

## How Airplanes (and Christians) Fly

---

June 2007

**W**hile driving recently, I saw a small Cessna which had just taken off from DeKalb-Peachtree airport. In the distance behind the Cessna was a C-5 Galaxy on its final approach to Dobbins Air Base. The C-5 is a military jet, once the largest cargo plane in the world (max takeoff weight in war configuration: 840,000 lbs).

The disparity in size of the two aircraft was staggering, but as I watched the airplanes I began thinking that size really has little to do with the principles of flight. Both the Cessna and the Galaxy are able to fly because of the same physical forces. To simplify, the proper shape of the wing coupled with velocity results in a tremendous amount of lift. Sure, one airplane was vastly more complicated than the other, but without the same basic laws of physics, neither could become airborne.

And then I thought how this mirrors spiritual life. No matter how mature one is compared to another, how long one has been a Christian compared to another, how much knowledge one has relative to another, all Christians operate according to the same basic principles.

**Trusting obedience.** All Christians begin at this point. There is no power in baptismal water; it is the same chemical make-up as water found anywhere else. Baptism is an act of obedience which, among other things, acknowledges that one is appealing to God for the salvation from sin that only He can give. This trusting obedience never goes away; it is merely perfected throughout the rest of one's life.

**Prayer.** All Christians, no matter how experienced in their faith, desperately need constant communication with God. Prayer is oxygen for the soul. The life of David is a good documentary of the mistakes a godly man can make when he stops consulting God (compare 1 Sam 23:2-4, 11-12 with 27:1ff; 1 Sam 30:6-8/2 Sam 2:1; 5:19, 23 with 2 Sam 6:1-3/1 Chr 15:11-15).

**Worship.** The new convert and grizzled veteran of faith alike need occasions to reflect on God and offer Him thoughts of praise. We don't ever "outgrow" this need, for we can never exhaust our comprehension of God's greatness, nor can we ever adequately express our gratitude and joy for what He has done on our behalf. Note Paul's outbursts of wonder and praise (doxologies) in his epistles as he ponders the depth of God (Rom 11:33-36; Eph 3:20-21; 2 Tim 4:17-18).

**Study.** Young Christians may long for the day when their knowledge is so ingrained that they don't have to study so hard. This is a mirage. Growth of knowledge merely extends the horizons of one's ignorance. There is more to learn than we'll ever have the time to discover or the memory to retain it.

Comparatively speaking, the babe in Christ (the Cessna) doesn't fly very high, has a relatively weak motor and is vulnerable strong atmospheric forces. But still he flies, right beside the mature Christian (the C-5) who has the power to lift not only his own weight but the burdens of others. The adult child of God may fly higher, faster and further than the youthful believer, but he flies by the same physical forces. And – need it be said? – even big jets can crash when enough things go wrong at critical moments.