

Hidden Weaknesses

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When a United DC-10 lost all of its hydraulic fluids and crash landed at the Sioux City airport in 1989, the cause of the malfunction was traced to a flaw the size of a grain of sand.

During the manufacturing process, a tiny imperfection in the fan assembly of the tail engine went undetected. The airplane flew for *17 years* without any problem, but during that time stress took its toll on the weak spot. Finally, the disk blew apart; flying shrapnel severed all the hydraulic lines and the airliner was left with little steering control. The pilots did the best they could to land the plane, but in the end an Iowa cornfield was strewn with scores of dead passengers. Observations:

Small flaws can lead to catastrophic failures. No spiritual weakness should be taken lightly and thought inconsequential. For example, greed doesn't seem particularly malignant, but this appears to be the very motivation of Judas' betrayal of Jesus to the Jews (Jn 12:4-6; Mt 26:14-16). People too often excuse their spiritual flaws with a resigned "That's just the way I am." Christians must look at themselves critically and desire the purest character possible.

Hidden weaknesses can lie undetected until it is too late. When a Christian "goes off the deep end" and does something seemingly out of character, it is likely that they acted upon a long-standing flaw. Such flaws are either unrecognized or not subjected to the proper stimuli to expose them. But Satan is patient and cunning; he will wait until a person is the most vulnerable and then take full advantage of their weakness. This is often the case with adultery. A man who suddenly abandons his wife, family and the Lord for an illicit relationship has succumbed to just the right mix of temptation which has preyed upon his latent weakness.

Sin is often the result of a chain of events. The United crash actually began 17 years previously when the fan disk was manufactured. No one detected the flaw; the engine didn't blow on the runway; the blades severed not one but all the hydraulic lines; etc. Often, several things must fall into place, like tumblers in a lock, before sin occurs. If we can learn to break this chain by realizing that we are heading into trouble and thus altering our course of action, we will save ourselves untold grief.

The life of a Christian is an unending process of evaluation and correction. "... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor 7:1).