

Star-Gazing and Practicing

Charles Lindbergh – aviator, military officer, author and inventor – went from obscurity as a United States air-mail pilot to instantaneous world fame by winning the Orteig Prize for making a nonstop flight from New York to Paris, France.

Lindbergh covered the 33½-hour, 3,600-statute-mile flight alone in a single-engine Ryan monoplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, making it the first solo transatlantic flight. Lindbergh was an officer in the U.S. Army Air Corps Reserve, and he received the United States' highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor, for his historic flight.

But as significant as his solo flight across the Atlantic was, the accomplishment was truly a team effort, since Lindbergh had the backing of nine businessmen from St. Louis and the help of the Ryan Aeronautical Company, which built the plane.

That doesn't take away from Lindbergh's personal effort. That's not the kind of task a person just goes out and does. He has to work up to it. How did Lindbergh do that? A story from his friend, Frank Samuels, gives insight into the process.



In the 1920s, Lindbergh used to fly mail out of St. Louis. Occasionally, he would go out to San Diego to check on the progress of his plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, which was being built there. Samuels sometimes went along with him, and the two men would stay overnight in a small hotel there.

One night, Samuels woke up shortly after midnight and noticed that Lindbergh was sitting by the window looking at the stars. It had been a long day, so Samuels asked, "Why are you sitting there at this hour?"

"Just practicing," answered Lindbergh.

"Practicing what?" asked Samuels.

"Staying awake all night."

When he could have been enjoying a well-deserved rest, Lindbergh was putting forth the effort to improve himself. It was an investment that paid off for him. And it can do the same thing for you and me.

The question, then, is: What are you and I giving up in order to improve ourselves?

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty (Proverbs 21:5 ESV).