

When the Airplane Rolled



Chuck Yeager, the famed test pilot and the first to have exceeded the speed of sound in level flight, was flying an F-86 Sabre over a lake in the Sierras when he decided to buzz a friend's house near the edge of the lake.

During a slow roll, he suddenly felt his aileron lock. Yeager said, "It was a hairy moment, flying around 150 feet off the ground and upside down."

A lesser pilot might have panicked with fatal results, but Yeager let off on the G's, pushed up the nose, and sure enough, the aileron unlocked. Climbing to 15,000 feet, where it was safer, Yeager tried the maneuver again. Every time that he rolled, the problem reoccurred.

Yeager knew three or four pilots had died under similar circumstances, but to date, investigators were puzzled as to the source of the Sabre's fatal flaw. Yeager went to his superior with a report, and the inspectors went to work. They found that a bolt on the aileron cylinder was installed upside down.

Eventually, the culprit was found in a North American plant. He was an older man on the assembly line who ignored instructions about how to insert that bolt because, by golly, he knew that bolts were supposed to be placed head up, not head down.

In a sad commentary, Yeager said that nobody ever told the man how many pilots he had killed.

It seems to make sense that a bolt should be positioned head up. However, when the manufacturers' instructions contradict what makes sense, the mechanic is being called upon to respond to a higher source of understanding.

The same thing happens in the Christian life. Sometimes God asks us to do things that don't make sense. The moral values and priorities taught in the Bible often clash with what might seem most expedient in our cultural setting. But should we choose to ignore the wisdom of God, we do so to our own peril.

The commands and moral principles taught in the pages of Scripture may seem like small concerns to the world around us, but they are the path that God has provided to life and peace.

The Bible warns: *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death* (Proverbs 14:12 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter