



With Jesus Above 10,000 Feet

by Pastor Michael Hammond Sr.
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In recent news and on social media we have been bombarded with stories about the airline industry. We've seen stories about people being downgraded because of their race, people being removed from flights due to overbooking, and issues surrounding the use of cell phones and laptop when flying to or from certain countries. From unruly passengers and disrespectful flight attendants, to failed technology and labor strikes there's been no shortage of news about flying these days.

One story that probably got far less press was a story about the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) 1981 *Sterile Cockpit Rule*. According to the Conde' Nast Traveler Magazine's Tyler Moss the rule is:

...intended to prohibit 'crew member performance of non-essential duties or activities while the aircraft is involved in taxi, takeoff, landing, and all other flight operations conducted below 10,000 feet.'"

"If you look at accident history, most incidents happen during takeoff or landing," says Candace Kolander, Air Safety, Health and Security Coordinator for the Association of Flight Attendants. "The flight crew is supposed to concentrate on everything that can and can't happen during those phases because that's when you could have the biggest issues that could cause the aircraft to crash." ¹

Basically, this FAA rule only allows conversations (in the cockpit and on the radio), actions/interactions and sight-seeing directly related to the take-off or landing of the plane when it is below 10,000 feet. (This rule also pertains to all flight attendants regarding their interactions and communications with the pilots and crew.) However, at or above 10,000 feet the pilots and crew can talk about or do anything their heart desires (within reason) while fulfilling their duties.

¹ <http://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/news/why-airline-pilots-cant-chit-chat-below-10000-feet/ar-BBax3f?li=BBnbfL&ocid=mailsignout>

I imagine the longest part of any flight is flown above 10,000 feet, which got me to thinking about exactly when people are having conversations and interactions with God through the Holy Spirit. Listen to the apostle Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NASB): "¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." To the church at Ephesus Paul instructs the saints to take "...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints..." (Ephesians 6:17-18).

Relationships do not work on auto-pilot for very long, but require the continual investments of time and interaction during both the good times and the bad, if they are to be healthy.

Do we see continual prayer with God as non-essential when there is no crisis in our life, or in the life of someone we know? Do we only talk with, seek after or pay attention to God when the threat of a crisis or crash in our lives seems imminent? Do we generally ignore him and go about our merry little way when life is good, failing to thank Him for the love, joy, peace, favor, health, strength, and all the other (internal and external) gifts he gives us to enjoy?

Do we accept God's gifts, but reject or treat as insignificant the relationship he wants us to have with him? Would this behavior be deemed appropriate or acceptable in any other relationship in which the other person has done and continues to do so much for us? Is God "ok" with this? If he is not, recognize that the power to change this rests with us.

In closing, I'm reminded of a bell in a bell tower that used to ring at the top of every hour in a city where I used to live. That bell rang when the weather was good and when it was not. It rang when I was enjoying time with family and friends, and when I was lonely and discouraged. It didn't matter the time of day or night. If it was three in the morning that bell rang three times at 03:00. If it was six o'clock in the evening it rang six times at 18:00 (6:00 p.m. for non-military folks). That bell was a constant reminder to those who could hear it of what time it was.

Whether it's setting an hourly alarm on your computer, smart phone/watch, or doing something else, the important question here is: what habits and triggers can we implement to acknowledge God in all of our ways every day? The ability to do this rests with us so...What are YOU going to do about it?