

Our “Black Box”

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Commercial airliners are equipped with “black boxes,” a recording device housed in a nearly indestructible case (actually, its orange). Our own Capt. John Trimble, who flies for AirTran Airways, says that modern black boxes can be retrieved from crashes and plugged in to simulators in order to recreate the last fateful moments of the flight. Mechanical failures, pilot errors, efforts to prevent the crash, etc. are all on tape for others to examine and learn from.

This led John to wonder: “What if we had our own black box? What if our lives were being recorded from all angles and our thoughts, words, decisions and actions could be played back for the whole world to see?” A disturbing thought, indeed.

An airline crash or even a car wreck is not usually the result of one event; it is often a series of unfortunate conditions, mistakes and errors of judgment that all converge at one moment in time resulting in the big CRASH! An important component of growth is the ability to reflect on one’s life and honestly see the process of how things went wrong. Part of repentance is genuine sorrow for sin; another part is making it right with concerned parties (if possible). But isn’t a natural outgrowth of penitence a corresponding desire not to make the same mistake again?

I wonder how many times Peter replayed in his own memory the denial of the Lord? It wasn’t long before he got a second chance to get it right. Seven weeks later, to a crowd that included some responsible for Jesus’ death, Peter boldly declared “*you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death ... God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Ac 2:23, 36). And he affirmed the same thing before the Sanhedrin a short time later (Ac 4:10-12, 19-20; 5:29-32). Apparently, Peter kept affirming what he had formerly denied until the Lord’s prophecy of his martyrdom was fulfilled (Jn 21:18-19).

Life doesn’t give us many “do-overs.” And while nothing excuses the sin we commit, a godly response to it would certainly be to analyze what happened and determine to avoid the same in the future.

Replaying segments of our life can help us see how Satan deceived us into thinking that sin was desirable or advantageous. We might be able to pinpoint areas of weakness that crept in long before the specific temptation arose. For example, adultery is often preceded by a gradual breakdown of respect for one’s spouse, a waning of genuine affection, a subtle search for emotional satisfaction outside the marriage – making us vulnerable to the fulfillment of lust.

Upon reflection we might also recognize what should have been the proper course of action as things were beginning to go awry. God promises to “*make the way of escape*” from temptation (1 Cor 10:13), but sin usually occurs after we have missed several opportunities to change course or correct a weakness.

The dreadful truth of the black box analogy is that God is, in fact, recording every detail of our lives: “*all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account*” (Heb 4:13). Thanks be to God that He allows us to review the tape ahead of time and erase the horrible mistakes through confession and repentance. Do we really want to watch the recording of our life in the darkened theater of Christ’s judgment hall – unedited?