



Jetway Journeys

CROWDED AND NOISY, WITH LIMITED seating, and surrounded by a host of agitated fellow travelers, there isn't much praise that can be offered up for airport terminals.

As inconvenient and irritating as a long wait in an airport can be though, there is one thing I absolutely love in that situation. If I have time to kill, I walk along the rows of gates and look to see to where each of the planes is headed. All within a few gates the signs could read Washington D.C., Boston, Dallas, Honolulu, Nashville or any other destination. In the international terminal, suddenly London, Paris and Tokyo are in the mix as well. There is something exhilarating about the knowledge that simply passing through each door and walking down the jetway could take me to such incredible places. The world is my oyster and all I have to do is decide which door to take (and buy a ticket!).

Life offers us a similar opportunity. There are so many doors of possibility all lined up, just waiting for us to buy the ticket, strike out down the jetway and set off on a journey.

Sometimes we don't pick a certain jetway even if it would be good for us, because it seems boring and unpromising, like a gate marked Duluth or Waco. Not all jetways lead to fun and excitement though; some take us on journeys we need to experience to make us smarter, kinder and of service to others. Likewise, not every choice in life is a grand adventure, but sometimes you have to face it and choose yes. Yes, I choose to do the right thing, yes, I choose to do what I don't want to, yes, I choose to swim against the stream because I know it is what is right and will get me where I need to go.

The jetways we choose, and the paths we go down offer us the chance to impact others.

When I started my first job out of college, the company I worked for had a security guard posted outside the front door. Truth be told, there was probably little he could do to ensure

the security of the business; he was small in stature and didn't often speak, and looked like an easy target. Some of the women with whom I worked would always mock him in the back room – never within earshot of him, and never to him, but daily to one another. At the time, fresh out of school, I felt too young, new and inferior to speak up against the behavior that was demonstrated. I wish I had taken the jetway of courage though, both by speaking in his defense, and by getting to know him.

Sure, I would smile and say good morning to him each day, but I was never bold enough to dig deeper and find out about him, or to go outside of my comfort zone and engage him in conversation. I always assumed he was grumpy and weird, and that, coupled with what my coworkers said about him, was enough to steer me from truly taking time for him.

A few years later, I was absentmindedly looking through a magazine with the television on in the background. As I glanced up from the page, a commercial for a local shelter came on with a man sharing his testimonial. I stopped and stared.

There was the security guard on the screen. He was sharing that a few years earlier, before he had gone to the shelter, he had been homeless; living out of a shelter constructed from boxes. After going to the shelter he finally had a place to live and people that cared about him, and they helped him beat his addiction and get a job. I realized from the timeframe of his story that the job he was talking about was as the security guard outside my office.

During the entire time I worked there, it never dawned on me to think what life was like for this man who was standing guard outside our building. I had missed the opportunity to walk down a jetway of life and take off on what might have been a turbulent or uncomfortable flight, getting to know this man. I could have given him the dignity of more than just a quiet hello in the morning; I could have provided him the chance to know that someone else appreciated him and was invested, even if just a little, in his life.

There are so many jetways we don't venture down, lured instead to other choices that seem like they will take us to easier, more relaxed and carefree destinations. Sometimes we have to take the boring, mundane or challenging trips in life, and venture down jetways we are uncertain of in order to get where we are really supposed to be.

As we approach Thanksgiving, and give more thought and attention to the things for which we are most thankful and appreciative, it gives a chance to reflect on our lives – where we have been, where we are and where we are going. Which jetways we have ventured down, which ones we have shied away from or outright refused to travel, and which ones we risked taking, and how it has impacted our lives.

Life is a grand adventure. You may not have the whole itinerary planned out, but be brave and be bold. Choose a jetway you want to try, and, one foot in front of the other, off you go. Though the journey may be uncertain, it is sure to be memorable.

Happy reading, and Happy Thanksgiving!

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