

Chapter 31: A C-130 Flight Like No Other

Life Application Verses:

Revelation 3:20 (NIV): Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

The first question some of you might have about this chapter is: What is a C-130 Hercules? It's a military aircraft, with 4 turbo-prop engines, and it is LOUD when you are onboard. It has seats like you might not want to sit in for a long trip; these seats look like hanging straps and unfold from the side of the aircraft, so that you are facing the opposite bulkhead. And, of course, like other aircraft, you take off, climb to altitude and you sit back and relax. These aircraft have a very good safety record, yet on one occasion, myself, other passengers, and the pilots and crew experienced something like we had never been through before. And now...the rest of the story...



I was stationed at Rota, Spain, for three years (I've mentioned this previously), 1976-1978, Jan – Dec of each year. In 1976, I began to play racquetball, which at the time was a huge sport globally. I had divorced (as I have also spoken of in this book), and with time on my hands, I began to play every day, and when off-duty, I would play for 3 to 5 hours daily. Not that I was the greatest player in the world, but I got to a level quickly and began to move up the 'ladder' on base. Now, you have to remember that Rota was a large Naval port and there was considerable traffic from many services in the area and from the ships in transit and/or stationed at Rota. To make a long story short, I had moved up to the Nr. 1 spot on the ladder, and played many top players in the area and those visiting Rota. During this time, I discovered that the US Navy was interested in creating a motivated group of racquetball enthusiasts to compete in the Navy Sports Program. So, they devised a tournament in Naples, Italy, and invited all military personnel from the entire COMFAIRMED (Commander, Fleet Air, Mediterranean, part of United States Naval Forces Europe) regions. That's a HUGE territory to draw from in terms of people who joined the Navy Sports Program to compete in many venues,

and in particular, racquetball. The tournament dates were set, my boss in our highly secure job was more than happy to release me for the tournament to represent our Division, and we packed and boarded the Navy C-130 Hercules. We departed Rota, Spain, in the morning, bound for Naples, Italy. Just routine stuff for Naval Personnel...

The flight was uneventful for the trip until we began our approach to Naples. The pilot informed us that a very large storm front had developed during our flight directly in our path to the runway. I asked one of the crew if we could go around it, but it was so large, the pilot then informed us he would have to fly through it to reach the runway. You will have to understand that at the time, radar could detect a storm, but not wind shear within it. As we approached the storm front, we were at about 30,000 feet. At some point, the C-130 hit a significant downdraft and began a descent that was nearly vertical, but down—always down. Things on the plane began to float upward and for a moment (felt like a lifetime), we were near weightlessness. Afterwards, the pilot (which I could see clearly up on the flight deck), was ghostly pale. This drop had forced us from 30,000 feet to under 10,000 feet in a matter of seconds. In short, it was as close to our crashing as we could have encountered if the pilot had not been able to recover from the enormous downdraft. If only I could produce in your mind the faces of the pilot, co-pilot, and crew. And me. And those sitting next to me and across from me. As you may have heard, just before we think death will consume us, our life flashes before our eyes: I didn't have time for a playback because *there was no time for the Life Projector to even come on!*

At the time of this event, all I could do was close my eyes and ready myself for whatever eventuality might be about to occur. I silently—but LOUDLY—called out to God in those fleeting seconds and was ready for His Will to be done. What I remember to this day is that I had no time to make amends before God. *What I had at that moment in time was all that I had.* My life's work, witnessing, my hours on the racquetball court, my friend Jim Means as I was working with him to accept Jesus Christ as Savior, my faults, missed Bible readings, and so on. Let me say it like this: at the moment we began to literally fall from the sky, I—and everyone else—thought we were all about to die. Everyone had their own thoughts and reflective outcomes. I think this near tragedy caused me to reflect on what I was doing for God, or had done for God, up to that moment and to consider its depth. IN other words, as the saying goes,

“deep calls to deep.” How deep had I served Him in Christ Jesus? And what would I say to Him in the very next moment of time had we actually crashed and everyone on board had been killed. To those of us on the flight, this was more than ‘just a close call.’ We **expected** to die.

How Heavenly Minded had I been? How Earthly Good was I at that moment? And then it hit me: this C-130 flight had caused me to consider that at any moment I could be called out of this world and if that happened, was I really ready to meet God or was my assurance of Salvation mere words? Was I ready to stand before God with Christ Jesus seated at the Right Hand of the Father and give an account of my actions to that point in my life? This event, even today, causes me to reflect on the Life Application Verse: Revelation 3: 20: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” I think to everyone on board that aircraft, in their own heart and mind, heard Revelation 3: 20. But, what did it mean to each of us? To me, and at that time in my life, I was following Christ closely—I thought! Now, no man lives in a State of Perfection, but I was dedicated at that time. Yet, falling from the sky not knowing the final outcome, Jesus was knocking at the door and I heard His voice and opened the door for that final moment of life on this Earth. You see, I think God provides opportunities for each of us to experience validation of our Faith. You are crazy, Ken! Most likely, but God’s Word is not...

It’s not a test, because I don’t think God tests us to catch us in a snare. But, I do believe He gives us situations of many variations that cause us to react as we believe—not make believe, but BELIEVE! If I say that I Trust my medical doctor to bring me through surgery, I must believe that is true. I then submit myself to be put to sleep, ‘surgeried on’, and awakened. I believe this to happen and Trust the team to accomplish this. When that C-130 was falling, did I believe in God? Was my salvation something convenient to have and talk about, or did I believe it? REALLY BELIEVE IT! Was my Faith in Christ solid? Or was I calling out to God in a time of crisis and sure death, as that is exactly what we all thought was about to happen. You see...life as we know it is not guaranteed. We have the very breath we have at the very moment we breathe it. But, that is all we have. God does not promise Life Everlasting here on Earth, and one day, in His Will, that breath will cease. Don’t misunderstand, and please forgive the morbidity, but you and I have to be ready. Not make believe ready, but ready so we can live fully in a mode of

Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good—at all times. IF death summons without warning, we don't have time to do all those last minute things, live for God, or maybe even accept Christ...

Put yourself in the very seat that I occupied on that flight. I was sitting—if you are looking to the nose of the aircraft—on the left side, first seat. I could see the flight deck by looking up and seeing the pilot and co-pilot. The crewmembers were doing their work, and we had some cargo on board. You are comfortable, sort of, and the turboprops are cutting through the air and making noise—lots of noise. You have earplugs, and your breathing is loud even coming through the noise of the flight. You are mostly comfortable, excited that you are about to land, and—whoop—the sound of the engines rising to meet the demands of the G-forces, the falling of items not secured, the pit of your stomach has gone through the top of your head, you look at the faces of those around you and they see death staring them in the face, and...finally...finally, the plane begins to decelerate its fall. This all happened in a matter of seconds—not 60 seconds, but very few seconds. Jesus was knocking at the door because we all thought that in the next few moments we were going through the door from Earthly life to Eternal life or Eternal death. Oh, if I could only impart to your experience what we all felt that day: horror, fright, helplessness, fear, finality, Home, the unknown, God's Hand, Jesus knocking at the door, darkness, and so many emotions that I cannot begin to list them all. They hit in an instant and in that instant—we each to his or her own Beliefs—came to the realization that life on this Earth is not Eternal, nor is it guaranteed or given extended time to 'do over.'

When the C-130 finally leveled off, a sigh of relief came over the passengers, crew, and me. It was like in that instant in time, I gave up this Earthly life because it was about to cease, and I let God take over in preparation to meet Him. I was being transformed to Cross The River Jordan and move from my present reality to a new Heavenly Reality and Eternal Life. I think that what I am saying to you as Christians is this: live your lives fully, be extraordinary for God in Christ Jesus, and be prepared for what God has in store for you. Every moment of every day.

When you think about it, driving is a hazardous business. Vehicles everywhere, speeding, changing lanes, distracted drivers, and Newton's Third Law: for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. It's dangerous, because how many times have you heard about someone you knew that left home for work or other event and never made it to their

destination. They lost their life in an accident. Just that quick—they were here in a moment of time and gone in the next moment. They left this life and entered into Eternity. As Billy Graham would end one of his speaking engagements, he would tell the large crowd: “This may be the last moment you have in this life. What you decide right here tonight will determine where you spend Eternity.” In the words of Jesus, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” If you consider the words of God’s Only Son, when you open the door to Him, Eternity comes to you in that moment. It rides with you in the car, when you fly on a C-130 Hercules, as you age, should a terrible disease ravage your physical body, and it becomes The Hope we have in God through the Salvation of Jesus Christ. Life here is not guaranteed; only Eternal Life in Christ Jesus. Let me take you to this idea.

In 1 Corinthians 15: 51-53: ⁵¹ Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— ⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality (NIV). The phrase that came to mind on that C-130 flight was “in the twinkling of an eye.” That’s how fast the event was to those of us on that plane. It ‘just happened.’ Then it was over, but in that ‘twinkling’ it was death that we envisioned, but it was God—for some of us—that we Heard, Saw, and Felt standing over the shoulder of death. Seated at the Right Hand of God, was Christ Jesus. Oh, it wasn’t visible as my eyes were closed in the shock of the moment, but it was God on the Throne of Mercy, Grace, and Love, with Christ to His right, that I ‘saw, heard, called to, and expected to see’ in the next moment of life.

There was no time to seek forgiveness, nor was there time to do anything but step into the presence of God with the expectation that in that twinkling of an eye I would be changed from this Earthly life to a Heavenly life. At that moment in time, Heavenly Minded was the ONLY thing I was focused on; all the Earthly Good was not even an afterthought, but – and please don’t miss this: all the Earthly Good was what carried me to that moment in time. My life, as I expected it to happen as did others on that flight, was about to be over. If I had not been an effective, sinner-saved-by-Grace extraordinary living Christian, there was no hope that my life would have ever been counted for Earthly Good. IN other words, if I had lived an ordinary life, sought out no one to witness to as a means to bring the Hope of Salvation to

them, been an ordinary employee, failed to lead my family to Christ, done just enough all my life to get by...my opportunities to change all that were about to cease. Folks, Eternity awaits. Don't plan on do-overs in your life; do them right and for God the first time while you have time. That is the message God is giving me to give to you...to the lost, Salvation awaits...reach out for it now! To those of you who are Born Again, live extraordinary lives NOW...while there is time!

If you are reading this, I hope that you never go through something like this, because it will 'burn in your memory' like nothing else can. But, HEAR ME OUT...if something like this happens, you won't have time to look back and think, "Oh, if I had only done this or that." If you find yourself in a situation that is only a very few seconds in duration, you only have time to prepare for your Eternity. Don't reach that point in your life and look back with regret—because you won't have time to feel regret: fear, yes; shock, yes; and, Eternity, yes. I've noted this in other chapters, but there is no do-over when we get to the point that God says, "Okay, Ken, it's time to start Eternity." Right the wrongs, sing the songs, hug your wife and children. Find the time to understand that life can be gone in an instant. It can and it happens every day.

If that C-130 had crashed, as we expected it to do in those few 'twinklings of our eyes", I only had what I had done to that point. When was the last time I had made time to call my mom and dad to tell them that I loved them? How many Prayers did I leave unspoken for the people I played racquetball with that I knew did not know Jesus? They were on that plane and if it hit Terra Firma, they would leave this life lost and destined for Eternal separation from God—Hell. I beg you: Stuff as much Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good living as you can into your life so that when that moment arrives, you will hear God say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

A Question of Curiosity:

If we knew the day and hour of our death, how would we prepare? Would we go out and eat our last meal to prepare, or would we do those things that make an Eternal difference for those we love? It is the people we love and care for that are beyond the temporal of this life; therefore, should we not be involved in their lives to the fullest extent, including winning them to Jesus? Remember: Eternity is forever, life on Earth is not. But OH THE GLORY OF HEAVEN forever and ever! Be prepared to meet Jesus in 'every next moment' and you will have a life of assurance like you cannot imagine. And you say...

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“We only have one life to live.” ~ *Anonymous* ~

Think of these quotes below in terms of that C-130's 'fall from the sky.'

Life is but a walking shadow. * As for man, his days are like grass. Life is but a fleeting moment.
Death smiles at us all. All a man can do is smile back. * Surely every man is a mere breath.
For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

“God never said that the journey would be easy; He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile!”
~ *Max Lucado* ~

“The more familiar acquaintance we have with God the more do we partake of him. He that passes by the fire may have some gleams of heat, but he that stands by it has his colour changed. It is not possible that a man should have any long conference with God and be no whit affected. If we are strangers to God it is no wonder that our faces become earthy.”

~ *William Bramwell* ~

“We fail in the work of grace and love when there is too much of us and not enough of God.”
~ *Suzanne Woods Fisher, The Search* ~

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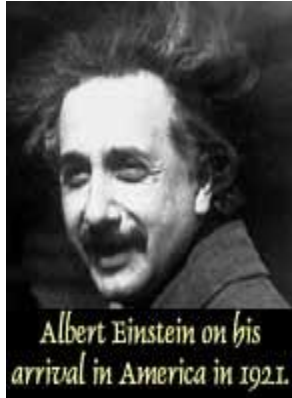
My Prayer For You:

Lord, I have poured out my heart in this writing. I have given the reader the truth of the event of that day, a day that I will believe to my last breath, that You caught that plane in its fall. I have shared this story so that anyone who may read this will understand the brevity of life on this Earth; yet, we have no guarantee of tomorrow or even our next breath. Only You, Father God, know the appointed time for our death. I have tried to give the reader of this text the words You would have them read so that they might better understand that life can be gone in the twinkling of an eye and that we must be ready at all times. Use these words, not for my glory, but for Your Glory and so that someone might live a more extraordinary and dedicated life for You, to serve You in Christ Jesus to reach every lost soul that they encounter. Time is fleeting before us like morning dew before the hot sun. At the very moment You will call us out to Eternity, I Pray for every Christian to have known You beyond the simple, but in Fullness of living an extraordinary life for You. God of All Creation, we are but dust in Your hands, yet we have been given life and breath and free will. Guide us to know what You would desire for our lives so that we might fulfill Your Will and at the moment our 'plane' falls from the sky, we close our eyes in anticipation of seeing Your Holy Face to bend knee before The Lamb of God to Praise Him as Worthy is the Lamb Who Was Slain, and sing Holy Praises to You, O Lord. Use these words to reach even one Lost Soul or to cause a Child of God to turn to Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good living for all the days they may have left on this Earth. I Pray, God, that we would remember to be about the Work of our God in Christ Jesus, to be ready in that instant in time when You call us Home. In the name of the Holy Son of God, I ask these things, Amen.

The Gravity of the Situation¹

What is gravity? How does it work? And what happens when we become its intended target? Because of gravity, if you drop something, it falls down, instead of up. Well, everybody knows that! But, what does this really mean? What is gravity? Gravity has played a big part in making the universe the way it is. Gravity is what makes pieces of matter clump together into planets, moons, and stars. Gravity is what makes the planets orbit the stars--like Earth orbits our star, the Sun. Gravity is what makes the stars clump together in huge, swirling galaxies.

A great scientist, Albert Einstein, who lived in the 20th century, had a new idea about gravity.



He thought that gravity is what happens when space itself is curved or warped around a mass, such as a star or a planet. Thus, a star or planet would cause kind of a dip in space so that any other object that came too near would tend to fall into the dip. And gravity is what made one particular C-130 Hercules fall from the sky –literally! Take a moment to consider The Gravity of the Situation in your Eternal Life. Are you ready to meet God? NO...I didn't ask, do you think you are ready to meet



God? I asked if you ARE ready to meet God! That is the question that every single one of us must answer for our Souls!

If you are ready to stand before Christ
at any given moment, you have Peace
That Passes ALL Understanding!
Eternal Peace!
Everlasting Joy!
And No More Tears or Fears!
Get Ready NOW! Don't Wait!

¹ Source: <http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/what-is-gravity/en/>