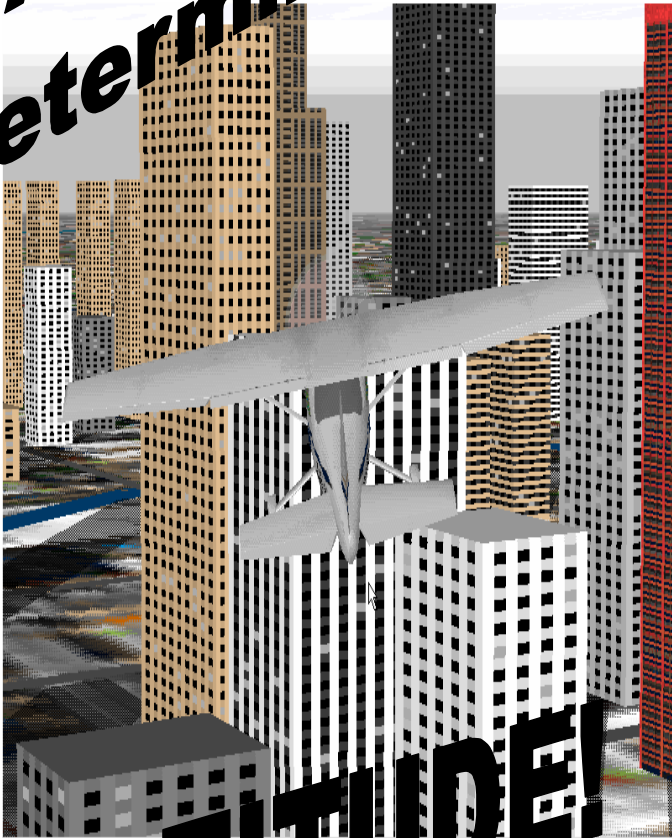


Attitude Determines



ALTITUDE!

By Dempsey C. Howard

Last year I was invited to be a guest for a local TV program taping. I was elated that an invitation had been given to me to participate as one of the key speakers on the program, until I was told of the topic. It was one that really threw me for a loop. It was, Attitude Determines Altitude. My first reaction was,... “Huh?”. Fortunately I had some time to prepare for this topic, and I admit I had put it on a back burner for several days because I was going nuts thinking on this one! Here is what I learned.

Often I will sit at the computer and be doing things there to clear my mind, or to maybe even challenge my mind. After all there is nothing more challenging to the mind than trying to outwit a machine in a game that the computer is programmed to know all the possible moves. The computer must have had some insight to my dilemma for it was then it hit me while sitting at my computer, not writing, but flying my flight simulator to some destination unknown. I saw on the screen in front of me a screen that had on it an altitude control, AND an attitude control. I had sat at this program many times before and had really never noticed the names of the controls. I knew what they would do and used them to the best of my ability. Most of the time however, I was guilty choosing a preset flight and just acting the part of the pilot. While watching the controls and the movements of the aircraft I was “flying” I

noticed the attitude or pitch of airplane gave the determination of the altitude (or height) in which the plane would be flying. I sat there in amazement as my mind began to understand a little more on the coming topic we were to discuss. I immediately got on the telephone to a friend of mine in which is a pilot and a fellow minister to confirm my thoughts and “theory”, to make sure I was flying properly.

Can you imagine boarding an airplane to fly across country and you know there are in front of you mountains that are thousands of feet high? As the flight progresses you notice the pilot is not at the controls of the plane, but mingling with the passengers. You see way off in the distance the coming mountains. As they are growing closer, the pilot is seemingly less concerned than before. After all, the autopilot is running. I don't know

about you... I would be wanting him sitting at the controls making sure we are going to clear those peaks that are coming closer and closer with each passing moment of time.

The pilot however had set a course before take off. He knew the altitude of the place he was taking off from, and he knew the altitude of the place they were to eventually land. Yet, should he have failed to compensate for the obstacles that were to be in between this plane is doomed to crash, unless the pilot sits at the yoke and controls the attitude of the plane. With today's technology he would be able to adjust the upward or downward motions (attitude) of the plane with the adjustment of controls, knobs, and switches for the onboard computers. He is aware of his timing and the coming maneuvers the air craft will be in need of to continue safely.

So many times we as Christians fail to fly properly and unaware often finding ourselves in a nosedive towards destruction. We are even guilty at times of thinking that it's going to be smooth flying for us, and the obstacles of the world are not a hindrance to us any longer. When we first get saved, our goal is heaven. The autopilot is in control. We are saved and nothing can bother us! WRONG! Our attitude is placed on autopilot and we fail to compensate for the flight ahead. How do we as Christians compensate for the things of the world that will come our way?

As a Christian in flight to our goal of heaven we have been given before us a series of controls if you will. Controls that will assist us in overcoming the perils of the flight we are taking. What are some of those controls?

Determination

Determination is a vital part of any Christian's "flight". For without determination and willingness to fly above the storm, or above the mountain ranges, we are in for a bumpy ride or even a serious crash. Determination to do whatever it takes to survive the obstacles that may come in our path. That determination is found in our hearts and in our minds.

The pilot of the plane becomes determined to cross the mountain range safely and with ease when he sits at the controls and makes adjustment, for without that determination the flight is surely doomed to crash. As a Christian, we must be willing to fall on our knees and accessing the second control that is given to us... and that being Prayer.

Prayer

Something happens when we pray. Sometimes that happening is immediate and then again, that prayers result is seen weeks or months later. Always on time however. Just remember, to get the answers to that which we desire in a prayer, we **MUST START PRAYING!** We must also think when we pray of whether our life is worthy of the answer we desire. Have we become casual prayer people, only praying in a time of need or near disaster? Is our life in line with God's plans?

Back to the pilot on that airplane. He has spent hours at the controls of an airplane and he is familiar with how to use the controls on the panel in front of him. However there are times he may find himself flying into unfamiliar territory and he will have to seek maps and even pick up the microphone calling ahead to the control tower for

flight path instructions allowing him to remain on course. We too have a manual full of maps, and each have heard it referred that way and being the Bible. Sure, we have it and we have read it. And yes, we take it to church with us on Sunday morning. Contained in its pages are the directives to answers to which we are seeking. Just as the pilot uses the maps and or contact to the tower for instructions on flying over the obstacles in front of him, we too must seek directions from God's word to move forward to our prayers being answered.

When David was writing the 23rd Psalm he wrote assuredly that the guidance he walked in was not one of destruction, but one of safe passage.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads

me beside the still waters. He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His
name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For
You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they
comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with
oil;

My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will
dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

What for pete's sake does this passage have to do
with airplanes, prayers answered, and flying safely
over mountains? Ok.. here we go at an attempt to
explain this to you the best I can.

Inside the control tower seemingly miles away and
unseen to the pilot is a controller. He is constantly

watching little blips on a radar screen in front of him that represents all of the planes flying in his area. If one of those planes is off course, he can contact them, guiding them back to the proper air space to guarantee a safe passage.

Inside of each of us, is a controller. He is constantly monitoring us and guiding us (if we let him). That controller is the Holy Spirit. Some folks get scared of thinking on the Holy Spirit controlling them as they are only knowing to his works in seeing people shake, cry uncontrollably, or even fall out in a trance like state at times. It scares them! But the Holy Spirit is more than that which we see manifested in the lives of some. The works of the Holy Spirit is that of a teacher, a guide through the unknown. He is that unseen presence that is constantly working in us to make our path safe upon our heeding to the directives given.

When we are reading the bible and there is a passage in which we don't understand, a simple prayer like, "Holy Spirit, I don't understand what this is saying or how it applies to my life, but there is something there that is speaking to me. Will you show/teach me the meaning of the words?" Guess what? He will. He is your guide. He is your understanding power to the unknown. Not only that, but he is your warning of impending dangers! Back to the plane. The pilot will hear a warning bell or buzzer if there is a danger contained in or surrounding the planes path. By heeding to the sound of the warning, and making the needed adjustments, he can avoid the impending danger. The same with us when the Holy Spirit actively working in our lives, sends a warning signal to us of dangers or things to be on the lookout for.

Have you ever been in a situation in which something doesn't "feel" just right and you change your direction? Later you find out that you avoided a major catastrophe by reacting to that "feeling". That was the Holy Spirit working in your life believe it or not.

The Holy Spirit lives in the lives of each and every born again believer. Only the actions that are allowed are limited by our not inviting more involvement. In the lives of each un believer there is waiting to be brought to life a spirit being deep inside that is waiting for a chance of birth inside and ready to work with us and for us. I can imagine the dormant Holy Spirit sitting in a corner twiddling his thumbs (if he has any) just waiting for an opportunity to brought to "life" inside of the non-Christian and at times, he does push a warning button so to speak to give heed to an impending danger. Oh the tragedies that could be

avoided, the sinful situations that could have been bypassed had the person only given chance to that “feeling” inside of them. The times that one had sat inside the walls of a church for that special once a year visit, and they felt this prick or feeling inside of them that there was something more for them yet they walked out the same as they came in.

In the cockpit of the plane we can see the determination of the pilot by his sitting by the controls. We can see and hear the prayers as he takes the microphone seeking an answer to his calls of distress or direction. And then there is the voice of the unseen one in the control tower working together with him to make a safe journey possible. When all of those are working together and in unison success of the flight is assured. The pilot then knows how to make corrections, most of the time being the attitude of the aircraft.

Maintaining Attitude

There is a little window on the panel of the airplane that has horizontal lines going across it. One line goes straight across. The others vary in length while centered with the main horizontal line. There are a series of these smaller lines on both the top and bottom of the one that goes all the way across the window. That main line is the perfect setting for a straight flight of the plane.



At times it becomes needed to make adjustments to what is seen in that window for the flight to be a success.

Some people who have a new experience with Christianity for the first time can fail with out adjustments to the controls in their life. *Even the experienced Christian!* If they remain on the same line all the time, they will surely encounter obstacles along the way. Yet, by rising above the objects or adversities that lay ahead of them, they are able to fly above the storms, above the mountains, out of harms way. Some however like to maneuver through the obstacles. Staying on that straight line, not making adjustments to rise above, only to fly around in ways to bypass problems. This would be cause for an unsettling ride for those you carry with you. There are even times we become guilty of taking our eyes off the

controls and before we know it, we have drifted below the solid line and crashing is almost inevitable unless we make rapid adjustments which can also be uneasy to handle.

By maintaining proper visual and hearing on the things ahead of us our Christian flight will be one not void of obstacles but easier and a lot smoother!

We all seem to have an attitude of some sorts towards church. That is why we have so many denominations! All of them are flying with the same controller however, but different uses of the controls. Mind you, this is not intended to tear down any thoughts, or denominations. It is only intended to direct greater focus on the controller!

Each of us may have a different interpretation of God's word and the directives it gives to us daily.

That is fine to a point. We each can learn something new by knowing more of the others knowledge. It helps us to understand the other person or church better. But keep in mind the little window that is on the planes control panel. That one fine line that extends all the way across. It is like our path to heaven, it is a narrow path. One movement to take us away from that path can at any time keep us from our ultimate goal of heaven.

There may be one church that says, “ *the Holy Spirit does not work as it did in the days of the apostles. God has given us a mind that has been cultivated in time and our wisdom is greater now than it was then.*” True, God has given us a mind, and yes that mind has been cultivated and yes our wisdom is greater for there is more to know of *this world* than there was back then. But the Holy Spirit is still able to work in us and direct us and

does so when we allow him to do so and are tuned in to his being! Duh! Our knowledge of this world has so over shadowed a desire to have knowledge of the workings of the Holy Spirit that there are many Christian people today sitting in the pews of the churches with a powerful being inside of them just waiting of chance to make a move and Physically MOVE them harmoniously with the knowledge of the “controls” in front of them.

Either we don't like the length of the pastor's sermons, we don't like the family sitting near us that never fails to sit in the same areas we may have chosen to sit in, or we just can't get our minds off the kids running around the church that hinders us from worship.

Our attitude towards the things surrounding us compared to the attitude of knowledge of God's

word and putting that knowledge we have to work has caused a course of destruction for many of us. There are those who have TOO MUCH knowledge for their own good! Or it seems they do. Maybe they just don't seem to understand what they know? Maybe too, they don't understand how to use effectively what they know. Confusing you yet?

I have knowledge of how to use the flight simulator on my computer system. To a degree, that is. I know how to start the program, how to input the flight I want to "experience". And yes, I can even take off and land the aircraft. My problem is I don't know how to effectively use the controls on the panel. Strangely enough, each of those controls, all relate to the attitude of the plane. It is the same with Christians. We know how to be a Christian. We know what our goal is.

We know how to get there. But when it comes to avoiding the obstacles in front of us, seen and unseen, we have problems. If not corrected, those problems can be destructive to our reaching the goal. It is imperative that we allow the “controller”, remember him, the Holy Spirit to be guiding and leading us along the way. Things we don’t understand or things we don’t know how to deal with, ask. He will respond with the proper command or directive in our path. Seek his knowledge, and seek his willingness to help us.

What is your flight path? How are your communications with the “control tower” in your life? Has there ever been a time when you didn’t know just what to do and you didn’t get an answer thinking that it just wasn’t meant to be, yet you failed maybe to seek guidance from the instructor?

Here is a simple prayer that is guaranteed to change your flight path:

Holy Spirit, I don't really understand _____ . It seems so foreign to me. Can you help me to know more of what or how this applies to my life or my life's direction. Will you be my guide, my teacher, in not just this, but in times when I am unsure, or times when I am doubting, will you spring forth in me to show me the correction I need to make? Continuously speak to me, nudging me, no matter where I am, what I am doing, speak to me that I may understand, in a way that I may understand. In Jesus Name I Pray, Amen.

