Prayer, using Augustine's teaching on Prayer that begins the set of questions below, and prayers contained in the *Confessions*. Dr. Goodloe provided us with a list of some specific prayers taken from the book. I have used that to outline a proposed class session on Prayer and included it here.

Introduction

Augustine is arguably the most notable of the post-New Testament church fathers. After his conversion to Christianity, which he recounts in these *Confessions* of his, he became Bishop of Hippo, located in North Africa. He is one of the thinkers following the New Testament writers who continued to influence the direction of the Christian Church in its theology, spirituality, and practices. If you learn about only one ancient church father, he should be the one, and if you learn something about Augustine, your learning should begin with his *Confessions*.

The opening paragraph of his *Confessions* contains what probably is his most famous and oft-quoted statement of human yearning for God. The paragraph also gives us immediately the sense of his entire book: its quality of prayer and the way in which Scripture is so woven into its warp and woof that ordinary readers are hard-pressed to know where quotations from Scripture end and Augustine's own thoughts begin. Here it is:

> *GREAT art Thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is Thy power, and of Thy wisdom there is no end. And man, being a part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee, man, who bears about with him his mortality, the witness of his sin, even the witness that Thou "resistest the proud," —yet man, this part of Thy creation, desires to praise Thee. Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.*(Collier edition translation.)

Augustine is widely regarded as the most important Christian writer in the western world and his *Confessions* as the greatest of his works. The book was an immediate success, hand-copied and circulated widely. English Bishop G. Roger Huddleston wrote in the twentieth century that the *Confessions* acquired in Augustine's lifetime "the place it still holds as the most famous of Christian spiritual writings outside the New Testament."

Augustine's influence did not fade with the Reformation. You cannot read the works of Calvin and Luther without hearing in them the echoes of Augustine and finding references and quotations from his works.

The *Confessions* is a salvation story much more than an intellectual exercise. The *Confessions* is autobiographical but only in a limited sense. Augustine wants his readers to know the most important thing that ever happened to him and how difficult it was for him to find what he was searching for. This is a personal and intimate account of his desire both to run from and run to God. He says in his *Confessions* that traveling is not only by foot or by coach; we also travel by our hearts. The book challenges us to examine our own hearts on the matter of where we are running.

> *One might ask whether we are to pray by words or deeds, and what need there is for prayer, if God already knows what is needful for us.*
>
> *But it is because the act of prayer clarifies and purges our heart, and makes it more capable of receiving the divine gifts that are poured out for us in the spirit. God does not give heed to the ambitiousness of our prayers, because he is always ready to give us his light, not a visible light but an intellectual and spiritual one:*
>
> > *but we are not always ready to receive it when we turn aside and down to other things out of a desire for temporal things.*
>
> *For in prayer there occurs a turning of the heart to he who is always ready to give if we will but take what he gives:*
>
> > *and in that turning is the purification of the inner eye when the things we crave in the temporal world are shut out.*
>
> *So that the vision of the human heart can bear the pure light that shines divinely without setting or wavering,*
>
> > *and not only bear it, but abide in it; not only without difficulty, but even with unspeakable joy, with which the blessed life is truly and genuinely brought to fulfillment.*
>
> (Augustine, "On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount")

Session 1
Maria Boulding's Introduction

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. What do you learn about the period in which Augustine lived?

2. What do you learn about Augustine's life? Events? Development of the man?

3. What do you learn about the *Confessions*?

4. What do you learn about Boulding's translation?

Introduction: Discussion Questions

1. Read the first paragraph on page 36: Augustine's own words about his book. What reason does Augustine give for writing the *Confessions*? Why is the book not strictly an autobiography?

2. What are the three meanings of the word "confession" that Augustine uses?

3. What do you learn from the introduction about the place and period in which Augustine lived that especially pertain to him?

4. What do you learn about Augustine's life from Boulding's description? How does he describe himself? What are the two journeys? What New Testament writer did he find most helpful?

5. What do you learn about the *Confessions*?

6. What do you learn about Boulding's translation and the organization of the book?

7. What themes emerge in your reading of the introduction that give hints of what to anticipate in your reading of the *Confessions*?

Sessions 2-3
Book I: Infancy and Boyhood

Augustine writes of his two journeys. We actually might see it as three journeys: his physical journey, his intellectual journey, and his journey of the soul or his spiritual journey.

> *Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods.* (Paul to the Galatians, Chapt. 4:8.)

> *You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.* (*Confessions*, Book I, Chapt. 1, para. 1, p. 39.)

> *Not with our feet or by traversing great distances do we journey away from you or find our way back.* (*Confessions*, Book I, Chapt. 18, para. 28, p. 58.)

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How does Augustine describe God in this book? (pp. 39-42)

2. How does he relate his own creation to the Creation account? (p. 43)

3. How does Augustine deduce what he was like as a baby? (pp. 43-44)

4. What does Augustine mean when he says, "My infancy has been so long dead now, whereas I am alive"? (p. 44)

5. What is Augustine's evaluation of a baby's "innocence"? (p. 46)

6. How does he describe learning to speak? What are his thoughts on time and memory here? (p. 47)

7. What was his early education like? (pp. 48-49)

8. Under what circumstances did Augustine want to be baptized as a Christian? (pp. 50-51) Why did his mother defer his wish?

9. What leads Augustine to characterize himself as "being a great sinner for such a tiny boy"? (p. 52)

10. What did he consider his worst sin? (See pages 60-61)

11. How does Book I express the "Everyman" idea that Boulding raises in her introduction?

Book I: Discussion Questions

Yet these humans, due part of your creation as they are, still do long to praise you. You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you. (I.1.1., page 39)

1. Read Question 1 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism and compare to Augustine's thought here. How does Augustine relate this to memory? (pp 45, 47)

2. "What are you, then, my God?" (p. 41) How does Augustine describe God?

3. How does he understand the distinction between God and created beings?

4. Read Westminster Larger Catechism's description of God: Q 7. How do they compare?

5. What Scriptures do you think of (or find) that support the distinction that Augustine makes between Creator and creature (consider, for example, Psalm 139:1-18; John 4:24; 1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24,25; Psalm 90:2; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Romans 11:33; Jeremiah 23:24)?

<u>Infancy and Early Education: pp. 43-60.</u>

6. From what perspective does Augustine describe his infancy?

7. How is his description of infancy and "learning to speak" an expression of "Everyman"?

8. What does he conclude about human nature?

9. Does his conclusion have a basis in Scripture? In Reformed documents? Compare, for examples the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q. 10, 16, 18, 19, and the Heidelberg Catechism, Q. 5 – 8.

10. What do you learn about Augustine's view of sin in Book I? What is his threefold concept? (p. 50) What does Augustine see as resolution for sin?

11. Consider his comments on "outgrowing" sins; compare the section on infancy with the later section on boyhood. What is his view of "innocence"?

12. How did his early education help or hinder the development of his character and his relationship to God?

13. What conflict did Augustine discover in his search for "the good life"?

Sessions 4-5
Book II: Adolescence

Augustine is awakening to sexual sin. "A weak doctrine of sin permits a weak doctrine of forgiveness." (Jim Goodloe, on Augustine's *Confessions*.)

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How old is Augustine at the time of this book? (p. 64)

2. Where does Augustine travel in this book? What are the main events associated with each location?

3. What does he say was his delight? What ruined his delight? (p. 62)

4. What does he think might have alleviated his youthful distress? (p. 63)

5. Why is he critical of his father's efforts to provide for a good education for him? (p. 65)

6. How does God speak to him in this book?

7. How significant is his sexual sin in this book?

8. What is the Pear Tree episode? What is its importance? (p. 67)

9. What does Augustine see as the danger in things perceived to be beautiful in God's creation?

10. What does Augustine mean when he uses the word "fornication"? (p. 71)

11. With whom is he comparing himself on page 71? What is the comparison?

12. What is his view of sin and forgiveness, expressed on page 72?

13. What contribution did friends make to his sin? (pp. 72-73)

14. Where does the story of the Prodigal Son come from and what is the comparison that Augustine makes between that story and himself? (Luke 15:11-32)

15. What biblical passages are especially pertinent to Augustine's condition in this book?

16. How would you summarize Augustine's emphasis in this book in two or three sentences?

Book II: Discussion Questions

Pages 62 – 67

1. Augustine primarily uses two of what the Westminster Confession calls "actual" sins in this book to contemplate sin and its effect on the lives of human beings and on their relationship with God. He contemplates—or studies—sin from a variety of angles. What are they? How significant are they? Why do you think there is such disparity between his parents and himself on the matter? Why do you think he feels so strongly about this?

Pages 67 – 74 The Pear Tree Episode

2. How does Augustine use this experience of his youth to understand the nature of sin and its effect on him?

3. Why is it not simply "adolescent rebellion"?

4. What is sin?

5. What causes us to sin?

6. What are the biblical allusions he uses and how apt are they?

7. How does the beautiful become a means to sin?

8. How does Augustine see God at work in our dealing with sin?

9. How does Augustine see friends and family at work in dealing with sin?

10. What is the nature of Augustine's suffering in this book?

11. How does Augustine's account avoid lingering in the depths of despair?

12. Why do you think Augustine uses the Prodigal story to conclude this book? How does it contribute to the idea that this chapter is about Everyman's spiritual journey?

13. Read the definition of sin in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 14, and following), and

Heidelberg Catechism (Q. 2 – Q. 8, and following). How do they compare with Augustine's understanding of sin?

Sessions 6-7
Book III: Student Years at Carthage

Augustine searches for God in the wrong places. This book describes the contrast between his academic and social success and his misery. He sets a course toward discovery of wisdom ("for the immortality that wisdom seemed to promise") and for Truth ("O Truth, Truth, how the deepest and innermost marrow of my mind ached for you").

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. "So I arrived at Carthage...." How old was Augustine? (p. 79) What did he find in Carthage and what was his response to what he found?

2. How does he describe his primary feelings during this time?

3. He writes: "...everyone aspires to be happy" (p. 76) and "I loved feeling sad." (p. 77). How does he explain this conflict of emotions? What danger does he say lies in "compassion"?

4. What does he mean by "impious curiosity"? (p. 78)

5. How does he describe his relationship to God in this book?

6. Does he do well in school? What was his opinion of the "law"? (p. 78)

7. Who are the "wreckers"? (p. 78) What is Augustine's relationship to them?

8. How did he come on Cicero's *Hortensius*? (p. 79) What was its effect on him? What was he searching for?

9. At what did he want to excel? What was his reservation about the book? (p. 79)

10. Where is his father? (p. 79)

11. He quotes Col. 2:8-9. Is that a positive or negative critique of Cicero? (p. 79)

12. What was the nature of his attitude toward Scripture at this time? (p. 80)

13. What does he say he was "aching for"? (p. 81)

14. Why did Augustine become a Manichean? What was the attraction of their beliefs? What are the three Manichee challenges to Christianity in this book? What were the Manichean criticisms of the Old Testament?

15. What does Augustine mean by "the food we dream..."? (p. 82)

16. Where was God? (p. 82)

17. What does he say led him into hell? (p. 83)

18. In her note on page 83, Boulding says Augustine repeats four times in quick succession that "I did not know." What does he say he did not know when he became a Manichean? (pp. 83-84)

19. What is the distinction Augustine makes between custom and God's principles in his discussion of sin? (pp. 84-85)

20. What does he say are the chief kinds of sin? (p. 87) What is the effect of sin on God? On the person?

21. What principle of biblical interpretation does Augustine express here? (p. 85) What is the difference between divine justice and relative justice?

22. What does Augustine say are motives behind crimes against persons? (p. 86) Who is hurt most by our sin? (p. 87)

23. How do we overcome evil? (p. 87)

24. What is Monica's relationship with Augustine in Carthage? What was her vision? (pp. 89-91)

Book III: Discussion Questions

1. Contrast the outer and inner Augustine during this time. Contrast his behavior and his aspirations. What was he looking for? Where was he looking? What was he finding? What was he missing that he later realized?

2. What was Cicero's contribution to Augustine's search?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2. How does this chapter express who Augustine was in this period of this life and what he became?

4. How is his search like that of Everyman? How do you identify with his search? How close to the mark does Augustine get in Book III?

5. How is he like the Prodigal Son in this book?

6. How does the first paragraph of Book I come to bear on this time of Augustine's life? (I.1, page 39)

7. What does Augustine say he did not know at this time? What are the contrasts between what he thought then and what he later came to understand?

8. In what ways did the Manichees help or hinder his search?

9. What are your thoughts on what Augustine concludes about biblical interpretation in this book?

10. How would you express a Reformed view of biblical interpretation? (Consider, for example, The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, page 122.)

11. What gives Augustine hope?

Supplementary Reading: *Richard Cory* by Edwin Arlington Robinson.

12. What insight does the poem offer to the notion that Augustine was an expression of "Everyman" in this book?

Sessions 8-9
Book IV: Augustine the Manichee

Augustine's Early Adulthood: His life as a Manichee

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How old is Augustine in Book IV? (p. 92)

2. What was he doing during this period and what was his objective? (p. 93)

3. What is his relationship to the Manichees? (p. 92) What attracted him to them?

4. How did he hope to help himself? (p. 92)

5. What has developed in his sexual relationships in Book IV? (p. 92) What does he see as a primary difference between marriage for family and marriage to satisfy carnal desire? How would you compare these to motives for marrying in our time and culture?

6. He encounters both sorcery and astrology as a Manichean. What is his response to both? (pp. 93-95)

7. The chronology of this book begins in Thagaste and the account of the death of his friend. (pp. 96-101) What was Augustine's contribution to this friendship? Was it for good or ill?

8. What was the effect of his friend's death on Augustine?

9. Why is weeping a relief?

10. How does he relate this to God?

11. Why did he leave Thagaste for Carthage? (p. 100)

12. In the section on "transience of created things" (pp. 101-105) he reflects on the changing and the unchanging realities. What is the significance of the comparison he makes between syllables of speech and other parts of creation? Do you find it a helpful comparison?

13. How does he understand a whole formed from parts and apply it to created beings?

14. What comparison does he make between the beauty of creation and the beauty of God?

15. How does that which is subject to continual change become unchanging?

16. What does he mean when he says, "You are seeking a happy life in the realm of death, and it will not be found there? (p. 104)

17. Compare IV. 19 to the Apostles' Creed.

18. Why do we love what we would not want to emulate? (p. 106)

19. What is beauty? (pp. 105-109)

20. Augustine asks "What is it that entices and attracts us in the things we love?" He contemplates the reputation of a Roman orator and its effect on him. What error does he come to see?

21. What does he conclude about the mind and Truth?

22. What blocked him in his search for God?

23. What was Augustine's mistake concerning the Ten Categories? (pp. 109-111) What about the intellect did he fail to understand?

Book IV: Discussion Questions

1. These are the nine years of Augustine living as a Manichean. What are the evidences of Manichaeanism in his behavior and thinking? What leaves him with the restlessness that he describes in I.i.i., p. 36?

2. This book alludes to the Prodigal. How does Augustine see himself as the prodigal in this book? Where do you find evidence of the Father at work in his life in this book?

3. Book IV deals with marriage, sexuality, and friendship. How would you bring together Augustine's experiences and thinking on these matters?

4. Augustine contemplates his grief for a friend. He will deal with the subject again on the death of Monica. Compare his thoughts on death and grieving with 1 Thess. 4:13-15.

5. Augustine discusses the lure of fame in Book IV. What is his take on it? Are there passages of Scripture that you think apply? How would you apply or contrast his thinking on this to our own time?

Sessions 10-11
Book V: Faustus to Carthage, Augustine to Rome and Milan

Augustine travels from Faustus to Ambrose (physically and intellectually).

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How old is Augustine in Book V? (p. 115)

2. Augustine begins this book with a prayer. (pp. 113-114) What does he say is the creation's relationship to

God? What is the relationship between God and the wicked?

3. Who is Faustus? (p. 115) What was Augustine seeking from Faustus? What did he find? (pp. 119-20)

4. How does Augustine compare the philosophers with Mani? (pp. 117-119) What is Augustine discovering about the relationship between science and faith in this book? Another tree episode occurs in Book V (p. 117). What is the point of Augustine's example?

5. What are Augustine's conclusions about science and faith? About teacher and student? (or leader and follower?)

6. What does Augustine conclude about the importance of eloquence? (p. 119)

7. What are the two reasons that prompt Augustine's move to Rome? (p. 122)

8. What is Monica's response to Augustine's decision to go to Rome? How does Augustine explain this event spiritually? (pp. 123-125)

9. What are the main events of Augustine's time in Rome? (pp. 125-130)

10. Who were the "Skeptics of the New Academy? (p. 127 and footnote). What was their influence on Augustine?

11. Why does he move to Milan? (pp. 129-130)

12. What is the impact of his contact with Ambrose in Milan? (pp. 130-133)

13. What is Augustine's assessment of and conclusion about Manichaeanism in this book?

Book V: Discussion Questions

1. Augustine's opening prayer addresses the relationship between creation and Creator. It also deals with "good and evil" in Augustine's poetic discussion of a right relationship with God and the wicked's relationship with God. What understanding of God does the prayer express? Compare 2 Chronicles 7:14 with Augustine's prayer.

2. We in our age, like many others before us, are talking about how Scripture is to be interpreted and applied. Augustine had many of the same concerns we have. Many assert that the Bible is neither a book of science nor history. What is Augustine discovering about the relationship between science, history, and faith in this book? What are his conclusions?

3. What application does he make to teacher and student? (or leader and follower?) How do you respond to his conclusions?

4. What view of good and evil does Augustine develop in this book? Of Scripture? Of the Incarnation of Christ?

5. How did Augustine's belief in Manichean dualism compromise his acceptance of responsibility for his sins? What would the Christian response be to this? Cf. Romans 3 and 1 John 1:8-9.

6. In discussing his mother's deep sorrow, Augustine writes, "these cries of pain revealed what there was left of Eve in her." What does he mean?

Sessions 12-13
Book VI: Milan--Progress, Friends, Perplexities

Augustine's changed view of Scripture and insights into happiness.

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How old is Augustine in this book? (p. 150)

2. Book VI begins with Monica's arrival in Milan and her experience there. (pp. 134-137) Describe Monica's journey. How did she find Augustine when she arrived? How did her faith develop in Milan? What role did Ambrose play?

3. What is Augustine's relationship with Ambrose? (pp. 137-141) What does Augustine learn from Ambrose that moves his journey forward toward truth?

4. What importance does Augustine ascribe to Scripture? Why does he say we need it? (pp. 141-142)

5. Who is Alypius? (144-150) How does the description of him give insight into Augustine's teaching career? What is Alypius's journey of faith? What is his influence on Augustine's journey of faith?

6. Who is Nebridius? (p. 150) What role does he play in Augustine's journey?

7. Sum up Augustine's spiritual state on pp. 150-152.

8. What differences does Augustine have with Alypius on marriage and sexuality? (pp. 152-154)

9. What plan develops for Augustine to marry? What is Monica's experience in this plan? (p. 154)

10. Why did the "ideal community" not materialize? (p. 155)

11. What becomes of Augustine's common law wife? (p. 156)

12. What keeps Augustine from sinking deeper into "the whirlpool of carnal lust?" (pp. 156-157)

13. Why did Epicurus lose? (pp. 156-157)

Book VI: Discussion Questions

1. Note Augustine's use of "mouth of his heart" (p. 137); elsewhere he uses the expression, "ears of my heart." How do you understand these expressions?

2. How did Augustine's view of the "image of God" change in this book? How would you explain the "image of God" from a Reformed perspective?

3. What is the breakthrough for Augustine in Book VI? What were the limits of the breakthrough?

4. How did Augustine come to understand Scripture?

5. Compare Hebrews 10 with his developing understanding of Scripture.

6. Compare his developing understanding with the Westminster Confession, Chapter 1.

7. What is the meaning of the episode of the drunken beggar? (pp. 142-144)

8. Consider Augustine's conclusions about happiness and "rest" in this book. Look at the metaphor on rest that he uses at the end of the book. How is this an Everyman experience?

Sessions 14-15
Book VII: Neo-Platonism Frees Augustine's Mind

Augustine's discovery of God and the one mediator between God and humans.

> *Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either—but right through every human heart—and through all human hearts. This line shifts. Inside us, it oscillates with the years. And even within hearts overwhelmed by evil, one small bridgehead of good is retained. And even in the best of all hearts, there remains...an unuprooted small corner of evil.* (Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* 1918-1956)

> *Indeed, Augustine speaks rightly when he declares that pride was the beginning of all evils. For if ambition had not raised man higher than was meet and right, he could have remained in his original state.... [D]isobedience was the beginning of the Fall. This is the inherited corruption, which the church fathers termed 'original sin,' meaning by the word 'sin' the depravation of a nature previously good and pure. A saying of Chrysostom's has always pleased me very much, that the foundation of our philosophy is humility*. (Calvin's Institutes, 2.3.14, 2.6.1, 2.7.8)

> *Not yet was I humble enough to grasp the humble Jesus as my God, nor did I know what his weakness has to teach.* (Augustine, Book VII)

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How does Augustine explain his age? (p. 158)

2. Augustine is now struggling with his views on substance in understanding God. (pp. 158-160) How would you explain the nature of the struggle? How does he use the example of the elephant and the sparrow? How does he use the example of his own mind?

3. What was Nebridius' argument? (pp. 160-161)

4. What was dangerous about the Manichean argument? Why do you think Augustine brings it in here, after he has rejected their thought? (p. 161)

5. Why did his thoughts about good and evil push him down and "nearly choked me"? (pp. 161-162)

6. Where does he say he should have begun his search? (pp. 162-163)

7. What answer to the problem of evil does Augustine entertain on pp. 163-164?

8. How did Firminus help him finally reject astrology? What biblical story was confirmation for him? (pp. 164-167)

9. What is the error in his search that he discovers? (pp. 168-169)

10. How did the writings of the Platonists help him? How were they lacking? (pp. 169-172)

11. Describe his ecstatic experience. (pp. 172-173)

12. What understanding of reality does he come to? (p. 173) How does this understanding affect his view of God?

13. What is Augustine's discovery about evil? (pp. 174-175) How do you react to Augustine's explanation?

14. How does Augustine say his duality of thought about substances corrupted his view of God? (pp. 175-176)

15. On page 176 Augustine explains how the inner life of the human affects his view of the creation. Does his explanation help us to understand differences among us? How does he explain villainy?

16. What does Augustine come to see as the relationship between Creator and creation? What is the That Which Is? (pp. 176-178)

17. Why does he need Christ the Mediator? (p. 178)

18. How does he regard Christ now? (pp. 178-180)

19. Augustine takes pride in his developing reputation for wisdom. What was the effect of the Plato books on that view of himself? (pp. 180-181) What does he see as the difference between presumption and assumption?

20. How has his opinion of St. Paul changed? (pp. 181-183)

Book VII: Discussion Questions

1. How does he begin his search for understanding God in this book?

2. What is his misunderstanding of substance? What is the elephant and sparrow example and how does it help?

3. What characteristics of God does he hold as criteria for his thought and how do they help him work through his thinking?

4. How does contemplation of his own mind help him?

5. How does contemplation of the mutable and the immutable help him?

6. Does Augustine's consideration of substance and God help you think about God?

7. What is his explanation of the problem of evil? How does he finally come to his understanding of evil?

8. How does his developing understanding of God help him?

9. How does his understanding of the will help him?

10. He says on page 162: "Whence, then, did I derive this ability to will evil and refuse good?...If the devil is responsible, where did the devil come from?" How does his view of evil develop? (see pp. 173-174)

11. Compare Augustine's developing thinking about evil with Romans 7. How do you understand Paul's thinking about sin?

12. How does Augustine understand Good?

13. There is one narrative in this book on his abandonment of astrology. What does he learn about the nature of human life that is persuasive in his turning away from this philosophy? What about astrology is opposed to Christian faith?

14. In the section on the Platonists, Augustine describes what helps him conceive of immaterial reality. Why does he find Platonist thought falling short of what he—and humankind—needs in order to find truth and happiness?

15. What would you choose as a significant Scripture reference in this book for its effect on Augustine's thinking and your own?

16. By Book VII has Augustine found what he is looking for? Why, or why not?

Sessions 16-17
Book VIII: Conversion

Augustine's conversion to Christianity.
...put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh or the gratification of your desires. (Rom 13:14)

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How old is Augustine in Book VIII? (p. 198)

2. Who are the principal characters in this book?

3. What is Augustine's longing now? How is this distinguished from his past? (p. 184)

4. Who is Simplicianus? Why does Augustine seek him out? [See also section 2.3] (pp. 184-186)

5. On page 185 he says "I was in tight bondage to a woman." How does this play a significant part in this book?

6. What has he learned about wisdom? (pp. 185-186)

7. What does Simplicianus tell Augustine that helps? Why did Simplicianus insist that Victorinus go to church to prove he's a Christian? (pp. 186-188)

8. When Victorinus makes his profession of faith, where is it and what is it? (pp. 188-189)

9. Augustine reflects on the significance of one coming to faith who has been a notorious skeptic or unbeliever. What does he conclude about this? (pp. 189-190)

10. What role does Augustine find that distress plays in joy? (pp. 190-192)

11. What prevents Augustine from following Victorinus? (p. 192) What does Augustine discover is in control of his will? (p. 193) What are the laws that he describes and how are they in relation to each other? (pp. 193-194)

12. What is he going to tell us he was set free from on page 194?

13. How does Augustine come to hear Ponticianus' story? (p. 195)

14. Who is Ponticianus? (pp. 195-196)

15. What is the story of the two courtiers and the cottage? How does The Life of Antony figure into the story? (pp. 196-197)

16. What is the effect of Ponticianus' story on Augustine? What role does conscience play? (pp. 197-199)

17. What is Augustine's account of his experience in the garden? (pp. 199ff)

18. How does he describe his vacillation? (p. 200)

19. What is the "bizarre" situation that he describes? (p. 201)

20. What is the contrast Augustine draws between our wills and our natures? (pp. 201-204)

21. What is significant about the "frivolity of frivolous aims, the futility of futile pursuits"? (pp. 204-205)

22. What is the significance of his encounter with Continence? (pp. 205-206)

23. What does he "pick up and read"? What is its effect? (pp. 206-207)

24 What is the response of Alypius? (p. 207)

25. What is Monica's response? (pp. 207-208)

Book VIII: Discussion Questions

1. In this book, what are the instruments that bring Augustine to his decision? What role do they play?

2. What would you describe as the pre-evangelism efforts in the *Confessions*?

3. What were the direct influences on Augustine's decision? How would you describe them and their effect?

4. How does Augustine's struggle reflect Paul's in Romans 7? Do you see other similarities with Paul's experience?

5. "Two wills, two natures." Which is it, and why?

6. What is his "garden" experience? What held Augustine back from a decision and what helped him? What were the effects of his decision?

7. What is the significance you see in Augustine's accounts of trees?

8. How does your account of coming to faith compare with Augustine's? Have you knowingly had the experience of helping someone else along the path to faith?

Session 18
Book IX: Death and Rebirth

Augustine finds and describes the "rest" he's been seeking.

He himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything...that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:25-27)

Questions to Aid Your Reading

1. How old is Augustine in Book IX? (p. 231)

2. What career decision does Augustine make and how does he carry it out? (pp. 210-213)

3. What friend of Augustine's is associated with the "restful" retreat of the estate in Cassiciacum? What is his story? (pp. 212-213

4. What became of Nebridius? What does Augustine say is the meaning of "Abraham's bosom"? How does he explore the idea of "rest" in his discussion of Nebridius? (p. 213)

5. How is Augustine affected by his initial retreat to Cassiciacum following his "retirement"? (pp. 213-214)

6. Who was his company in this country house? What is his description of his mother at this time? (pp. 214-215)

7. How does reading the Psalms affect him? (pp. 214-215)

8. How particularly does Psalm 4 affect him? (pp. 215-218)

9. What does he mean when he says "For me, good things were no longer outside...." (pp. 216-217)

10. Describe the effect of the toothache. (p. 218)

11. Who baptized Augustine? Who joined Augustine in baptism? (pp. 218-220)

12. How does Augustine describe his son? (p. 219)

13. What are Augustine's comments on the use of hymns? How would you compare the singing of hymns to saying the Creed? (p. 220)

14. What was the experience and effect of Ambrose and the two martyrs? Is there anything here that we can relate to in our experience? (p. 221)

15. What does he relate about his mother? What is the experience they share? How does she express her heart's desire in this present life? (pp. 222-229)

16. How does Augustine experience and express his grief? (pp. 230-236)

Book IX: Discussion Questions

1. Compare paragraph 26 of Book VIII (pp. 204-205) with the second part of the second paragraph of IX.1.1.on pages 209-210. How does he use the comparison to tell us what has happened to him?

2. Where is Augustine on his journey? How does forgiveness figure into Augustine's journey? Read Matt. 19.

3. How is Augustine's experience of grief over the death of his mother an expression of his new life in Christ? How would you compare it to his earlier loss of

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his friend? Compare Augustine's prayer for his mother on page 234 with Job 1:1-5. How would you compare or contrast it with Reformed Faith?

4. Augustine says in paragraph 12.30 (p. 231-232) that "any sort of habit is bondage." He made a close association between habit and the bondage of sin in Book VIII, but he expands on the idea here. What does he mean?

5. How would you summarize Augustine's journey of the soul in a paragraph or two? What are some key words or ideas that convey his confession? What particular Scripture passages come to mind when you think of his journey?

6. Why do you think Augustine has told us his age in each book?

7. What does the word "confession" mean to you now at the end of your study?

Session 19
Concluding Class on Prayer

Read Augustine's teaching on prayer and review the particular prayers in the *Confessions* that have particular meaning for you.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you learn about prayer from Augustine's teaching and from contemplating his life of prayer in the *Confessions*?

Some of Augustine's Prayers*
- I.1.1 (p. 39)
- I.5.5 (pp. 41-42)
- I.20.31 (pp. 60-61)
- II.7.15 (pp. 71-72)
- X.1.1 (p.237)
- X.6.8-9 (pp. 241-243)
- X.17.26 (pp. 254-256)
- X.27.28 (p. 262)
- X.29.40 (p. 263)
- XI.2.3 (pp.285-286)
- XIII.35.50 (p. 379)
- IV. 15-31 (p. 101)
- X.15 (pp. 246-247)
- V.1.1-2.2 (pp. 113-114)
- VI.1.1 (p. 134)

2. How do the prayers reveal Augustine's relationship to God? God's relationship to Augustine, to all persons, and to you?

3. Is there a prayer in the *Confessions* that has particular meaning to you? Which is it, and why?

* List of prayers supplied by Dr. Jim Goodloe

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