

On the wings of prayer

By Beverly Goldsmith

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Today, no matter whether you fly infrequently or on a regular basis as I do, personal safety while in the air is a top priority. That's why I always pray when traveling. I like to affirm that wherever I go, I am protected, and so are those traveling with me. Such prayer, I've found, is a practical help to me.

For instance, late one afternoon recently, I boarded a Qantas flight in Brisbane bound for Sydney. I had a speaking engagement that evening. The plane was full. We were all on board, doors closed and ready to go. But the aircraft didn't move. After some delay, the pilot spoke over the PA system. He'd discovered a small defect, about the size of a fingernail, in an area considered critical to the plane's performance. Because of this, he'd requested that the maintenance engineers look at it.

As we sat waiting, I prayed about the situation. I'd flown hundreds of times and had never encountered anything like this. I was thankful that the pilot was concerned about our safety and wasn't willing to take a risk. I appreciated his honesty and his respect for the safety policy of the airline company. In support of his good intentions, I acknowledged in prayer that God was then and there in control of our well-being. After 20 minutes, the pilot announced that the engineers were unfamiliar with the kind of flaw that had been found and were unsure of its implications for the plane's safety. He apologized for the delay and then told us we could use our mobile phones. I rang my husband. I asked him to pray with me and also to let the person meeting me in Sydney know that my plane might be late.

More time passed. Then the pilot told us that the defect was so unusual that the engineers would need to consult the aircraft maintenance manual. Although the passengers were sitting quietly and patiently, some near me began to worry about their connecting flights to Europe. So I prayed, knowing that the laws of God were in force right where we were and that, because of this, each person would be taken care of, and each need would be met. Surely, I realized, God would see to everything. Sometime later, however, the pilot reported that the manufacturer's maintenance manual didn't even list the particular defect he had discovered. He and the engineers now had to make their own decision as to whether or not the plane was safe to fly. I realized that this would be a tough call. I didn't envy them. So I prayed that wisdom from God would help them in this situation. Our lives were not at the mercy of chance or opinion, and God would guide those in charge to make the right conclusion.

Finally, 90 minutes after we had boarded the aircraft, the pilot said that he felt reasonably confident that the plane was safe to fly. As we taxied out to the runway for take-off, I kept praying. I thanked God for being with us. I knew with all my heart that He was protecting us and keeping us safe. I actually felt calm and peaceful – totally unafraid.

From that time on, the flight was trouble free. We landed safely at Sydney only one hour late, and I could see that passengers with connecting flights received thoughtful attention from the airline staff. My schedule worked out, too. Even though peak-hour traffic clogged Sydney's streets, I arrived at my accommodation with just enough time to unpack, change clothes, and leave for my speaking engagement on schedule.

Since then, as I hear news reports that armed marshals will soon begin flying on Qantas flights, and I recall how terrorist threats prompted the cancellation of British Airways, Air France, and Aeromexico flights into America, I'm reminded to keep praying for the well-being of all travelers.

Such prayer is constructive. As government authorities and airlines do everything they can to keep the skies secure, our prayers will assist them. Each time we affirm the fact that God is guiding and protecting each and every one of us, we will be helping people stay safe.

ON THE WINGS OF PRAYER – A HUSBAND'S RESPONSE

When the phone rang, I wasn't expecting to hear my wife's voice. For a moment, my heart stopped beating. Half an hour earlier, I'd seen her board her flight. As far as I knew, she was in the air on her way to Sydney. What was happening? When I realized she was calling on her mobile from onboard the plane, thoughts of 9/11 flooded into my mind. I was relieved when she explained it was a defect discovered by the pilot that was keeping her plane on the ground. She asked me to pray with her straight away.

I began by praying about my fear for everyone's safety. I said, "Heavenly Father, Your dear ones on this plane are in Your care. You are protecting them. Their relationship with You is indestructible." And I remembered these powerful statements from the Bible: "Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:9), and "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27). These messages reassured me that God was safe-guarding everyone.

When Beverly phoned again, she said the fault with the plane was still being investigated. No one knew whether it was safe to fly with the defect or not. I continued praying, recalling Mary Baker Eddy's words from *Science and Health*: "Spirit, God, gathers unformed thoughts into their proper channels, and unfolds these thoughts ... " (p. 506). To me, this meant that with God in control, appropriate action would become apparent. God's laws were in force right there and then.

The last time my wife phoned me from the plane, she reported that the decision had been made to depart in five minutes. I assured her that I'd been praying and would continue to do so. I also told her I'd contacted the person in Sydney and that he would meet her at the airport.

For the next 90 minutes, I prayed and prayed keeping in mind this comforting promise from the book of Psalms: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth" (145:18). How grateful I was to God when my wife phoned to tell of the plane's safe arrival in Sydney.