



Pastor's Page

"Making a Clean Start"

It was a full two and a half hours to my plane taking off and there I was checking in! This is unheard of for me! However all went well and soon I was heading for passport control. Once there we had to go through with all the usual security checks. So jackets, shoes and belts had to be taken off, pockets emptied, hand-luggage had to be handed over, before a full frisking could take place. As this was happening my personal effects were gliding down a conveyor belt like prizes on the 1970s Generation Game, beeping occasionally when the x-ray scanner detected anything it didn't like. Happy to be reunited with my belt, shoes and jacket I began to put them on as the security man asked me to open my back pack. I obliged removing the contents as instructed. I began to feel as if I was being violated as all my "essentials" were revealed (I always work on the basis that if I never see my suitcase again I will still have all that I need to survive in my hand luggage!) Out came my bible (hope you're impressed!) then my Filofax and mobile phone and my Sony Walkman cassette player (I'm so up to date!) Then my tablets (its ok they are all legal!) and lastly my wash bag. "Open that up please sir" he said. So I did, exposing my brand new hair shampoo, shower gel, sun-cream and top of the range Linx deodorant especially useful for 'ministers on the move'. However, the wind was then taken right out of my sail as he said "I'm sorry but I'm going to have to confiscate all these." "But"...I said, "you can't, I need them" (as though that would make any difference!) But credit to him he tried to help by saying "well as you look like a decent man I'll let you keep the stuff if you return to the desk ask for your suitcase back put your toiletries in it and then check-in again!" What....but can you guarantee I'll still be in time for the flight if I do this? I asked "No I can't sir" he said "but it's the best I can offer you" Well, frustrated as I was and hating to lose some of my little "survival" items I decided to move on, since the queue behind me was about 3 miles long, and I was now getting dirty looks!!

It's not the first time I've experienced a confiscation of liquid items at an airport (you'd think I'd learn) but when it happens it always challenges me in terms of the unnecessary items I carry when I travel. I know that toiletries are pretty important but I had other things in that back-pack that I didn't need or even use! What is true of me when I travel (ie I carry unnecessary things) is also true of me in life generally. The author Max Lucado says; *"There are certain weights in life you simply cannot carry. Your Lord is asking you to lay them down and trust him. He is the Father of the baggage claim. When a dad sees his five year old son trying to drag the family suitcase off the baggage carousel what does he say? The father will say to his son what God says to you - Lay it down child I'll carry that one"* Perhaps we are carrying burdens that God never intended us to carry - perhaps we are flirting with sins that God is calling us to renounce. Well last Wednesday we entered into Lent, the 40-day period preparing for Easter when we remember Jesus fasting in the desert for 40 days and nights as he was tempted by the devil. It's a time to reflect again on Jesus' great victory over sin and to consider our own commitment to Him and if needs be, lay some things down.

So why not have a good old spiritual spring clean? (No shower gel required!)

1st March 2009