



*In your life, is
the cross
a decoration
or a
declaration?*

followers of Christ 

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~ SUMMER HOURS for July and August: Sunday Worship at 10:00 am ~

then dropped heavily to the ground a third time. O'Neill hit the brake and the plane rolled onto the grass, without a scratch on it or the pilot.

After months of recovery, O'Neill met — and finally saw — the man who rescued him. Gerrard was modest, saying he was glad to help. But Jim O'Neill knew the truth. "I owe my life to the RAF," he said.

What a fitting metaphor for genuine faith. Sooner or later, each of us will find ourselves in a situation we can't control; one that leaves us completely up in the air with no idea how to get through the crisis. Loathe as we normally are to ask for help, we'll have no choice, only to find that those we rely on can't guide us in.

But in those frantic times, God hears the mayday and sends his Son who comes in close. Not to take the controls, as so many seem to think, but to get us back to a place of emotional and spiritual safety. If we'll listen, he stays in constant contact, giving us course corrections along the way to ensure we don't crash. He speaks reassuringly through his Word, his Spirit, and his people. "Everything's going to be fine," he reminds us. "Just keep listening to me."

But it's not as though we deserve his intervention. Separated from him by the many sins that endanger ourselves and the innocents around us, he could easily abandon us to our own destruction. Instead, his often-perplexing love for us compels him to offer rescue. Yet we get the final say. If we want his help, our part is clear. "You just have to follow my instructions to the tee," he says. See in the proper light, those instructions are not kill-joy commandments or a dreary list of do's and don'ts but life-saving insights to guide us through the uncertainties of life without crashing and burning.

But even when our Commander aligns us with the right way, we find it so hard to trust him. Time and again we pull back from our commitment. Yet our Pilot patiently talks us through, staying with us until desperation or devotion wins out. The landing is almost always scary and more than a little rocky but, for the wise, it's the start of a whole new relationship with God, born of gratitude and a desire to give back. Get your sight back and you see things in a whole new way.



RICK GAMBLE

~ sharing Jesus and the journey ~



Avoid a Crash-Landing

Flying blind is an eye-opening experience. Ask Jim O'Neill.

In November 2008, the 65-year-old was flying from Scotland to England when his vision suddenly went blurry. Panicking, he screamed into his radio. "Mayday! I can't see the dials. It's all a blur!"



Air traffic controllers tried to guide him to a nearby airfield but the pilot soared right past. Worse, he was confused and his speech was slurred. O'Neill was having a stroke.

Hearing the mayday, the Royal Air Force scrambled Wing Commander Paul Gerrard who flew his Tucano T1 turboprop in close. "Mr. O'Neill," he radioed. "I'm going to take you back to my base." For the next 20 minutes, the Commander stayed in constant contact, giving O'Neill course corrections to keep him from crashing. "Everything's going to be fine," he reassured. "Just keep listening to me."

Though the easiest choice facing the Commander was to steer the Cessna to a secluded area and let it crash, he never considered it. "We're going to get you down safely," he told O'Neill. "You just have to follow my instructions to the tee."

With the military man talking him through the approach, O'Neill began his descent. But spooked because he couldn't see either his instruments or the airstrip, the blind pilot pulled up at the last minute. "No worries," Gerrard said. "Let's turn around and we'll try again." Six more harrowing attempts ensued with O'Neill either bouncing off the runway or losing courage and refusing to try a landing. If he had a second stroke near the base, others could die.

On the seventh try, the Cessna smacked the runway, bounced back into the air, came down hard a second time, skipped skyward again,