

2-2013

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Recommended Citation

Burton, Sarah, "God Got on a Plane..." (2013). *Lake Union Herald*. 173.
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/luh-pubs/173>

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God Got on a Plane...

BY SARAH BURTON

“S he is so cute!” exclaimed my seatmate, smiling at a chubby baby in the row in front of us. I smiled at his enthusiasm and began to chat with him. By the time the plane lifted off the California ground, we were deep in conversation. He was a young man in his late teens with an Irish name and an infectious enthusiasm for life. I told him of my recent wedding, and he expressed a mixture of astonishment, joy and envy at my commitment to one man who I knew to be “the one.”

“Someday, I want that,” he said wistfully. He told me about his interest in eastern meditation practices and his passion for living a healthy and balanced life: achieved by good sleep, food and an occasional smoke of marijuana. Somehow, the conversation shifted from drugs to religion. When he expressed his view that religion was a kind of positive drug that made people feel comfortable, I objected.

“Christianity, which is my religion, is anything but comfortable,” I said. “Christianity is about emptying yourself before God so He can fill you with Himself. It is about being completely naked and bare and vulnerable before God. There is nothing comfortable about that.”

He was silent.

“Being a Christian means taking up your cross and following Jesus, suffering with those who suffer and sacrificing when necessary.”

Tears began to well up in his eyes and stream down his cheeks. “I never thought of it that way,” he said softly.

His thoughts and concerns about religion, right and wrong, and his future came pouring out. While he had been raised a Catholic and attended Christian schools, the pursuit of his sport led him to form friendships with people whose



Kevin and Sarah Burton

morals he questioned. Disturbed by his love for his friends and his desire to make the right decisions in life, he wept openly.

“God put you here,” he said. And then, to my surprise, he began to talk to God aloud, thanking Him for placing me in his path.

I prayed with him, shortly before we landed in Chicago, and again he cried. “It’s been a really long time since I’ve prayed with someone,” he said,

wiping away his tears.

We parted ways in the baggage claim area, but I pray for him every day now. Our strange meeting affected him deeply, but it also affected me. At first, I kept the story to myself, as if it was too sacred to share.

See, something happened at that meeting: God was there. He took over the conversation and guided it, gave me the words to speak, and moved the heart of my seatmate.

I Corinthians 2:13 says that when we speak honestly about God, we speak *not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words*. And that’s a promise.

Sarah Burton, 21, is a senior at Andrews University where she is majoring in religion and anthropology. Sarah is a member of the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan.