

Flight Risk

✖ As I sit in the Tulsa International Airport waiting for my flight to Houston, I just realized how oxymoronic my life is when it comes to travel. I love going places, especially cities and states that I've never visited. That number is quickly decreasing yet I still find myself longing to go.

I love the feeling of stepping out of baggage claim and wandering out for a new adventure. I thoroughly enjoy experiencing fresh perspectives through the culture of a different part of the country and, on rare occasions, different parts of the world.

But here's the oxymoronic part. I hate just about everything it takes to get from point A to point B. There is absolutely nothing endearing about parking my car; waiting for the shuttle driver to arrive; deliberating the etiquette of tipping said shuttle driver; waiting in line to get a boarding pass (hoping the "easy" check-in machine can read my credit card); standing in line for security; dumping all of my belongings (shoes included) on to a conveyer belt; walking through a screening machine (praying it doesn't beep); hustling to the terminal only to find that the flight has been delayed; waiting for said flight to finally arrive; standing in line to get on the plane; wading through the congested aisle while looking for that last empty overhead bin; squeezing into a seat that seems to shrink with each trip; praying I don't get stuck sitting next to that one person who has never flown before and has major anxiety attacks throughout the entire trip; wading through the congested aisle while de-boarding the plane; hustling to the connecting flight that is boarding precariously close to the previous flight and going through the whole routine again until finally arriving at that glorious destination that was surely worth the

trouble.

Then there's something I like to call "flight risk" (pun intended). No matter how hard I try to forget about it; there is always the chance that something could go wrong. Whether it be a terrorist attack or an untimely encounter with a flock of birds taking to the so-called "friendly skies", it isn't always danger-free. And of course, there's always those inevitable pockets of stomach-turning turbulence.

My forays into air travel kind of remind me of my relationship with Christ. I love the benefits of my salvation. I deeply appreciate the hope that I have thanks to the great sacrifice He made on the cross. I gladly accept the blessings and promises of God's Word. I wait longingly for Jesus' return when I will take that last flight to an eternity in heaven.

But just like I deplore the hassles of flying, I often find myself frustrated with, and sometimes even resistant to, the process that I must go through as a follower of Christ. Finding time to pray and read the Bible is a daily challenge. Disciplining myself to fast and deny myself life's simple pleasures for the sake of His call is a near impossibility. Focusing on relationships in a meaningful, Christ-like manner is a constant struggle. And being patient in waiting for dreams to be fulfilled and prayers to be answered is a painstaking process that drives me to the edge of insanity.

The walk of faith is also full of significant risk. My good friend Kenny Luck wrote about this in a book aptly titled *Risk*. Check it out sometime if you find yourself, like me, struggling with the inherent dangers of the Christian faith.

You see, our spiritual journey is full of trials and tribulations. The Bible often compares it to the process that

fine metals like gold and silver go through in order to be purified. Sometimes we deal with persecution from those who don't share our beliefs. For some in other parts of the world persecution is serious business and can result in physical harm, imprisonment or even death. These are all things that we must deal with in order to become the people God called us to be. The risk we take dots a path that leads to great reward both here on earth and in heaven.

Towards the end of his life, Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith (HCSB)."

Paul had a very difficult road and described his journey as a fight, albeit a "good fight." Paul also wrote in Romans 12:12 that we should, "Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer."

He knew that there was something much greater waiting for him beyond this world. He understood that his devotion to the faith would produce a great reward-the "riches of the glory" he referred to in Colossians 1:27 (NASB). Paul also reminds us in 1 Corinthians 2:9 that, "no eye has seen and no ear has heard and what has never come into a man's heart, is what God has prepared for those who love Him."

I started this blog sitting in the Tulsa airport. I finished sitting in a room overlooking a beautiful stretch of Pensacola Beach. The trip was definitely worth the trouble. And I'm strangely affirmed by the promise that eternity with our Lord is worth any "flight risk" we as Christians will ever be asked to take.

Chad Bonham is a freelance author; journalist and television and documentary producer from Broken Arrow; Okla. He has

authored several books including a four-book FCA series (Regal Books) and is the coordinating producer on a forthcoming documentary called Choosing Life.