



POWER *for* LIVING

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I Can Do All Things Through Christ



Explosion on Flight 232

I Was Determined to Handle It On My Own

BY JERRY SCHEMSEL

COVER PHOTO AND PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY OF JERRY SCHEMSEL

The explosion sounded like a bomb going off. Immediately the DC-10 dropped into a steep descent. Screams filled the cabin.

I held my breath and gripped my armrests.

Suddenly the plane came out of its drop. As the plane began to level, some of the panic subsided and I started breathing again.

At that moment, our brave cockpit captain, Al Haynes, got on the PA system. He told us the Number 2 engine had exploded and damaged

the plane to the point that the cockpit crew was still having a difficult time controlling the aircraft.

He explained that we would be making an emergency landing in Sioux City.

Few of us passengers realized how much danger we were in. None of us knew the explosion had been so violent, so catastrophic, that it had taken out the entire hydraulic system.

The aircraft was thoroughly crippled.

We were in serious trouble.



I was 29 years old at that time. I was a freelance sportscaster but my full-time job was as Deputy Commissioner for the fledgling Continental Basketball Association, which was the minor league system of the NBA. I was traveling that day with Jay Ramsdell, the Commissioner of the league and a great friend. We were heading to Chicago, then on to Columbus, Ohio, the site of our college draft which was taking place the next day.

Just before touchdown, Captain Haynes told us to get into emergency

landing position, something we had just practiced with the flight attendants.

“OK everyone, we’re going to touch down in 30 seconds,” he said, sounding confident. “Everyone, now, brace, brace, brace.”

I had no idea we were dropping at a rate twice that of a normal DC-10 landing.

Upon impact, all chaos broke loose.

Bodies flew through the cabin, some still strapped to chairs. Debris was propelled everywhere through



Triage at Sioux Gateway Airport following the crash of United Airlines Flight 232

smoke and fire. The deafening sounds of steel grinding on steel drowned out all the screaming.

About the time I thought we might actually coast to a stop, the plane flipped over and cartwheeled end to end.

I held my arm rests with all the strength I could muster.

Upside down and backwards, the plane slid another 4,100 feet before digging into the soft dirt of a cornfield next to the runway and coming to a jolting stop.

I was hanging upside down in my seat, which was still intact. I was surrounded, however, by mangled, empty seats with no one in them.

The cabin was filling with smoke and fire very quickly. Detaching myself from my seat, I fell to the ceiling of the cabin. Making my way toward the back, away from the smoke and flames as best I could, I realized I was surrounded by the bodies of many who had not survived. I tried not to look at their eyes.

I eventually found a jagged gap in the torn fuselage. I slipped through, into sunlight and a cornfield. I made it! And without any serious injuries.

Of the 296 people on board, 184 of us survived. One hundred and twelve of us did not.

My friend Jay didn't make it.

At the time of the crash, I had no spiritual foundation. I believed in a higher power, but I never took religion of any kind seriously. I had some friends who called themselves Christians, who had made this so-called "decision for Christ, but I always dismissed them as misguided and weak. I didn't need this Jesus guy. I could do life on my own. I always had.

Immediately after the crash, people started telling me I should see a trauma counselor. I was clearly struggling with the plane crash, and especially Jay's death, but I thought I was holding everything together pretty well. Almost everyone immediately around me had died in the event, including an 18-month-old



boy sitting right in front of me. It was hard to process all this but I honestly thought I was OK.

Then, a couple weeks after the crash, just to get people off my back, I agreed to see a counselor.

The counselor was a soft-spoken Vietnam veteran named Tom. Tom politely told me about Post Trauma Stress Disorder and how it was going to hit me, how there was really no way of avoiding it. He explained that I would experience anger, survivor guilt, listlessness, and depression.

I had never heard of PTSD. And I didn't need to know about it. It was not going to affect me. I was tough and determined. And if PTSD *did* show up, I would kick its butt.

As the days turned into weeks and weeks into months after the crash, all the PTSD symptoms showed up, just like Tom said they would, and I found myself on a downward spiral that I could not stop.

I quit my job with the league. My marriage was starting to fall apart. I had six siblings, and my parents were alive then, and I wouldn't even return their calls.

On the 10-month anniversary of the crash, I sat down in a chair, alone in the little apartment my wife and I had in Denver. And I realized that for the first time in the 30 years of my life, I was knocked down and I could not pick myself back up. I couldn't do this on my own anymore. The way I had always fought my battles, totally on my own and in my own strength, was not working any more.

That's when I surrendered. That's when I turned to God.

I didn't ask God to get me out



Training for the 2015 Race Across America bike race. Jerry teamed with Brad Cooper to win the two person relay division.

of depression or save my marriage or give me a new job. I said simply, "God, please give me some relief from the effects of this crash. I simply can't do this on my own anymore."

As I said those words, something came over me. Something happened. Something changed. It wasn't a physical sensation, and it wasn't an audible voice. It was simply an overwhelming feeling of peace and contentment that moved through me.

At that moment I knew that the ally I had just invited into my life was powerful beyond my comprehension. I knew that eventually I was going to win every single battle. It wouldn't be easy, but I knew I was going to win the battle because of who was fighting the battle with and for me.

The very next day, for the first



time in my life, I opened a Bible.

As I read God's Word, I realized that if I wanted to follow in the footsteps of friends who claimed they'd had their sins forgiven and their spot in heaven secured, I had one more big decision to make:

I needed to decide to accept Christ as my Savior.

Two weeks later, I sat down in the same chair in our little empty apartment and I said something like a sinner's prayer. I told God that I believed Jesus was His Son. I told Him I believed Jesus was sent here to pay the penalty for my sins. I told Him that I wanted to open up my heart and let Jesus take residence there.

The prayer was short and concise. And life changing. It turned out to be the greatest thing I've ever done, the greatest decision I've ever made.

After becoming a Christian, God led me back into broadcasting and has blessed me in unbelievable ways in that business. I spent 20 years as a play-by-play announcer in the NBA and now well over a decade in Major League Baseball. And I have attempted to use that platform, as a broadcaster and public figure, to honor God. And more importantly, to point people toward His Son. I haven't done it perfectly, but I think I've given it a pretty good shot.

Today, when I look back at the crash, here is what I see. I see God






PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY SCUMMEL

Jerry Scummel and the legendary Vin Scully during Scully's 67th and final season broadcasting Dodgers games

saying, "Jerry, you were so stubborn, it took 30 years and a plane crash to get your attention. But now that I have it, I want to tell you about My Son. And more importantly, I want you to spend the rest of your life telling others about My Son."

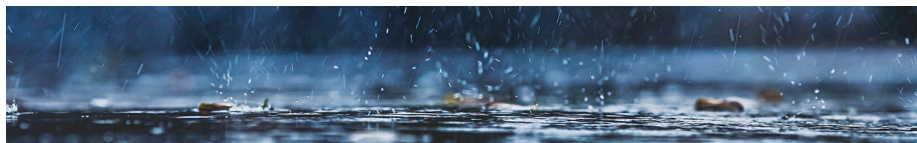
Why did I survive the crash of Flight 232? I don't have all the answers, but here's what I do know:

I survived, ten months later I was saved, and today I live to tell the story. Not my story, but God's story of the redemption available to all of us through His Son, Jesus Christ. 

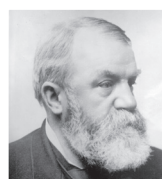
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For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. – Luke 19:10 (NKJV)



Oh, that we would wake up to the thought of what it is to be lost. The world has been lulled to sleep by Satan, who is going up and down telling people that it doesn't mean anything. I believe in old-fashioned heaven and hell. Christ came to earth to save us from a terrible hell, and any man who is cast down to hell from here must go in the full blaze of the gospel—and over the mangled body of the Son of God.

We hear of a man who has lost his health, and we sympathize with him

and say it is very sad. Here is another man who has lost his wealth, and we say, “That is too bad.” Here is another man who has lost his reputation, his standing among men. “That is sadder still,” we say. We know what it is to lose health and wealth and reputation, but what is the loss of all these things compared with the loss of the soul?

Who in your circle of friends and family does not know Christ? Ask God to give you a burden for that person's salvation—and ask for opportunities to share the love of Christ with that individual.

D.L. Moody (1837 - 1899), was one of nineteenth century America's greatest evangelists. His preaching ministry touched the lives of thousands on both sides of the Atlantic. He founded the Moody Bible Institute.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

SUNDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 1
MONDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 2
TUESDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 3—4
WEDNESDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 5
THURSDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 6—7
FRIDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 8
SATURDAY	<input type="checkbox"/>	Acts 9





God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. – Romans 8:16 (MSG)

Becoming a Christian is not a matter of weighing the evidence for and against faith and drawing your own conclusion. It is not about calculating the odds of God's existence, putting your chips on the table, and waiting for the hereafter to discover whether you made the right bet. We become Christians when we encounter God through His Son, get to know Jesus personally and intimately, fall deeply in love with Him, and choose to commit our lives to Him. And all this happens through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

At a miraculous point in time long ago, the almighty, invisible God came to earth and related to us as a fellow human being. For a few brief years we could see His face, hear His voice, touch His hands. Now that's

no longer possible, yet soon after Jesus left this planet and ascended into Heaven, God gave His followers an unimaginable gift: He poured out the Holy Spirit into their hearts. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit became our new Immanuel—"God with Us." On that day God fulfilled His promise never to leave us or forsake us, and Jesus kept His Word to be with us until the end of time.

If all the Bibles in the world disappeared, if all the churches were gone, if all Christian books, CDs, radio stations, DVDs, and TV shows went away, every believer would retain the essential component of faith, the "one thing that's needed" according to Jesus—God's presence within. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee that God is real, and we belong to Him. What an astonishing gift of grace!



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