

The Bulwark

OCTOBER 20, 2024

UPWARD, INWARD THEN OUTWARD

After all the passengers are settled into their seats on an airplane, only then does a flight attendant present a safety briefing. After showing how to fasten the seat belt, there then comes the ominous, “in the event of a change in cabin pressure...” What follows is a description of what to do with respect to the placement of an oxygen mask. Reach up, place the mask on yourself, then look outward to help any others who might need assistance. Simple right? First upward, then inward and lastly outward.



There is a logical reason behind such instruction. That being, before you can help anyone else, you must be alert and physically able to help others. Apply this instruction in a spiritual sense. One must first look upward to God (see Colossians 3:1-3). Then look inward; does your life reflect Christ shining through you (see Galatians 2:20)?

Have you undergone the process that Paul notes in Romans 12:2, “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*”? Now comes the time to “*prove what the will of God is*”, by reaching out in order to help others. Take some time to read over 1Timothy, chapter four and verses twelve through sixteen.

Notice that Paul encourages Timothy of the need to maintain his own spiritual health, before reaching out to help others, “*pay close attention to yourself...*”.

With the individual relationship in place, now comes the juncture where one can look outward. Check out what Paul wrote to the Galatians, chapter six verse ten. “*So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those of the household of faith.*” Opportunity seems to play a key role in the verse. Consider exactly what that word means, “favorable circumstances; good chance of advancement or progress”. What Paul wrote then holds true even for us today. Circumstances are right for the advancement of the cause of Christ. “*Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.*” (John 4:35)

Each day we encounter numerous people who are in need of the spiritual healing found in the gospel. It may be a member of the body of Christ who is struggling with some issue or another and in need of comfort (see 2Corinthians 1:3-5), “*...so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*” Or someone who has not heard the message of forgiveness and hope

contained in the gospel (see Romans 10:14-17)

Think back to the illustration we began this article with, safety instructions on a airplane. Daily we are challenged to look upward and inward. In order to strengthen our relationship with God. Then we will be alert enough to reach out and provide help to others. The well being of so many others relies on us being the type of people God would have us to be.

“*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near*” (Hebrews 10:24-25) (wbe)

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- 7054 Winnetka Ave.
Winnetka, CA 91306
- 818-795-5566
- Bruce Evans,
Minister
- Website:
www.winnetkachurchofchrist.com