

Ken Stoltzfus

Flying Higher



Bare Essentials

No. 7 in a series

Daring to pursue the highest possible level in all of life

The pilot of our Cessna Caravan was sitting in the cockpit on the ramp in Entebbe, Uganda. Another pilot walked up, looked inside and said "My, you guys fly by the seat of your pants, don't you?"

Well now, aaah - - we thought we had a well equipped aircraft there! King flight director, dual GPS, dual this and that, color radar and all kinds of nice stuff to make that panel chock full! It was a whole lot more than anything else in the fleet had! What in the world was he talking about?

For part of 1996-97 I was the flight program manager for a missionary organization in East Africa. It was over the time of the rebellion in Zaire (now Congo) and we were evacuating missionaries from danger there.

The U.S. Air Force was also in Uganda because of the Zaire situation. But not with Cessna Caravans. They brought their fancy stuff. And when you look inside you know they don't fly by the seat of their pants! Their avionics probably cost more than our whole airplane!

What is essential and what is not?

I used to occasionally fly into New York's Idlewild Airport, and regularly into Philly International in the Cessna 170B and 180. We had a 27-channel Narco Mk-II Omnigator, and we thought we were hot stuff because it had whistle-stop tuning on the receiver. Wowzee!!



Obviously the situation today is more complex. It's essential to have more than an Omnigator. I know that. But consider the jet jock's observation in Entebbe!

It's easy to get used to fancy things and forget the basics. We like the latest and greatest and before long we come to depend on them.

I was at a Christian Pilot's Retreat once and said something about my home town, Coatesville, PA. One of the participants asked if I knew of the little grass strip there. I did, 'cause that's where I grew up.

Turns out he was a PanAm, 747 captain. He flew all over the world with a cockpit full of fancy gadgets - - and a co-pilot and flight engineer.

Well, one day he rented a Piper Cherokee. All it had was a couple of simple NavComs whose presentation confused him. No familiar HSI, Flight Director or even RMI! He had long ago forgotten pilotage and got totally lost going from New Jersey to Maryland. He wound up on the very muddy sod runway at my home place in PA to try to sort out where he was. It was a good story and for years to come we laughed together about it.

One of the disservices that theologians have rendered the church is in making the simple, complex.

Coming to know God, through Jesus Christ, is really quite simple. But to many it is hidden under the layers of theological discussion and controversy which fill volumes - - even libraries.

That stuff's all very nice. It can make the trip more enjoyable in a certain way. We have fun twisting different theories around like knobs on our avionics.

But here's the problem. We have come to depend on the complicated, interwoven doctrines of the church to tell us where we're at with God. And we have forgotten the basics. The bare essentials for "getting there." Like these:

- But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12
- For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. John 3:16, 17
- And all who believe in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them. John 3:36
- For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. - -
- For "Anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:9-13, portions

Bottom line now. Is it true that if you had a transponder and a transceiver, that you could in an emergency, fly IFR coast to coast without a GPS, VOR, ADF or Loran? I think so. If ATC knows where you are and where you're going, and if you will talk with them, they can get you there.

You know where I'm taking this, don't you!?! And it's true. God knows where you are. He knows where you need to go. If you will talk with Him, He'll hear you and tell you how to get you there!

The Christian life is the good way to live. The most deeply satisfying. One misses the best, when we choose anything else. But if, even in the last instant of life, you acknowledge your need of God, and believe in God's Son, you will have made your peace with Him. You will miss the rewards of walking with God in this life, but you will spend "forever" with Him. All you need is one channel. Your heart to His.

Makes my 27-channel Omnigator sound like more than a bare essential, doesn't it!

I hope to see you there!

1999, rev. 7/10, Bible quotations from NLT



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A Commercial Pilot with S&MEL&S, DC-3, Glider and Instrument ratings; CFI with A-I-G ratings; Ground Instructor A&I; and A&P, Ken lives in northeast Ohio with Elaine, his wife of over 50 years. His hobbies are aviation photography and collecting aircraft photos, negatives and slides.

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