

Parable On A Plane

I haven't flown very much. I didn't take my first trip in an airplane until I was a freshman in high school, and I have only made four trips since then. I don't like to fly because I have absolutely no control over the situation and feel totally helpless when the captain asks the stewardesses to sit down because of turbulent weather or when something doesn't feel like I think it ought to feel.

Melissa and I flew to Lubbock about a month ago, and as I looked around the plane I observed three distinct classes of flyers. Stay with me now, because you'll probably be able to tell where I'm going with this before we get there.

First-time flyers. The whole experience was brand new to them. They checked their seatbelt at least twelve times before we ever made it to the runway. They hung on every word of the flight attendant as she explained the crash procedures. They read all of the pamphlets from the pocket of the seat in front them explaining how the oxygen masks work and how the seats can be used as floatation devices. They were glued to the window throughout the entire flight, taking in visions and scenes they had never seen before. And they let out a huge sigh of relief when the plane touched ground and landed.

Casual flyers. They weren't first time flyers but they weren't experienced flyers either. They made sure their seatbelt was snug before takeoff. They looked up at the flight attendant every now and then while they flipped through their magazine. They drifted in and out of sleep during the flight, waking only when it got bumpy and rough. They looked out the window occasionally and were still impressed by the view. It was nothing new to them, but it wasn't old enough to be boring.

Frequent flyers. They were asleep before they finished putting their carry-on (which should have been checked at the baggage claim) in the overhead compartment. They fastened their seatbelts only because the stewardess asked them to. They didn't listen to any of their instructions because they had heard all of that before. They slept through the turbulence and never really seemed bothered by anything. They had seen the view from the window a thousand times and knew that it wouldn't be any different this time. It was all routine.

Sometimes, when I look out over the audience while I'm preaching, I see the same classes of people.

Some are eager and ready to learn, soaking up every piece of information they can get their hands on. They are in awe of what the Lord has done for them in redeeming them from their sins, and never cease to give thanks for what He continues to work in their lives. They do not take the assembly of the saints for granted but use it to rejuvenate their spirits and to joyously lift up heartfelt praise to the God of their salvation.

Others have lost a little bit of the spark. They are still interested in being a part but sometimes drift in and out, leaving their share of the load undone. However, when there are signs of trouble or a rough road ahead, they wake up and get back to work. They're still hanging on. And then there are those who have been at it a long time, and their service has become a daily routine. They sleep through the sermons (yes, I can see you and so can the Lord) because they've heard it all before and are certainly beyond learning anything new. They are no longer impressed by the mighty works of God and are not even aroused by the most tempestuous storm. They have long departed.

If we're not careful, we can allow what was once exciting and new to become dull and commonplace. We can forget where we came from and Who allowed us to get where we are. We can lose the fiery desire to get into the Book because we can't find the time to get ourselves out of the recliner. We can fail to remember that heaven is for those who are faithful until death.

"But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul". Let's get our service back on the higher plane.

Bubba Garner

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