

On October 25, 1999, a Sunjet Aviation jet carrying golfer Payne Stewart, three passengers, and two pilots, departed Orlando and crashed near Aberdeen, SD. The NTSB determined the crash was a result of crew member incapacitation due to a leak causing a slow loss of cabin pressure. Long before the aircraft crashed, all those on-board blissfully fell asleep and perished because of a lack of oxygen to their brains and hearts (hypoxia).

A slow decompression is different than a violent, rapid decompression. However, the remedy is the same – 100% oxygen. Slow cabin decompressions can be very difficult to recognize before it's too late. That's because there's no loud noise or having the breath knocked out of you, as in a rapid decompression. The symptoms are subtle, hard to notice and come on slowly. It's insidious. *in-sid-i-ous: adjective proceeding in a gradual, subtle way, but with harmful effects.*

All pilots are trained in altitude chamber sessions so they can become familiar with their individual symptoms in slow decompression situations. Symptoms may vary, such as an increasingly drowsy and warm feeling, fingernail beds turning blue, and peripheral vision slowly closing in. Left unaddressed, one can drift off in a very relaxed state and pass out. But, with one or two breaths of 100% oxygen from their mask, he/she is back to normal and in their right mind...corrected in mere seconds!

Throughout my (John B.) career as a pilot, there was usually someone in each training session who didn't recognize their symptoms and was unable to take action. The trainers had to talk to the pilot, asking them probing questions to help them recognize the danger they were in, even to the point of yelling at them to take the simple steps to get on 100% oxygen. The hypoxia progresses to the point where only the intervention of another can help a person recover.

There are so many parallels with our relationship to sin. Some of our sin is very transparent to us – and to those close to us. We confess and repent and thank God for His forgiveness purchased through Jesus' blood. But other sin - insidious sin - can escape our heart's notice. The "little lie"; a small false expense claim at work; gossip disguised as praying for someone; little indulgences of the flesh, good deeds done with wrong motives, false humility, etc. We may be so numb and immune to what we're doing, we don't realize how far down a path we've gone until we're in a very dangerous place.

This summer, as we enter into "relaxed" and "casual" and "vacation" mode, let's not let insidious sin cause a plane crash of our faith! We can stay vigilant by

1. Understanding what tempts me
2. Sharing my temptations/weakness with a friend
3. Recognizing my symptoms and calling them out
4. Staying close to my source of 100% life-giving breath of life...Jesus Christ

*Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8)*

*But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3:13)*

*"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? (Luke 6:41-42)*