

## (NOT) LEAVIN' ON A JET PLANE

To say I hate to fly an understatement. I'd rather have two root canals while giving birth, then immediately traverse the Sahara Desert with nothing more than spit for hydration. I know I'm not the only person who feels this way. A lot of otherwise reasonable folks are vigorously nodding their heads as they read these words. However, most of you don't have spouses who work for an airline and therefore must repeatedly endure the trauma of being catapulted through the air in a vehicle that unlike most cars, can only crash once. In one of the ridiculous ironies of my life, what should be a blessing is actually a trauma. I always arrive at our destination, how-ever exotic or anticipated, perspiring and aching all over from telepathically helping the pilots keep that gravity defying metal bird in the sky. With every muscle on alert, and a firm grip on the armrests, I sit as rigidly as possible so that in the event we actually *do* catapult to earth in a flaming ball of fire, I'll be miraculously spared because I HELD ON!

I have an almost pathological fear of being off terra firma. I don't even like to *jump*. I was the only child in the neighborhood who pulled my tricycle behind me on a rope because I was too afraid to climb onto it. All the other kids would fearlessly mount their trikes and blast off in search of adventure. I'd run behind them, pulling mine with one hand while waving the other shouting, "Hey! Wait for me! Wait...for...meeeeee..."

My husband used to exhibit a bit of a sadistic streak at take-off and grab my arm while gasping in mock horror at any unexpected noise or turbulence. He finally realized I was truly frightened and his not-so-fun-loving behavior was subtracting years from my life. Thanks to those repeated traumas, I'm now closer to eighty than I am to fifty.

So imagine, if you dare, my recent terror when we experienced turbulence that on a scale of 1 to 10 registered roughly 984. There were several disconcerting moments as I strategically planned my survival. First was the other passenger's amazing display of restraint in the face of their untimely demise. I was the only one who jumped up and yelled, "Prepare to meet your Maker!"

Second, though I wasn't fooled for an instant, came the prerecorded voices of the pilots talking oh so casually about cold and warm fronts hitting each other in an effort to dispel fear and explain the chaos in the sky. I knew full well that the cockpit was utter pandemonium. I had vivid mental pictures of them fighting valiantly to regain control of the aircraft and save our lives knowing the odds were slim. I had no doubt that if they survived to tell the story, they'd immed-iatly change jobs, even if it meant flipping burgers.

However, the *most* disconcerting thing was the sky. It was as soft and black as the velvet on an Elvis painting. It seemed like everything was calm and serene and then some giant, invis-ible hand reached up and grabbed the airplane and shook it like a baby's rattle.

You can imagine my undying gratitude when we miraculously landed in one piece. The pilots emerged from the cockpit looking astonishingly unruffled (hey, they're professionals, whadda ya expect?). I gave them both a bear hug and kissed them full on the mouth and told them I would do anything for them, all they had to do was ask. *Anything!* I was in the process of scribbling down my name and phone number when

they suggested I disembark as quickly and quietly as possible before security had to be called.

Not willing to risk another close call, the walk home from Dallas gave me plenty of time to think.

Where was my faith? Where was my trust in the intrinsic goodness and sovereignty of God? What was preventing me from rejoicing over seeing the Lord if we actually did crash? Why couldn't I echo the Apostle Paul's words, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain"?

Fear can be an intimidating enemy. But God tells me in 2 Timothy 1:7 that He has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Good stuff! So how can I walk in that marvelous truth when confronted with fear?

The only answer I could come up with is to rehearse the truth until it takes root in my spirit and can be called forth in time of need. And I plan to do just that in every situation that presents itself from now on. Especially at 30,000 feet.