

AIRPLANES, JESUS, AND ME!

I have a love/hate relationship with airplanes, so when I attend seminars, I usually drive. We received a flyer at the last minute about a seminar in Seattle, WA that my pastor wanted me to attend, and there wasn't time in my schedule to drive. He told me that the church would buy my plane ticket and I would fly out in two days. I gulped and said a quiet, "Okay."

It was time to board and as I walked down the ramp to the plane, I fought the panic. Flying has never been my cup of tea. I get motion sickness and I have suffered from claustrophobia since childhood—you know, that old confined space feeling—the, *LET ME OUT!—LIKE RIGHT NOW?* But being the strong willed person that I am with a "Never let anyone see your fear" attitude, I gave myself the "*thumbs up*" and marched boldly toward the plane.

Thinking I was flying on a BIG airplane, I was feeling more confident; after all, hadn't I been an overcomer three times before when I flew? "*I can do this, I can! I can!*" I said under my breath.

But as I approached the plane and saw it was a small 19 seater, my heart sank and my feet dragged. The closer I got to the plane, it kept shrinking and my fears kept growing. Now as any good counselor would do, I started my "*self*" talk. Only somehow it backfired because out came the words, "*I can't do this Lord; no way!*"

You may ask if I started quoting scripture and praying as any good believer, especially a minister, would do. NO I didn't! I panicked and had I been alone on the steps, I would have turned tail and ran. But people were toe to toe behind me, so I had to keep moving forward.

The Holy Spirit and I had a running conversation all the way up the steps and into the plane. I'm saying, "*Lord, I can't do this!*"

He was saying, "*Oh yes you can!*"

He won out and I found myself sitting in the seat securely STRAPPED in. Okay, you can use the word belted in if you want and it may be the proper word, but far as I was concerned, I was STRAPPED in!

It was a most interesting flight. The Lord and I kept a running conversation going during the flight. I kept asking, "*Lord, are you still here with me?*" He kept assuring me that He was. I was

certainly “Prayed up” by the time the plane landed. And, oh yes, I didn’t get sick this time. I was too busy praying and reminding the Lord that I needed to get to the seminar and back home in one piece. I’m so glad our Lord has a sense of humor and lots of patience, as I’m sure during that plane ride I pushed “His buttons” more than once.

I made it to the seminar with only a few other little glitches, but I will save that for a later time. I enjoyed the seminar and felt that I had received valuable information to bring back to the church and the SMART ministry that I was founder of. Being on the ground at the seminar for several days, I had my old courageous self back and I was ready to come home and do battle with the enemy. Of course, I had forgotten to get back home, I had to fly again.

Sunday morning after a good breakfast under my belt, I was ready for the flight home. The seminar was positive, stressing recovery, overcoming and trusting the Lord in ALL things. My “self” talk was, “*You brought me here in one piece and you will take me home, snug as a bug in a rug, right Lord?*”

We know the devil never gives up trying to distract us or steal our peace. He uses fear, self-condemnation, and anxiety against us, thus bringing confusion and even anger into our lives. He was working overtime on the trip back home. My trip started out with the shuttle bus being late. My panic button was triggered, as I was afraid I would miss my connections home. I’m thinking I should have called the bus two hours early instead of only one. We are a little off schedule, but arrive at the airport safe and sound with me breathing a long sigh of relief.

I checked in my baggage and headed for the waiting room. They announce the flight to Portland is boarding now. I go through the line as my ticket is checked and told to proceed to the plane amid pouring down rain which I wasn’t dressed for. A nineteen seater again, but I’ve got a handle on it this time. “*No Problem!*” I thought.

Sitting in the plane, I hear my name called out. Looking up, I answered and the stewardess informed me that I am on the wrong plane. Quickly gathering my luggage, I prepared to follow the ticket agent back out into the torrential rain. She decided to put me on another plane even though it is against regulations. By this time we had walked about two blocks and I’m soaked. As I climbed the steps to the second plane, the stewardess said, “Welcome aboard for Spokane.” PANIC VILLE! I was going to Portland.

Again we face the torrential rain and retrace our steps back to the airport. They say the third time is the charm, and they finally got me on the correct plane. By this time I didn't care if the plane was large or small, I was freezing, exhausted, and just wanted to sit down and rest.

The plane lifted and off we went into the wild blue yonder and guess what? I got sick. As I sat there praying and trying not to "upchuck" into the bag provided for just such things, I looked out the window and saw nothing but bright white clouds. I felt hemmed in and realized that Mr. Claustrophobia was sharing my seat. A most undesirable fellow he is. He in turn introduced me to Mr. No Control and Mrs. Fear, and I was in a tail spin.

I felt helpless. I had no control over any part of this situation in regards to the plane, which by the way was hitting huge air pockets thus making these weird noises and giving me a roller coaster ride that I wasn't going to soon forget; if I survived it that is.

Negative feelings come flooding in and I was struggling with my fears. It was hard to breath; I was having heat flashes, sick to my stomach, out of touch sensations, panic/anxiety attacks; you name it, I was experiencing them all. Fear of the unknown swept over me in relentless waves. I felt I was drowning, going down for the third time, and not coming back up. At this point the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart to trust and yield the control to Him. I yelled back, "*What control?*"

At that point, the man in the seat next to me put down his book, turned, and gave me the most beautiful and reassuring smile I'd ever seen and said in a soft, soothing voice, "*Isn't it wonderful to sit here and be able to trust the pilot to fly this plane. We don't know the first thing about flying, but he sure does. We can just turn the controls, over into his capable hands, sit back, and enjoy the ride because he knows exactly what to do. We don't have a thing to worry about. It'll smooth out pretty soon when we get past the air pockets and the noise will stop too. It'll be okay.*"

I gave him a pasted on smile and hoped he wouldn't notice how sick and scared I was.

He smiled back, opened his book and proceeded to read. That was all it took.

The Lord always knows how to deal with me and what to do to release my fears. He certainly spoke peace, truth and comfort to my heart through that man. Then as I began to ponder his words, the Lord showed me the lesson He was trying to teach me.

There will always be situations in which we will have no control. We will have to trust other people that are trained to do their jobs and not worry. That man on the plane gave words of encouragement to me and I received them by faith through the Holy Spirit. Our talents, skills and knowledge are from the Lord. He will impart to us His truth as we pray, read His Holy word and seek His face.

Remembering that God is the controller of all things, we can sit in the midst of chaos and have total peace. We can have control in our lives through trusting the character of God and trust the Holy Spirit to do the job Jesus sent Him to earth to do. We can be victorious if we just trust and believe.

Psalm 51:6 says, *“Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom.”*

Deuteronomy 29:29 says, *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of the law.”*

Finally, I was reminded of God’s words in Joshua 1:7-8. As it gave God’s promise to the people of Israel, the promise still applies to us today. *“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

The remainder of my trip was peaceful and all fear had totally disappeared. Upon our arrival home, the man helped me off the plane. After retrieving our luggage, I saw him stop at the front door, turn and give me one last smile; then he was gone into the night.

Was I sitting next to an angel—only God knows!