

Kenneth and The Compass

Last Tuesday afternoon, I caught a flight that would get me from Norfolk, Virginia into Houston three hours earlier than my original schedule. I was really happy not to be going through Dallas/Fort Worth as my previous plans dictated. I had a good meeting in Virginia Beach; I had a real sense that God met with His people and ministered life to the hearers. Tuesday morning we had a glorious service with the sixth grade through college age at Gateway FWB Church Conference. That morning I spoke about the urgency to take advantage of the opportunities to witness as the Lord provides. A young man from the naval base was flying back home to Orange County, California via Houston and on the crowded flight; he sat right next to me. He listened to his Ipod Nano; I read my book. And as I was looking out the window at one of the most beautiful sunsets I've ever seen, I heard that "still small voice" (I Kings 19:12) say, "Did you mean it about witnessing to those God brings across your path?" I looked back at the young man and introduced myself; he firmly shook my hand and said his name was Kenneth Claussen. After we were through with the niceties, I cut to the chase and asked if he had made relationship with Christ personal. He replied, "No, but I've been thinking about the direction my life is going." He went to the Lutheran church in his youth, but was not attending church anywhere presently.

I explained that going to church was good, but being in the right places, knowing other people that may be a good influence doesn't make you a Christian. I then took advantage of the youth culture's knowledge of technology. I said, "You have in that Ipod a nearly limitless amount of songs, books, and other information from podcasts. It is portable; it can go everywhere you want to go." I pointed out, "You can't have a church building with you everywhere, but when you have Christ, you have all the information that you need to get on with life to the ultimate and heaven at the end!" I asked him if I could explain from the Bible how to become a Christian. He got very serious and said, "Yes, please do." Kenneth was a very polite young man. And I had the unique understanding without him saying verbally, this is just what he was looking for. We went to the genetic problem we all have - we are sinners, by nature and by choice. I showed him that sin without Christ's forgiveness would give the penalty of death, separation from God through eternity and an overall unpleasant life on earth. We went to the cross. After almost four decades of introducing individuals to our Lord and Savior, I have never lost the wonder that He would die for us, "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

So often we give the plan of salvation as only a fire escape out of Hell. And although it is definitely the only way to escape eternal damnation, knowing Christ is so much more than that. I felt impressed to focus in on the concept of Christ being in us as a Compass to give us direction through this sojourn on earth. Here is a young man, not married, getting ready to become a Navy pilot, going to visit his grandma, then back to Virginia, with offers to go many directions. The air was thick with anticipation at 25 thousand feet in a small jet cutting across the country. Here was a young man with a hunger in his heart to have the best life possible and was awakening to the idea that only the God of the universe as revealed through Jesus Christ, who has great and wonderful plans could guide him. I shared with Kenneth, Proverbs 3:6, "*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*" He smiled, nodded his head and listened intently as I explained that the real God of wonders who sent His Son to die for our sins, was buried and rose again from the dead, would love to come into his life and forgive him, change him, give him a home in Heaven. In doing this, God would place the True North Compass in His heart through the mercies of God when he would accept Jesus Christ as his own personal Savior.

The plane began its long descent into Houston and I asked him if he would right now like to ask the Lord into his life? A quick smile and affirming nod launched me into prayer for this young man. I did it rather suddenly, without detailed explanation. Sometimes I think in our presentation, we get too detailed. In our desire to make it simple, we major on the method with the right words. Let us not glorify the approach to Christ better than Christ Himself! Let us get them to Jesus, not our interpretation; He

after all is The Way (John 14:6)!

When Kenneth lifted his head, after inviting Christ into His life as Lord and Savior, he was beaming. I did not ask him to take off his hat, he had already done so. Before we prayed, I clasped my hands tightly. When Kenneth finished praying, his manly hands were still firmly clasped in the same fashion, as a child praying earnestly would pray. He loosed his clasp, gave me a firm handshake and said, "Thank you!" Then he inquired, "And how do I get this compass working?" I laughed and said, "Well you just did what was necessary to receive Christ, the Directing Compass into your heart! He'll be better than GPS." *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"* (John 1:12). I went on to tell him the Compass is activated through obedience in believer's baptism, Bible reading, and prayer. He asked, "And how do I pray?" Then I gave him a mini Prayer Series from The Model Payer in Matthew 6. After we discussed prayer, he further asked, "And how do you handle difficult things in life?" Then we gave a Bible Study based on Romans 8:28. Kenneth was eagerly asking one question after another. He was like a little bird with his beak wide open!

As we touched down, I mentioned to him, that I was scheduled on another flight; this was a change at the last minute. I was attempting to get back home three hours earlier; two agents had told me it was not possible to get an earlier flight on another airline. Then as I was telling the agent of the competing airline, that I appreciated her help, she said, "Wait a minute, Mr. Pope, let me see what I can do." I overheard the agent asking her rival airline agent supervisor to do this as a personal favor to her. I couldn't believe it! I did not know these people and they were fighting to get me on that plane. I made the unlikely flight which was packed, every seat taken. The last available seat (next to me) had already been passed by Kenneth and he came back as the stewardess sat him down. Kenneth agreed three hours later, our being placed together was indeed God's great plan. *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps"* (Proverbs 16:9).

When I am through writing this, I'm going to check my email to see if I've heard from the new convert! Whether he is in California or Virginia, he is not lost anymore. My new friend Kenneth has a Compass! And you do, too, if you have Christ! *"Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great the joy of the whole earth King"* (Psalm 48:1, 2).

- Pastor Pope -

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