

Keep Doing The Dance

Deuteronomy 22:8: When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

As some of you know, I travel quite a bit for my job. The airlines have what they call “frequent flier programs” that allow them to track which customers are travelling the most.

I usually travel Delta Airlines and because of this I get certain benefits to me as a frequent traveler. One of those benefits is that I am often upgraded to first class.

In first class the flight attendants have much fewer passengers to deal with, so they are often more free to speak with us. On one such flight the person sitting next to me was talking to the flight attendant when it came time to perform what they call the “flight safety briefing.”

The flight safety briefing is a presentation that must be given to all passengers before the plane is allowed to take off. The briefing explains how the safety features of the aircraft work so that in the event of an emergency, people will know what to do.

The government requires that the airlines provide the flight safety briefing before all flights. However there is no government regulation that says that anyone has to actually listen to the flight safety briefing.

There is no test you must pass before you are allowed to sit in a seat on the plane. As a result most people ignore the flight attendants while they give the presentation.

There are a number of physical actions that the flight attendants must demonstrate such as:

- Buckling and unbuckling a seatbelt
- Putting on an oxygen mask
- Pointing to the lights on the floor
- Pointing to the exit doors.

Because of these physical activities, the flight attendants refer to the flight safety briefing as “doing the dance.”

I have personally heard the flight safety briefing thousands of times. Those of us who are frequent fliers have heard it over and over so much that we don’t even listen to it any more.

The flight attendants know that we aren’t listening, but they are required to give it anyway. Even though no one is listening they are required to do the dance.

I am sure that the flight attendants would rather not do the dance. They could easily say that since hardly anyone is listening, there is no point in doing the dance.

Airlines are one of the safest means of travel today. In fact you are much more likely to have an automobile accident on your way to the airport than you are to have an accident on the plane itself.

In fact the biggest problem that people experience while flying is that they miss their connection.

What is the number one reason that they miss their connection?

- The flight was delayed due to mechanical problems.
 - That is, the airline would rather make you late than to risk your life due to something wrong with the plane itself.

Anyone who has flown more than a few times has certainly had a delayed flight or missed a connection. Hardly anyone has ever had to use any of the information that is in the flight safety briefing; that is why we all ignore it.

This is why it was so strange for me when in 1993 I was on an MD88 American Eagle flight from the Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International Airport to Chicago O'Hare Field at 6:00 AM (you will see why I remember so many details in the moment) and the thing that was never supposed to happen happened.

It was only 40 minutes in duration, but the flight attendants had the beverage cart out into the aisle of the plane giving everyone drinks. I was sitting in my seat reading my Bible.

Suddenly there was a loud noise that went from one end of the plane to the other. We all looked up and saw that the panels that held the oxygen masks had opened.

Just inches away from my face were a cluster of 3 oxygen masks hanging in mid-air. We looked at the masks, and then looked at the flight attendants.

They looked at the masks, looked back at all of us, and said, "Well put them on!"

Suddenly a wave of panic started to wash over me. I had to try and remember what they said in the flight safety briefing.

But in a panic I couldn't remember what they said. Instead I started trying to remember the moves to the "dance."

- "White lights lead to red lights..." No, that's not it
- "Lift up on the metal tab to release the buckle..." No, that's not it either
- "Pull the mask towards you to the full extent of the tubing" That's it!

So I pulled the mask towards me. I put the mask over my head, using my hands in the exact same position that they did during the demonstration.

One of the interesting things that they don't tell you in the briefing is why you do some of the things they tell you to do.

For example, what they don't tell you is that the tubing has a string on it attached to a pin. When you pull the mask, you are actually releasing a pin from a small canister that looks like a grenade.

Pulling the pin causes lead styphnate and tetrazene to initiate the main chemical reaction of sodium chlorate (NaClO_3) mixed with 5 percent barium peroxide (BaO_2) and 1 percent potassium perchlorate (KClO_4).

Each canister will produce oxygen for 15 to 20 minutes. What they tell you is, "Pull the mask towards you to initiate the flow of oxygen."

The chemical reaction is exothermic (generates heat). The exterior temperature of the canister will reach 500 °F. I can tell you from personal experience, it smells like burning plastic.

What they tell you is, "Do not touch the oxygen generator as it may get very hot."

The flight safety briefing gives you the information you need in the event of an emergency, but it does not try to be a science class.

If you are really interested in why things work the way they do, you can look it up on the Internet when you get off the plane.

I was sitting there on the plane with my oxygen mask on, smelling the burning plastic, when I suddenly heard a guy 3 rows behind me shout, "This bag isn't inflating!"

On the oxygen masks there is a small bag at the end. This guy saw that his bag wasn't inflating and panicked. He threw down his mask and dove across the aisle to an empty seat. He grabbed another mask and pulled it towards his face.

I looked down at my mask. My mask wasn't inflating either! Wait, I remember there was something in the flight safety briefing.

- “The bag will not inflate...” Wait, what comes next? Is it that the bag will not inflate unless I do something? “The bag will not inflate unless you...” Unless I what? What was it I was supposed to do?
- “The bag will not inflate...” Maybe it is not supposed to inflate. Maybe it will only inflate if I forget to do something. “Bag will not inflate so long as you remember to...”
- Was I supposed to do something, or was I supposed to not to something?
- “Bag will not inflate...”
- “Bag will not inflate...”
- I don’t remember! I wasn’t paying attention!

Suddenly the flight attendant came on the loudspeaker. While I was busy trying to figure out how to put the mask on, she had managed to put away the cart. She came on and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, the bag will not inflate even though oxygen is flowing.”

That’s it! That’s what they say.

So with nothing left to do we sat in our seats, oxygen masks attached, looking entirely ridiculous and not caring in the slightest little bit.

When we finally did land, the flight attendant came on one last time and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for not panicking.” That was the part that I found strangest of all.

It is their job to ensure our safety on the flight, and yet it was they who were thanking us for doing nothing more than allowing them to do their job.

Don't you have a sermon to preach?

So you might be wondering at this point what that story has to do with the scripture I read at the beginning of the message.

In fact I would guess that you have never heard this scripture used as the anchor for a message before. The scripture says to build a battlement (pretil) on your roof.

The word battlement means "any low protective wall or barrier at the edge of a balcony, roof, or bridge."

Why would you build a low wall on your roof? It was built to keep people from falling off, of course. That is why it says,

Deuteronomy 22:8: ...that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

Your job is to build a barrier to try and keep people from hurting themselves. True, someone could still fall off the roof, but they would have to ignore the warning you put in place to do so.

It is your job as a servant of God to recognize danger and to warn other people about it. If someone falls off your roof because you left a dangerous situation in place, then it is your fault. But if you recognize the danger and warn them about it by building the wall and they fall off the roof anyway, then it is their fault.

It is not your job to force people to stay on your roof if they are determined to jump over the battlement you have built. It is your fault if you fail to warn them about the fall.

Just like the flight attendants on the airplanes, they have to give you the flight safety briefing because the FAA says so. Even though most people ignore the warning, they have no choice but to do the dance anyway.

So it is with us; even though the world may well ignore what we say to them, we are obligated, by God, to give them their warnings. We must do the dance, even if no one is watching.

The Bible says that we must be immersed in the waters of Baptism in Jesus Name. To the world this is nonsense, a holdover from a time when people didn't take baths.

But to us the Baptism is our first death; our sinful body dies and is buried in the waters of baptism so that it can rise again. We do this so that our bodies can rise again when the Lord comes again.

If we fail to warn people about the need to have their sins forgiven via Baptism, it is we who have the blood on our house.

We pray that the Lord would fill us with the Holy Ghost. When we are filled with the Holy Ghost we speak in another language.

To the world this is just a crazy superstition and we are faking a language and speaking in gibberish. But we understand that it is our Spirit being born. Just as our body took its first breath so our Spirit breathes its first breath.

If we fail to tell people how to be filled with the Holy Ghost, it is we who have the blood on our house.

We abstain from drinking alcohol. We know that people lose control of their bodies when they drink. If one drinks enough, their body can become dependent on the alcohol.

Neither the stupid acts nor the alcoholism are attributes of a good Christian, so we put up a battlement: a low wall; we tell people that they should not consume alcohol at all.

If we fail to warn them about the dangers, it is we who have blood on our house.

The world sees what we do but they do not understand why we do it, so they try to pretend that it does not exist. The airlines tell us to pull the mask toward our face; they do not try to explain all the chemical reactions that make it happen.

Likewise the Lord tells us to act a certain way; he does not try to explain the whole of the Universe in a single Bible verse.

Over the past few hundred years mankind's knowledge of science has exploded. We now have machines that can view tiny viruses as they attack human cells.

Viruses that are much too small for our eyes to see. Yet do you know what all that science tells us is the best way to prevent the spread of disease? Wash your hands. You know what the Bible says is the best way to prevent the spread of disease? Wash your hands.

As the church we shout the warnings. We tell people the dangers of their actions. We demonstrate modest dress in our actions. We worship the Lord with the rising of our hands and singing with our voice.

We sing our song and we do our dance, yet it seems that the more we sing and the more we dance the less anyone pays attention to us.

We might be tempted to say, "No one is listening to us anyway; why don't we just stop?"

Matthew 11:16: But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

Matthew 11:17: And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.

“Lord, we have done our song and our dance but no one is listening and no one is dancing.” The Lord simply replies, “Keep doing the dance.”

We are not asked whether or not we agree with the commands of the Lord. We are not asked whether we understand the commands of the Lord. We are ordered to obey and to warn that they should obey as well.

In the middle ages the Black Plague wiped out something like 40% of the population of Europe. Many Jewish neighborhoods were attacked because they had very low incidence of the disease, so people thought that they must have been causing it.

You know why Jewish neighborhoods didn't have as much of the plague?

- Because they took baths.
- Because they washed their clothes.
- Because they kept their food away from rats.
 - You know why they did that stuff? Because God told them to.

People who followed the commands of God even though they did not understand those commands were saved from a disease they did not understand.

Keep Doing The Dance

It may seem like no one is listening to the warnings we sound. There will come a day when the world will need the advice we have been trying to give them. They will have to sing and they will have to dance but we in the church will not be around any longer to teach them. The only chance they will have is what they can remember of what you taught them.

1 Thessalonians 4:16: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1 Thessalonians 4:17: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Just like I was not expecting the sound of the oxygen masks opening, so the world is not expecting the saints of God to be called away in the Rapture.

I had heard of such a thing happening, but I never expected that it would happen to me. Likewise we have been telling the world that the rapture will occur, but they are not expecting it to happen.

They will be like I was with the oxygen masks; I knew there was something about putting the mask on. I didn't remember the words; I remembered the motions.

That is how it will be with those who are left in the world after the Lord has taken away his people. They will not remember the words; but they will remember what you did. They will remember how you acted.

You may feel that the world is not listening to the gospel you preach to them every day. The truth is they probably aren't listening to you.

But that does not mean that they are not learning what they should do by watching you. They may not listen to what you say, but they watch what you do.

When the day comes that they need to hear from God, it may not be the words you spoke but rather the dance you performed; the witness you provided to them with your body that they will remember.

So before we depart, I would like to brief you on some of the safety features of our church. You may follow along using the

safety briefing Bible located in the seatback pocket in front of you.

This life is equipped with just one exit: the door Jesus Christ. Waters of baptism lead to infilling of the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues, which indicates salvation

Remember that the church is here primarily for your salvation, but if there is anything we can do to make your life here on earth more comfortable, please do not hesitate to ask

From all of us at the Apostolic Church of Barberton, thank you for worshiping with us