

Flying Successfully Through Life

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I'm watching a good friend walk down paths that can only lead to misery, and it breaks my heart. She's convinced that what she's doing "feels right" but to anyone who knows the word of God, it's obvious she's lost her bearings. Things she once knew to be true, she's turned her back on. Actions she once knew were contrary to God's plan for a happy life, she now engages in. Somehow she's justified it all in her mind. She says she prays, but she still feels these things are okay to do. One afternoon we spent some time together discussing her life, and she admitted the error of her ways and a desire to set things right, but then a few weeks later her vision has blurred again.

This once courageous and valiant woman has succumbed to temptation and wandered as a little lamb into the mists of darkness and down into a dangerous forest, yet she seems to believe that's a better place to be. The Good Shepherd is calling after her, but she cannot or will not hear. And I have been left to ask why? How in a matter of months did this happen? It all started when she stopped digging in her scriptures, and then stopped attending church. I'm reminded of a quote by C.S. Lewis in the *Screwtape Letters* (which is about one of Satan's minions and his tactics to lead a good man astray):

"Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one -- the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

Recently, I heard an analogy that hit the nail on the head and explains how my friend can insist what she's doing feels like the right thing to do when it's obvious she's abandoned stable ground within the fold of God.

Do you remember what happened to John F. Kennedy, Jr.? He died in a plane crash several years back when he drove his plane straight into the ground thinking he was climbing into the air. How could something like that happen? Surely a pilot can tell the difference between the ground and the sky? On a clear day a pilot would never make such a mistake. But on a hazy day or in bad weather, it becomes almost impossible to tell the difference between the ground and the sky using only visual or physical clues.

This is why they issue two classes of pilot licenses. The first is a visual license. This allows the pilot to fly on a perfectly clear day. As long as everything's beautiful and the visual great, this pilot is capable of flying successfully. But bring on some haze or rain and this pilot will need an instrument license. Owning an instrument license

means the pilot can fly without seeing the sky at all. He can read all the gages and instruments in front of him and fly successfully.

John F. Kennedy, Jr. didn't read his instruments properly. He felt like he was climbing when he was really driving his plane into the ground. As I listened to this analogy I immediately thought of my friend and realized she's barreling toward the earth, insisting what she's doing "feels like the right thing to do." She's flying without her instruments. She's not checking what she's doing against the word of God. Quite frankly, it feels good to her because it's the easy path of least resistance, and Satan has ceased his incessant buffetings because she's exactly where he wants her.

She hasn't taken the time to read the words of Jesus to the rich young man who asked, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Jesus answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The young man asked him which commandments he should keep, and Jesus answered, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The young man asked, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?"

Then Jesus answered, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me."

This doesn't mean we all need to go sell everything we have, give it to the poor, and become missionaries; but it does mean that we should be willing to place the Savior (and what He would have us do) as the number one priority in our lives. Paul gave a whole discourse in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 on our body being the temple of God and how we should not defile it. Everything Paul lists in that chapter as unacceptable behavior comes down to caring more about someone or something else more than God.

Anytime something else holds a higher position in our hearts than God, we've stopped looking at our instruments. If hazy or stormy weather comes, we're likely to make poor decisions that could lead to disastrous and unhappy results.

If you've followed my writings for any length of time you've read lessons about praying about decisions and listening for a feeling of peace. But there's something important I have not sufficiently emphasized. And my friend's situation has forced me to see and speak to this issue. **Satan can con you into thinking immoral decisions "feel right."** If you're not looking at your instruments (the word of God)

and comparing decisions against it, then when the storms come and the winds blow, your feelings can deceive you -- just as a pilot can be deceived.

I plead with you with all the energy of my soul that you **always, always check your instruments**. Have heartfelt, meaningful prayers. Read your scriptures daily and apply them to your life. Ask yourself -- and be brutally honest when you do -- whether you're living the way God has taught us to live. If you aren't, then please repent, ask God and anyone else you may have offended to forgive you, and then as Jesus admonished, "go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Attend your church meetings where you can associate with other people who are striving to live the way God wants us to live, and where you are surrounded by the Spirit of God. One of the very first things that led my friend to her bewildered state was to stop going to church.

Be faithful. Put God first in your life, and then when you pray you'll be less likely to get turned upside down in your thinking. When you heed your instruments, the choices you make will lead you toward greater happiness and "life" (as Jesus would put it). Remember, Satan desires to have you that he may sift you as wheat, "Watch ye therefore (your instruments), and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke 21:36).