

## P. Mark Knowles

Dear friends,

Did you ever meet a person & after you walk away from the encounter, you wonder, "Was that meeting divinely arranged?" Of course you have!

I had one of those times just yesterday as I boarded the plane to fly to Florida to visit my family.

I often fly as a "stand-by" passenger, thanks to the great help of my friend Jerry, who works for one of the major airlines. If you're not familiar with this term "stand-by", it basically is a reduced price ticket which comes with the condition that if the plane is already filled with passengers who have paid full price for the flight, then you must wait for the next flight and hope it will have a free seat. So some flexibility is needed :) to fly like this. Very often it happens that someone will not show up for the flight for whatever reason, thus the necessity to "stand by" the counter in case they call your name to give you a seat on the plane.

I arrived Tuesday morning at the Baltimore airport at 5am, hoping to get on the 6:30am flight, as the early flights usually have more open seats. But it didn't work out as I had hoped. The plane was full. If someone had not shown up, I would have been the next stand-by passenger to be allowed to board the plane. I was listed #1 as the plane roared down the runway & into the clear, beautiful sky. People often want to be #1 in life. We love it at the sporting event when at the end of the game or the end of the sports year, we can cry out, "We're No. 1! We're No. 1!" :) But in this case, being #1 was no different from being #37. I still wasn't on the plane. OK, next one maybe...

Nope, planes still full at 7:30am, 8:30am, 9:30am. I began to wonder when I would be able to board the flight for Atlanta. The dear ticket agent told me with a hint of pity in her voice that the 12:45pm looked pretty good, as there were 11 seats still free. That's good news. Yet still I'd try the flight at 11:30, just in case. I didn't really think I would be able to get on this one & was looking forward to picking up my stuff to go wait at the appropriate gate for the 12:45 flight. All of a sudden, I hear, "Passenger Knowles, please approach the boarding gate". I quickly grabbed my backpack and hurried to the gate. "Enjoy your flight!" How in the world did I get on this plane, I asked myself, as I walked down the hallway to board the plane? She said all the flights were full up until the 12:45 flight, didn't she? Interesting...

When the plane got to Atlanta, I had no idea what time the next possible flight to Jacksonville was, as I did not expect to be on this particular flight. At that point, I was just happy to be halfway home to Florida and just sort of enjoying the walk through the Atlanta airport. My walk quickly turned into somewhat of a sprint as I looked at the TV screens listing the departure times and saw that the next flight for Jacksonville said, "Boarding"! I needed to get to gate B-4, so I took the train to the B-gate and started down the hallway, thinking that B-4 would be pretty close, maybe the 4th one down? Nope, the numbers were reversed, starting from about B-20 or B-18 or something like that. As quickly as I could, I weaved my way through the many passengers who were doing the same thing as I was, only at a slower pace.

Praise the Lord, when I got there, they told me the plane had seats and quickly gave me a seat ticket. Somewhat out of breath, I staggered a bit down the aisle and found my seat. Five minutes later, they shut the airplane door, so had I not sprinted to get there, I probably would not have made this flight.

After I sat down, came a man named Benjamin, who sat right next to me & shared with me that his previous day's flight had been cancelled due to some mechanical problems in the plane.

As I continued to speak with Benjamin, the conversation quickly turned toward Jesus & the truth of the Bible. For the next hour & a half, I poured out to this man everything I could think of regarding the Bible, its relation to the history of the Jews & the deity of Jesus!!! He was a somewhat religious but not so zealous Jew, one who was very open to hearing about Jesus & the truth & believe-ability of the New Testament. He said that his rabbi told him that Jesus never claimed to be God, so I opened the Bible and read to him the passage when Jesus said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). What a joy it was then to take him to Exodus 3 and explain that Jesus was indeed claiming to be the "I AM" who appeared to Moses in the burning bush because the Jews took up stones immediately to stone him for what they considered to be blasphemy.

After the plane landed and rolled to a stop, people began to stand up and get their bags, but this man is still looking at me with a beautiful child-like amazement, continuing to ask questions!! He thanked me 2 or 3 times for sharing what I did. And I in turn rejoiced in my heart and thanked God for such an opportunity.

Before we parted ways, I said to him, "I don't believe in coincidence or accidents. Yesterday your flight was cancelled, today I got on this particular flight, though there didn't appear to be any chance for me to get on this flight. And I sprinted through the Atlanta airport, to get on this particular plane to Jacksonville. This was all because God knows that you have a heart that wants to know Him and He put me right next to you to share the good news with you!" He agreed with a big smile on his face.

Praise the good Lord above for His mysterious, gracious ways! Please pray for the salvation of this precious man Benjamin. Lord Jesus, we agree right now, & ask that you would save Benjamin's soul. You have said that you want none to perish but all to come to the knowledge of the truth. Have mercy on him, save him & raise him up to be a mighty evangelist, that he might win many of his own countrymen to Christ! Amen!

Thank you for enjoying this good report with me. Let's look to the fields, for they are white unto harvest. Thousands perish every day & descend into a Christ-less eternity, but there are many all around us who are longing to hear the simplicity of our Savior Jesus who died for them, shed His blood & rose again that they might be forgiven through faith in His name.

The great English missionary C.T. Studd said, "If Jesus Christ be God & died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him". Amen!