

OPEN TO OPPORTUNITIES:



ALWAYS BE PREPARED
TO GIVE AN ANSWER
TO ANYONE WHO
ASKS YOU TO GIVE
THE REASON
FOR THE HOPE
THAT YOU HAVE.
BUT DO THIS WITH
GENTLENESS
AND RESPECT.

1 PETER 3:15

THE WINDOW SEAT

by Jan Struck

The flight was already delayed and, as people boarded, I hoped no one would sit next to me. Nervous, I was on my way to speak for a women's retreat. This was not the usual after-lunch entertainment; I was to be a main presenter.

Along with a missionary, no less. What could I say that could match someone who shared the Gospel in a foreign country?

Someone cleared her throat. A young woman was pointing to the window seat next to me. I smiled as I rose to let her step into the narrow row, but internally? I was groaning. Now I would not be able to spread out my notes or to double-check the numerous scriptural references I had marked. Good grief! I hoped she was not a talker.

She certainly was not very verbal at that moment. In fact, she was trembling and looked terrified. "Are you all right?" I asked. She shook her head and whispered that this was her first flight. I jumped into experienced-traveler mode and shared facts about my numerous plane trips. "But what do you *do* to stay calm?" she questioned. The response left my lips before I had time to think. "I tell Jesus the flight number and exactly where I am seated." She finally smiled and replied, "Could you mention that I'm next to you?"

And so the conversation started. She was on her way to a new job in a new city. I shared my times of uncertainty and the reassurance of God's presence in my journey. She had just gone through a difficult divorce. I told her about my same experience and how I had clung to the promise of Jeremiah 29:11: "*For I know the plans I have for you,*" declares the Lord ... "*plans to give you hope and a future.*" We also shared a few tears.

That experience from many years ago taught me to be open to the opportunities the Lord would send my way. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us: *Always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.* Not prepared with a doctrinal lecture, complete with fitting footnotes — just ready to give a heartfelt answer.

It means to be approachable — kindly interested in those God puts in our path. It means to be attentive — to really listen, with respect and not judgment. It means to be authentic — taking the risk to share our own fears, doubts, and failures. By "laying down our life," we can personally describe the unconditional love and forgiveness that only comes through our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Always be prepared ... pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance ... now and every day. You never know when someone may sit down next to you.

Merciful Father, prepare my heart each morning to be Jesus' earthly mouthpiece to those You will send into my life that day. Amen.