

# AVIATION MIRACLES

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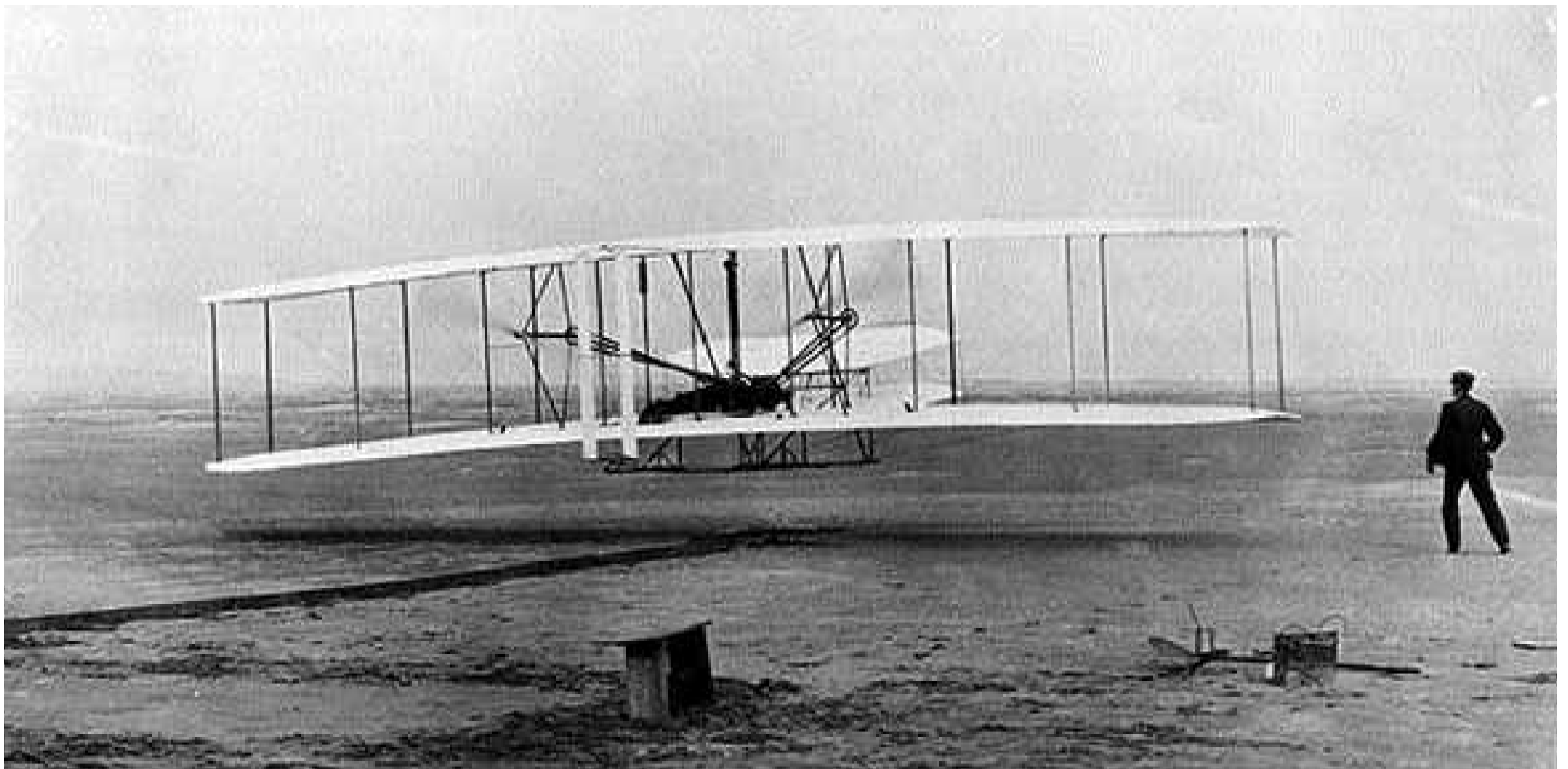
Insights into the Truth behind the stories



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## First Powered Flight

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**One Saturday in 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright made final repairs and adjustments to their aircraft. This was the culmination of four years' work by the brothers. Next morning, the aircraft was ready and wind conditions were perfect, but there would be no flight that day. It was Sunday - the Lord's day - and neither Wilbur nor Orville worked on the Lord's day.**

Wilbur Wright was born on April 16, 1867 on a farm 13 kilometres east of Newcastle, Indiana. He was the third son of Bishop Milton Wright, a minister of the United Brethren Church. The family later moved to Dayton, Ohio, where the fourth son, Orville, was born on August 19, 1871. As boys, Wilbur and Orville loved playing with anything mechanical and investigating how it worked. Their toys included a gyroscope, an old sewing machine, and a small helicopter like toy powered by rubber bands. During their youth, they began building their own machinery. They built a complicated lathe, and Wilbur designed and built a machine to fold newspapers. This ability to construct machinery themselves proved extremely valuable.

### Broken Teeth

Both Wilbur and Orville did well at school, but neither went to University. Wilbur's plans to attend Yale College and become a clergyman like his father were dashed when he lost most of his front teeth in an accident while playing ice hockey. It was only years afterwards when he was fitted with artificial teeth that his confidence to speak in public returned.

After the accident, Wilbur spent several years at home caring for his dying mother. In March 1889, Wilbur and Orville started producing a newspaper in Dayton. Seventeen-year-old Orville was the publisher and 21-year-old Wilbur was editor. Soon they were publishing other newspapers as well. In 1892, they became fascinated with the bicycle. The penny-farthing bicycle had become obsolete, so while continuing their publishing, Wilbur and Orville opened a shop selling more up to date machines.

Their active minds constantly sought ways to be more efficient and Orville invented a calculating machine in 1895 to make their bookkeeping easier. Next they decided to design and manufacture their own bicycles rather than merely sell those manufactured by others. Their mechanical abilities ensured their success, but the manufacture and sale of

bicycles was very seasonal leaving Wilbur and Orville spare time during the cold months each year to pursue another interest.

### Flying Machines

Wilbur and Orville's interest in flying had begun with the helicopter like toy their father had given them, and continued through making, flying and selling kites. In 1899 they decided to study aeronautics. Neither of them had officially completed High School, but they were certainly educated and scientific in their approach. The first step towards powered flight was to construct a glider that would lift a man's weight. To test the glider, steady head-winds were needed. The most suitable weather conditions were found at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, during summer and early autumn. For the next four years, the Wright brothers spent most of their time experimenting at Kitty Hawk, and the remainder of the year in Dayton studying and planning. The glider which Wilbur and Orville built in 1900 successfully supported a man's weight but was difficult to control. Several years earlier Wilbur marvelled that the Creator's 'flying machine' - the bird - had such excellent manoeuvrability. Wilbur sought to unlock the bird's flying secrets and spent many hours with binoculars studying birds in the wilderness near Dayton. He found that birds manoeuvre by changing the shape of their wings so the two brothers designed a system of pulleys and cables that changed the shape of the glider's wings. By doing this they achieved manoeuvrability during their 1901 experiments, but were disappointed with the lift they had achieved. They had designed the curve of the glider's wings using published tables of information, but something was wrong. Wilbur wrote: 'Having set out with absolute faith in the existing scientific data, we were driven to doubt one thing after another until, after two years of experiment, we cast it aside, and decided to rely entirely on our own investigations.'

### Solved Balance Problem

Wilbur and Orville's ingenuity now shone through. They set up a wind tunnel in their bicycle shop experimenting with different aerofoil surfaces. Their research produced the first reliable tables of the effect of air pressure on aerofoil sections, which they used to good effect during their 1902 gliding experiments obtaining better lift than before, as well as solving the problems of balance in flight.

# Concorde

## Statistics

Concorde measures 204ft in length - stretching between six and ten inches in-flight due to heating of the airframe. She is painted in a specially developed white paint to accommodate these changes and to dissipate the heat generated by supersonic flight. The tip of the nose reaches a temperature of 127(C compared to an outside air temperature of -50(C. The wingspan is 83ft 8ins - much less than conventional subsonic aircraft as Concorde flies in a totally different way using "Vortex Lift" to achieve her exceptional performance. The height is 37ft 1ins. The characteristic droop nose is lowered to improve pilots' visibility for take-off and landing.

## Power

Concorde's four engines - specially designed Rolls-Royce/ Snecma Olympus 593's - give more than 38,000lbs of thrust each, with 'reheat'. This adds fuel to the final stage of the engine to produce the extra power required for take-off and the transition to supersonic flight. They are the most powerful pure jet engines flying commercially.

## Speed

Concorde takes off at 220 knots (250mph), compared with 165 knots for most subsonic aircraft. She cruises at around 1350mph - more than twice the speed of sound - and at an altitude of up to 60,000 ft (over 11 miles high). A typical London to New York crossing takes a little less than three and a half hours as opposed to about eight hours for a subsonic flight. Travelling Westwards, the five-hour time difference means Concorde effectively arrives before she has taken off. She travels "faster than the sun".

## Service

More than 2.5 million passengers have flown supersonically on British Airways' Concorde since entering service in 1976.

The most frequent passenger, an oil company executive, has clocked up almost 70 round trip transatlantic crossings a year.

Since entering, commercial service, British Airways Concorde have operated almost 50,000 flights, travelling some 145 million miles and clocking up more than 145,000 flying hours - over 100,000 of them supersonically.

Each Concorde is young in "aeroplane years" having completed about the same number of take-offs and landings as a 3-4 year old 737 and the same number of hours as a 4-5 year old 747.

British Airways has clocked up more supersonic miles than all the world's Air Forces put together.

Concorde has flown round the world covering 28,238 miles in 29 hours 59 minutes

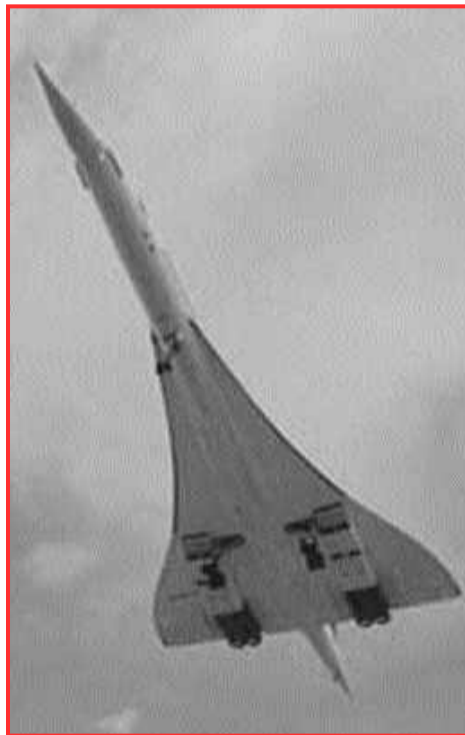
The fastest crossing of the Atlantic has been from west to east in 2 hours 52 minutes and 59 seconds.

Two British Airways Concorde flew supersonically in formation to chase the total eclipse of the sun in August 1999



**Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
If I go up to the heavens you are there,  
If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
If I settle on the far side of the sea,  
Even there your hand will guide me,  
Your right hand will hold me fast.**

*David Bar-Jesse  
King of Israel*



Statistics courtesy of British Airways [www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)

Photos. Copyright ( Adrian Meredith [www.concordephotos.com](http://www.concordephotos.com)

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The brothers were now ready for the final step - the addition of a lightweight engine. However, no suitable engine was available, and they could not find an engineering company prepared to take them seriously and build what they requested. So they designed and built their own engine. Their experience with bicycles was put to use in designing the drive for the propellers, and these were built according to their own data on air pressure.

Delayed by mishaps, technical problems and severe storms, the Wright brothers continued their 1903 experiments as the bitterly cold winter set in. Despite the harsh conditions, the tone of their letters to their sister Kate reflected their continuing cheerfulness. As always, they steadfastly observed their principle of not working on Sundays, even though they often had to wait several days for suitable wind conditions to return.

Finally, on Thursday December 17th 1903, Wilbur and Orville achieved their goal - the world's first powered flight. Orville flew the Wright Flyer a distance of 37 meters (120 feet), less than the length of Concorde, and stayed aloft for 12 seconds. Later the same day Wilbur flew over 260 meters in a flight lasting 59 seconds.

## Christian Character

Wilbur and Orville had both received Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour during their youth. Throughout their lives, they refused to work on Sunday, neither did they drink, smoke or gamble. The level of co-operation between Wilbur and Orville was truly remarkable, even during their somewhat loud debates over possible solutions to problems. They remained cheerful while experiencing danger and physical hardship. They were not dependent on praise and recognition for their motivation, and when fame and fortune finally came, they retained their humility.

The Christian character displayed by the Wright brothers was evident to those around them. Co-founder of the Rolls Royce Motor Company, The Hon.C.S. Rolls, gave the following description of Wilbur and Orville: 'They have lived through continual accusations of bluff; through disbelief and ridicule and have been unaffected. Now they have seen the sudden turn of popular opinion and have sprung to fame; but they are still



## High Flight

**Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds,— and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air. . . .**

**Up, up the long, delirious burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.**

*John Gillespie Magee, Jr.*

equally pursuing their daily work with their own hands in their own quiet way.'

And what was their father's explanation for these enviable characteristics displayed by Wilbur and Orville?

'He never tired of relating the positive effect that the Bible had on his children.'

The Wright brothers used intelligence, experience, and ingenuity to design their aircraft. They allowed chance to play no part. From studying God's creation in the form of bird flight, they were helped to develop their own flying machine. If we marvel at how great their achievement was, how much more should we give glory to the Creator who designed flight in the first place.

*First Published in Crossway Magazine*



### Who Is He?

“Jesus changed everything — from our system of justice to our concept of time.” He is history’s greatest personality. Standing at the very centre of human history,

Jesus changed everything — from our system of justice to our concept of time. The Bible tells us that Jesus was born to a virgin, lived a sinless life and taught only a few years in Palestine before being crucified on a Roman cross. Three days after his burial, he rose from the dead, was seen by at least 500 different people and shortly after, ascended to heaven.

During his time on earth, Jesus claimed he had the power to forgive sins, cast out demons and determine people’s eternal destiny. In short, he declared himself to be God.

Make no mistake, the story of Jesus is an incredible one. But for some people, it just seems too incredible to be true. Jesus may have been an important religious figure, or even a great moral teacher, they reason, but he could not have been God.

This position may seem like a valid one. But as former Oxford university professor C.S. Lewis explained in his book, *Mere Christianity*, “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher; he’d either be a lunatic — on a level with a man who says he’s a poached egg — or else he’d be the devil of hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse.”

Lewis went on to say, “You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”



### Are His Claims Real?

There is more evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writings than any 10 pieces of classical literature put together.”

Was Jesus’ claim to be God nothing more than a figment of the early church’s imagination? Something added to the Bible by Jesus’ followers?

It’s an interesting idea, but most scholars believe that at least three of the Bible’s gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, Luke) were written within a generation of Jesus. Many eyewitnesses would still have been alive to disagree with these first century writings. But there is no evidence of that occurring.

In fact, there is more evidence for the reliability of the New Testament writings than any 10 pieces of classical literature put together. Historians of ancient Greece, for example, have to rely on only eight manuscripts of Thucydide’s *History of the Peloponnesian War* with the earliest one written some 1,300 years after the originals. Biblical scholars meanwhile, have more than 20,000 New Testament manuscripts at their disposal, with several copied less than 200 years after Jesus’ birth.

Lastly, there is no question that the early Christians believed

## You Have Control by Captain John Eagles.

With this phrase the captain and co-pilot hand over the flying of an aircraft one to the other- there is then no doubt in either mind just who is handling the flying controls. It is a system that works; it is built on trust and has as its priority the safety of the flight.

Every person’s life is like a flight, from birth to death, from take-off to touch down. Life needs positive control. Many people rely on their own instincts to help them through life right to the end, but a Christian is one who has declared emphatically to Jesus Christ “you have control”. Christianity is not a dull ritualistic way of life so often associated with ‘church’, but a dynamic experience of the living God. In His death on a cross and then by rising, alive again from the grave, Jesus has overcome the problem brought about by our rebellion and lack of trust in God - anyone can turn to Jesus and receive the gift of eternal life by simply acknowledging “You have control!”

“For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Bible.

First Published in *Crossway Magazine*



## The perfect person

in and worshipped one of their own countrymen as God in human form. It’s never been seriously disputed. Which leaves us to wonder at such behaviour. If, in fact, Jesus never claimed to be God, what were a bunch of monotheists (believers in only one god) doing falling at his feet?



### Lord, Liar or Lunatic?

“He told people to be honest whatever the cost, promised them eternal life without sorrow or pain and said he could forgive sin.” So Jesus really did claim to be God. Now what?

Simply put, his claim can either be true or false. If it’s false, then he was a liar, deliberately misleading people. Or, he was a lunatic — a man who sincerely believed himself to be God when he wasn’t.

If we accept Jesus as a liar, then we must also call him evil. Let’s face it. He told people to be honest whatever the cost, promised them eternal life without sorrow or pain and said he could forgive sin. Meanwhile, he was living a colossal lie? Not likely.

As for the lunatic option, it too is out of the question. Jesus’ words and actions just aren’t consistent with those of a deluded or disturbed man. Even his harshest critics cannot find fault in his teaching. Instead, he is most often regarded as a man of penetrating insight.

Lord? It’s the only option left. If Jesus wasn’t a liar or lunatic, then he could only have been who he said he was — God in human form. The principles of logic demand that conclusion. More than that, it explains why unprecedented and miraculous things happened in Jesus’ presence.

Consider the man who’d been lame for 38 years and who, after one conversation with Jesus, was healed (John 5:1-13). Or the man who’d been born blind and started seeing after Jesus touched his eyes (John 9:1-15). Or Lazarus, who’d been dead for three days, but came back to life at Jesus’ command (John 11:38-44).

It’s hard to imagine what it would have been like to witness these amazing events, but nevertheless, they happened. Even Jesus’ enemies said so. They saw the lame man walking (John 5:9-10) and questioned the blind man about his sight (John 9:8-34).

Not understanding who Jesus was, some people wondered: “How could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” (John 9:16).

The man who was once blind but could now see knew the true answer. “If this man were not from God, he couldn’t do it” (John 9:33).

## MAKE THE CHANGE

Here are four principles to help you discover how you can have a relationship with God



Principle One: God loves you that he wants you to spend eternity with Him. Jesus said, “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” (John 3:16). Jesus came so that each of us could know and understand God in a personal way. Jesus alone can bring meaning and purpose to life.

Principle Two: All of us are sinful and separated from God, therefore we cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for our life. We need Jesus. The Bible says, “...all fall short of God’s glorious standard” (Romans 3:23b). Though God intended for us to have a relationship with Him, by nature we want to do things our own way. We’re often stubborn, selfish, and frequently unable to follow through our promises.

Deep down, our attitude may be one of active rebellion or passive indifference, but it’s all evidence of what the Bible calls sin — an old archery term which literally means “missing the mark.”

Principle Three: Jesus Christ is God’s solution to the problem of human imperfection and evil. Because of Jesus’ death on the cross, we don’t have to be separated from God any longer. Jesus paid the price for our sin and in so doing, bridged the gap between God and us. For not only did Jesus die for our sin, He also rose from the dead and proved beyond doubt that he can rightfully promise eternal life—that He is the Son of God and only by Him can we know God.

Instead of trying harder to reach God for ourselves, we simply need to accept Jesus and his sacrifice as the only way. “I am the way, the truth and the life,” Jesus said. “No one can come to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He also said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish” (John 11:25-26).

Principle Four: We must personally believe and accept Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; then we can know and experience God’s love and plan for our life. The Bible says, “For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no-one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8,9).

The precise words you use to accept Christ and commit yourself to God are not important. He knows the intentions of your heart. Your prayer can be as simple as “Help!” or it can focus on an issue that is specific to your situation. If you are unsure of what to pray, you could use the following sample prayer to get started:

*Dear God, I want to know you. I’m sorry for the things I’ve done that have broken my relationship with you. Thank you for giving your son Jesus to die on the cross for me so that this relationship can be restored. Only through Jesus can You give me the power to change and become the person You made me to be. Thank you for forgiving my past. I give my life to Jesus. Amen.”*

Acknowledgements to Power to Change

# Cosmic Creator

If you're a space buff, you probably know that 20th July 2003 is the 34th anniversary of Apollo 11, the first mission to land on the moon. At 8:17 p.m. GMT, millions of people on Earth heard Mission Commander Neil Armstrong's historic words: "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." No one on Earth outside Mission Control, however, knew what Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin did right after landing - not until after they had returned to Earth.

The landing itself took quite some time. Landing the Lunar Module, or LM, was a bit more complicated than turning off the ignition and setting the parking brake. The astronauts had to do about two hours' worth of adjusting valves, programming computers, calculating telemetry and other chores that prepared the LM to take off again. That completed, they could pay attention to the fact that they were on the moon.

Aldrin had brought along a tiny communion set, the bread and wine used by Christians to proclaim the death of Jesus until he makes His return. "This is the LM pilot," he radioed to Earth. "I'd like to take this opportunity to ask every person listening in, whoever and wherever they may be, to pause for a moment and contemplate the events of the past few hours and to give thanks in his or her own way."

"In the radio blackout," he wrote later, "I opened the little plastic packages which contained the bread and the wine. I poured the wine into the chalice our church had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon, the wine slowly curled and gracefully came up the side of the cup. Then I read the Scripture, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Whosoever abides in me will bring forth much fruit. Without me you can do nothing'. I had intended to relay my communion passage back to earth, but at the last minute it was requested that I not do this. I agreed reluctantly... Eagle's metal body creaked. I ate the tiny Host and swallowed the wine. I gave thanks for the intelligence and spirit that had brought two young pilots to the Sea of Tranquility. It was interesting for me to think: the very first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the very first food eaten there, were the communion elements."

**Why the radio silence?** It started on Christmas Eve of 1968, when Apollo 8 was orbiting the moon. The astronauts - Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and William Anders - did a live television broadcast that evening. Borman, a Presbyterian lay reader, had jokingly apologized to his church for not being present on Christmas Eve. To conclude the broadcast, he took turns with the other astronauts in reading the account of Creation from Genesis chapter 1. "And from the crew of Apollo 8," Borman added, "we close with a good night, a merry Christmas and God bless all of you - all of you on the good Earth."

Not everyone was pleased to see astronauts reading the Bible on national television. Madalyn Murray O'Hair, a famous atheist who took credit for the 1963 Supreme Court case that removed prayer from public schools, was particularly outraged. She sued NASA, saying, "Congress did not appropriate money for a Christian missionary adventure."

The Supreme Court eventually rejected her case, but NASA was still fighting O'Hair in court during the Apollo 11 mission. Afraid of provoking another lawsuit, NASA silenced the lunar communion service.

**"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands"** (Psalm 19:1). Many astronauts besides Aldrin and the Apollo 8 crew have recognized this. James Irwin said that it was his experience exploring the moon on the Apollo 15 mission in July 1971 that moved him to devote the rest of his life to spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. He often spoke of the lunar mission as an epiphany, declaring "I felt the power of God as I've never felt it before." While on the moon, at the end of the first day exploring the rugged lunar highlands, he said he was reminded of "my favourite passage from the Psalms." Speaking by radio to Mission Control in Houston, he began quoting the passage, "I'll look into the hills from whence cometh my help," and added quickly, "but, of course, we get quite a bit of help from Houston, too." He was mindful perhaps of the O'Hair lawsuit. Senator John Glenn, the first American to orbit the earth in 1962, said during his space shuttle flight in November 1998, "To look out at this kind of creation out here and not believe in God is to me impossible. It just strengthens my faith."

NASA did not have to worry about another lawsuit from Madalyn Murray O'Hair over Glenn's remarks: In September 1995, Murray O'Hair disappeared. Her son, granddaughter and hundreds of thousands of dollars belonging to American Atheists Inc. disappeared at the same time. Some think the three atheists embezzled the money and fled the country. Others think the 77-year-old Murray O'Hair, whose health had been failing, left the country to die privately so that no Christians could pray for her. She had previously written that she did not want any "Christers" praying for her - especially her disowned son, William J. Murray, who became a Christian in 1980.

Whatever happened to Madalyn Murray O'Hair, it's no secret that she hated the very name of God. When the government seized her house and belongings to pay her back taxes, they discovered she had marked out the words "In God We Trust" on all the money in her home.

Madalyn Murray O'Hair could intimidate NASA and deface Federal Reserve banknotes. But she could not stop her son from turning to Christ, despite the years she spent telling him there was no God. And no one - not Madalyn Murray O'Hair, not all the atheists on Earth - can remove God's testimony from the heavens. As long as the sun, moon and stars exist, they will speak to us on His behalf.

Acknowledgements to Greg Hartmann and Breakaway magazine. Copyright (c) 1999 Focus on the Family.



## The Moon Is Not Enough

Charles Duke LM Pilot, Apollo 16

**I volunteered for the space program for the thrill of adventure. Believe me, waiting for take-off while sitting on top of a Saturn rocket that's 120 meters tall and weighs six-and-a-half million pounds - that's excitement! I knew I was in for one great ride! But what can top 11 days in space and 3 days trekking around the moon?**

I was 36, with a successful military career behind me, and I began to wonder, What now? I longed for the thrill of adventure, but there were no more flights blasting off for the moon, and only sketches of a space shuttle that might be built someday. I was bored. Fame, fortune, a spot in the history books: I had it all. But if you were a fly on the wall in my home, you would have seen that I wasn't so hot. I was failing miserably as a husband and father. But instead of addressing my problems, I took my eyes off the moon and put them on money. Surely, I reasoned, that would bring the satisfaction that even the moon had failed to deliver.

Marriage certainly hadn't delivered any satisfaction. Dottie and I had married in 1963. But it wasn't long before I was wondering, Is this all there is to marriage? Within a few years we were heading full-speed toward divorce. I'd noticed there were a lot of good-looking women in the world, and a lot of them liked astronauts. I hoped Dottie would decide to leave me. Instead, she told me she was depressed and thinking about suicide. I didn't have answers for that one.

About that time, our church hosted a "Renewal Weekend," which we attended. While Dottie was engrossed in the first-person testimonies about how Christ had changed people's lives, my mind was on the million-and-a-half dollars I'd just borrowed from the bank. I'd purchased a beer distributorship, and I figured it'd better work or I'd be in trouble. My money worries drowned out most of what I heard at the weekend seminar. Though I had gone to church all my life, I had all of God I needed in that one hour every Sunday morning. Even the moon had not been a spiritual experience. I wasn't looking for God. I knew Jesus the way you know the United States presidents - in name only.

Sure enough, my business succeeded. The money rolled in. After six months, I sold out at a handsome profit. Again I was bored.

But Dottie wasn't. She had changed. Her depression had lifted, and she demonstrated a new, believing faith. She turned to God - not me - for answers to her problems. It was appealing, and our marriage improved.

One night we attended a Bible study that focused on one penetrating question: Who was Jesus? All my life I had said the words, "the Son of God," but I had never thought about it in a deep way. That night I came face-to-face with the option of following Him. I prayed with Dottie in the front seat of our car and gave my life over to Christ. I didn't see angels. Didn't hear music. No blinding lights. But I knew what I knew. It was real. The next day, I awoke with an insatiable desire to read the Bible.

It quickly became evident to me that my lifestyle didn't line up with the Bible's teaching. The Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25). I had always thought marriage was a negotiated deal, like business. The Bible also speaks pointedly about using words to heal, not wound. I felt convicted; I had always been harsh with my sons, ages 11 and 13. I had a lot of mending to do. I asked God, Dottie and my sons to forgive me. I asked God for the strength to love my wife. Fifteen years have passed since then and my love for her grows daily. I'm more in love with Dottie today than I was 29 years ago. God also graciously restored my relationship with my sons, now ages 24 and 26. Watching God heal our family and pull us off the road to divorce has been true adventure.

**It cost the government \$400 million for me to walk three days on the moon - and it's over. But to walk with Jesus is free, and it lasts forever.**

As told to 'Power to Change'

## Astronauts' Faith Lives On

**On Feb. 1, 2003 Col. Rick Husband, Lt. Col. Michael Anderson and five other astronauts were killed when the space shuttle Columbia broke apart only minutes before its scheduled landing in Florida. Both Husband and Anderson were known for their Christian witness in the community around Johnson Space Center in Texas. The impact of their witness continues today. If your life ended tomorrow, would people remember you for your job or for the way you lived your life?**

### Priorities

"Rick Husband was a boy of 4 when he first thought of being an astronaut," President George W. Bush said the memorial service held at Johnson Space Center. "As a man and having become an astronaut, he found it was even more important to love his family and serve his Lord." Neither Husband nor Anderson left much doubt about their priorities in life. These men loved their God, their families and their jobs — in that order, said Steve Riggle, pastor of Grace Community Church in Houston, Texas, where both men were members. Riggle said that although both men rarely told people that they were astronauts, they looked for opportunities to tell others about Christ. Anderson was an unassuming man who demonstrated God's love by reaching out to help others. He would often take his two daughters into downtown Houston, where they would feed inner-city children.

Recording artist Steve Green met Husband at a concert a few years ago. They became friends, and Green performed at pre-launch ceremonies for Husband's two space flights. "Rick was a man of faith. He lived with the Christian hope of a better place, a place called heaven," Green said in an interview with CNN. "But he also had a very fond affection for this place, for this world. And that was his zeal, to spend his life making a difference."

On the Sunday before the men went into quarantine for their space flight, the congregation at Grace Community Church prayed for the astronauts. Said Anderson at the time: "Rick and I have prayed for a successful mission, but also that somehow God would allow everyone to see our faith in Him."

### Ongoing Impact

The astronauts' prayers are being answered, in spite of the Columbia tragedy, as the story of their faith in Christ spreads. Anderson's and Husband's simple demonstrations of faith in Christ are still having an impact on their community — an impact that was evident the morning after Columbia was lost. The three Sunday-morning services at Grace Community Church were full; people from the community and reporters from across the nation were in attendance. After talking to reporters Riggle saw two women waiting to talk to him. They told him that they had worked with Husband at NASA and that Husband had often invited them to the church, but they had always declined. Finally, the day after the tragedy, they accepted Husband's invitation, came to the church and responded to the call of Christ. 200 other people also sought more information and help.

### Hope for the Future

Anderson told a friend "If this thing doesn't come out right, don't worry about me. I'm just going on higher," reflecting words written to the early church in Thessalonika "Brothers, we do not want you ... to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him".

Because of the risks involved with space flight, NASA has astronauts complete a form specifying their final requests in the event of an accident. On the bottom of his form, Husband wrote a note to Steve Riggle: "Tell them about Jesus. He means everything to me." Riggle said that in spite of their grief, the Anderson and Husband families — especially wives Sandy Anderson and Evelyn Husband — want to tell the world about the trust the two men had in Jesus. That task is being accomplished in part by the attitude that permeates the Grace Community Church congregation. A television producer visiting the church asked, "Why is everyone so composed?" Riggle answered, "It's because we know where Rick and Mike are. While we feel the loss and the grief, we know that this is not it."

### What matters most.

On January 5th, less than two weeks before the shuttle launched, the pastor had called the Husband and Anderson families to the front of the church to pray for them. In the prayer he said something that proved to be prophetic, and in hindsight sad. "Somehow during this mission, even beyond the exploits of what needs to be accomplished, we pray today there would be something eternal of impact for your kingdom; let their lives count for you, let their light shine during this time in ways that you've ordained that we know nothing about."

Now the world does know and as loved ones and strangers alike mourn the crewmembers, some of Husband's words take on even deeper meaning.

"I got to thinking about it and I thought if I ended up at the end of my life having been an astronaut, but having sacrificed my family along the way or living my life in a way that didn't glorify God, then I would look back on it with great regret, and having become an astronaut would not have mattered all that much."

**But it did matter, and so does the Christian witness he leaves behind.**

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