

In Other Words...

A RESEARCH SERVICE FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATORS

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9/11 Illustrations for the 25th Memorial

ADVERSITY: How would you feel if any of these situations occurred to you while trying to get to work on time? An accident on the turnpike delayed you... Your car wouldn't start... You missed your bus... It was your turn to pick up donuts for the whole office... A telephone call put you behind... New shoes created a blister and required a stop at the drugstore to get a Band-Aid. All of these inconveniences did in fact happen on September 11, 2001 to people who were making their way to jobs within the World Trade Center. These little adversities saved the life of each person who had to face the above irritants on that fateful morning. Rough times can be advantageous even though they may be very frustrating at the time. *Men of Integrity, November/December 2006, p.11/13*

AMERICA: Astronaut Frank Culbertson was circling the earth in the International Space Station on September 11, 2001. While cameras and eyes were fixed on the two burning towers in New York, he saw something more. Through the crackling communication link to NASA, Commander Culbertson spoke of what he saw from 250 miles above Manhattan. He said, "I just wanted the folks to know that their city still looks very beautiful from space. I know it's very difficult for everybody in America right now. The country still looks good, and for New Yorkers, your city still looks great from up here." The remarkable video clip shows a beautiful day in which the great tragedy is evident through the rising smoke, but it also reveals hundreds of millions of people in the United States that were alive and safe. It was a perspective that could only come from someone witnessing the events from above. In the midst of any great angst, there is always good for which we can and should be thankful. Lord, please gives us eyes to see what You see from above, and hearts that are willing to respond appropriately. *Every Job A Parable, John Van Sloten, 2017, p.xv*

AMERICA: Since September 11, 2001, America has become acutely aware of the Islamic world. Anger and frustration have risen over Islamic fundamentalists targeting America with ruthless aggression. To better understand this dynamic, Gallup conducted a phenomenal survey of more than 10,000 people in predominantly Islamic countries. Most respondents described the United States as "ruthless, aggressive, conceited, arrogant, easily provoked, and biased." Although these words seem harsh and unfair, their perceptions are based upon realities we too often overlook as a country. We are blessed to experience the great value of our democracy, churches, and humanitarian pursuits, yet other countries are often exposed to the dark side of our country. America is the undisputed global leader in the production and exportation of pornography, sex and violence permeate our movies and television, divorce is epidemic, substance abuse is staggering, abortion and murder rates exceed other Western cultures, and the abandonment of traditional values - including Christianity - are some of the primary reasons our nation is viewed so negatively by Islamic lands. Defending America is a non-negotiable, but we must come to the realization that our land is in dire need of revival, and unfortunately, Muslims seem to see that more clearly than Americans. *Rev., January/February 2003, p.109*

ANXIETY: As WWII began, the British government distributed posters to encourage resolve among their countrymen. The first series of posters went out in September 1939 and carried the message: YOUR COURAGE YOUR CHEERFULNESS YOUR RESOLUTION WILL BRING US VICTORY. As the war intensified, a second poster was released with these words: FREEDOM IS IN PERIL DEFEND IT WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT. They were scattered throughout the countryside and plastered on trains, restaurants, stores, and pubs. A third poster was created with 2.5 million copies, but it was never used and wasn't discovered until six decades later. An auction of old books unearthed a copy, which had the same markings as the others: distinct all-caps typeface with a simple two-color format and a graphic of the king's crown. This third poster contained just five words: KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON. It wasn't used because the British government was saving it for an extreme crisis, like the invasion of Germany. Once found, it quickly escalated in popularity and was put on coffee mugs, postcards, and posters. People appreciated the simple but strong message to resist anxiety in the face of extreme adversity. *You'll Get Through This, Max Lucado, 2013, p.148*

APPLICATION: Before 9/11, the airline industry was in charge of policing what was carried on to planes. In 1994, they produced a manual called the *Checkpoint Operation Guide from Air Transport Association and Regional Airline Association* that identified items forbidden beyond the checkpoints. Included on the list that airport screeners were to confiscate from passengers were box cutters and pepper spray - the two weapons used by those infamous hijackers. Dean Headley co-authored an annual study on airline quality while teaching at Wichita State University. His report noted that airlines didn't want to invest the time or money before September 11, 2001 to check passengers thoroughly. We now live in a new era where the government controls security through the Transportation Security Administration. Failure to apply what we know is costly, destructive, and ill-advised. *Houston Chronicle, 11/12/2, p.7A*

CHURCH: A subtle message from what was known as Ground Zero reminds us of the significant role the Church must play in the strength and healing of any nation. Prior to that unforgettable fall day, few people would have noticed the cross-streets that ran next to those majestic twin towers. Back then, street signs seemed inconsequential when gazing up at buildings that soared one-quarter of a mile above the pavement. When everything collapsed to ground level, the names of those streets gained far more attention than before. A signpost that once stood in the shadow of the South Tower survived the carnage and bears the names of those two old streets, Church and Liberty. The atrocities of September 11th are incalculable, yet God has provided His empowered Church to be the avenue of Liberty from our grief, anger, and fears (Ephesians 1:22-23). *Editor's Personal Experience at Ground Zero, July 2002*

COMMITMENT: During the many interviews that followed September 11th, NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani consistently talked about the selfless heroism of the New York City firefighters. Just as they are trained to do, these brave men rushed in when everyone else was rushing out. On a Sunday talk show, after the mayor had once again affirmed his gratitude for these gallant warriors, the interviewer asked, "What surprised you most about their performance?" Giuliani simply replied, "Nothing." Few accolades speak louder than the absence of surprise when we effectively carry out our commitments. *Houston Chronicle, 7/21/2, Zest p.18*

COMMITMENT: Prior to the 10th anniversary of 9/11, few people knew about the suicide

counter-attack that was underway while United Airlines Flight 93 was still airborne on September 11, 2001. The F-16 jets at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland had just completed two weeks of training in Nevada and were only equipped with training bullets. In the pre-9/11 era, there were no perceived threats so it was uncommon to have combat-ready jets around the nation's capital. Today, there are always at least two "hot-cocked" planes ready with pilots standing by. After the second plane struck the Twin Towers, the mission became obvious but the equipment was lacking. No aircraft were ready and there was no system in place to scramble the jets over Washington. Knowing it would take nearly an hour to arm the planes, Colonel Marc Sasseville yelled for Heather "Lucky" Penney to come with him. Penney was a rookie and one of America's first female combat pilots. Her dad flew in Vietnam and she loved flying so she jumped at the chance when Congress opened up combat aviation for women. As they rapidly threw on their combat gear, they knew there was no ammunition to fire so this would be a suicide mission. Sasseville looked Penney in the eye and said, "I'm going to go for the cockpit." Without hesitating, she replied, "I'll take the tail." So, while Todd Beamer was declaring, "Let's roll," Sasseville and Penney said, "Let's go!" They took off without an adequate pre-flight check and raced over Washington at more than 400 mph. Penney said, "I genuinely believed that was going to be the last time I took off. If we did it right, this would be it." They weren't trained to take out a passenger plane, but they were ready to give their lives to prevent another deadly strike. The heroes of that tragic scenario turned out to be the passengers of Flight 93, but the sacrificial commitment of these two pilots is likewise heroic. Penney and Sasseville flew the rest of that day clearing airspace and escorting the president, but their legacy of commitment and bravery occurred hours earlier during the chaotic uncertainty. It's the type of commitment every believer would do well to emulate. *Houston Chronicle*, 9/11/11, p.A25

COMMITMENT: Each year in September, thousands of people join in a 5K race to remember the commitment of Stephen Siller. The 34-year-old father of five had just gotten off work and was headed to play golf with his brothers when he heard about a plane hitting the World Trade Center Towers. This firefighter from Squad 1 in Brooklyn turned his truck around and headed for Manhattan. Not being able to drive through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, Siller parked his vehicle, threw on over 60 pounds worth of equipment and ran more than three miles to the disaster. His entire squad perished that day. His story of heroism was memorialized in 2002 with a run that retraced his steps. Since that time, the race has become an annual event attracting over 25,000 participants and has spread to more than fifty other cities. One such race starts at Pearl Harbor and ends at the USS Arizona, which provides a link between the two worst attacks on U.S. soil. When runners come out of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, they are greeted by FDNY in full dress uniforms and poster-size pictures of the 343 firefighters who died on 9/11. The race ends near Ground Zero and the proceeds go to support troubled teens on Staten Island, provide scholarships, and build homes for quadriplegic veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Siller's parents died by the time he was 10, so he was raised by his much older brothers. One of them, Frank, said, "It just brings me to my knees that Stephen inspired so many people to come together through his actions and how he lived his last final moments." Usually such heroism is not adequately recognized, but the commitment of Stephen Siller should inspire us all to give our greatest effort in the cause of helping others – especially in the cause of sharing Jesus Christ. *Remembering Heroes*, *News Times*, 9/7/11; *The Bravest*, *Daily News*, 9/28/8; *TGIF*, *Os Hillman*, 9/11/11

CRISIS: The events of September 11, 2001 may seem a little less catastrophic if we consider how the Chinese view crisis. The Chinese language uses two characters to translate "crisis." The first character means danger and the second means opportunity. Since the Chinese read

from top to bottom, this means "crisis" is defined as "danger" over "opportunity." Hovering over every crisis is an opportunity. Such was the case at the World Trade Center in 1993. The detonation of a bomb in the underground parking lot created total chaos in trying to evacuate the two towers. It took six hours to move all of those people because they could barely see in pitch-black stairways. As a result of that crisis, which claimed six lives, battery lighting was installed in the stairwells and glow-in-the-dark paint was applied to the handrails and steps. In addition, regular evacuation drills were implemented. By seizing the opportunity that was created from the crisis of 1993, over ninety percent of those in the towers on September 11th were evacuated in fewer than two hours, which was essential for survival. This would not have occurred had a bomb not been exploded in 1993. *Rev., May/June 2002, p.31; Houston Chronicle, 12/16/1, p.10A*

CROSS: Frank Silecchia was the ironworker in New York City who found "America's Healing Cross" at Ground Zero on September 13, 2001. After helping recover three bodies, Silecchia noticed what he called "Calvary." When Tower One collapsed on World Trade Center Building 6, it created a unique valley bordered by the mounds of contorted debris. One writer called it a "new-millennium translation of the valley of the shadow of death." Silecchia was overwhelmed by the dim view of a perfectly symmetrical cross standing upright in the middle of that providential space. He quickly became the curator of the cross and took numerous people there for comfort. His faith compelled him to remind people that the cross was God's way of saying, "I never left you... I've been here all along." When Barbara Walters arrived with two of her family members who had lost a son there, she pointedly asked, "How could you tell me God's here?" Frank led her through the debris to "Calvary." She then responded, "I need a picture of that." Frank wanted the cross saved for the entire world to see. He said, "I want everybody to have it just as Christ wanted everyone to have salvation." Such a desire was realized when Father Brian Jordan appeared. Frank took him to the cross and Jordan became Silecchia's advocate for preserving the cross. By October 3rd, Jordan's influence with the Mayor's office led to a relocation of the cross, and a ceremony of blessing took place the following day. The eighteen-foot iron cross remained in a prominent, visible place at Ground Zero until 2006 when it was moved across the street to St. Peter's Church. Controversy over its inclusion in the World Trade Center Memorial was fierce, but as Frank Silecchia hoped, "America's Healing Cross," now known as the World Trade Center Cross, became a permanent fixture in the memorial during July of 2011. On reflecting back to the first time he actually touched the crossbeams of steel, Frank said, "I felt the power of the cross. Not just THIS cross, but THE cross." He stated, "Terrorism is the devil's tool; the cross is our tool. And I don't think, I know, we'll win." (Incidentally, a replica of this cross was placed at the gravesite of Father Mychal Judge, the New York City Fire Department chaplain who died at the WTC on September 11, 2001 and was identified as the first official casualty). *Be Still, America...I Am God, Amy Bartlett, 2002, p.23-31; Editor's Personal Experience at Ground Zero, July 2002*

CROSS: The Cross at Ground Zero stood as a mighty visual reminder to the power of faith in the aftermath of those terrorists' attacks in 2001. The 2-ton structural crossbeam is now on permanent display at the New York City 9/11 Museum. After that cross was discovered, something unusual began to happen in the shadows of the World Trade Center wreckage. Pete Dutro was a tattoo artist with little interest in anything beyond his world, but after cleaning out the ash from his MacDougal Street Tattoo Company he walked over to Ground Zero and acquired a zeal for his city and country. He cried over the mountain of twisted steel and came up with the only solution he could think of at the time - free tattoos for the guys working there. At first, they trickled in to get inked with an American flag or the name of a lost friend. Then they started coming in by the droves for something else. He said, "We

started doing the cross." Dutro calculates that he etched at least a thousand crosses onto people, doing about a dozen a day, seven days a week. It created an indelible reminder they would carry through life. Regardless of your thoughts about tattoos, this history from an obscure ink shop near the carnage of 9/11 certainly communicates about the power and conviction that surrounds the Cross. When we stare death in the face and become acutely aware of our own mortality, something inside of us recognizes that our only hope is inextricably connected to what Jesus Christ did on the Cross. *Houston Chronicle*, 9/11/11, p.A27

DEATH: Hilda Mayor cheated death on September 11th when the World Trade Center collapsed. She worked at the ground-floor restaurant and became one of the survivors who was able to escape before the towers crumbled. With the sense of having a new lease on life, Hilda planned a trip to her native homeland, the Dominican Republic. Her mother and two children had flown down there two weeks prior and were anticipating Hilda's arrival. On November 12th, the 26-year-old Ms. Mayor boarded American Airlines flight 587 which crashed into the New York suburb of Queens just minutes after taking off from JFK airport. The jet landed one house away from Megan Rochelle's home. Two months earlier, on September 11th, Megan's mom had made a promise to the little 6-year-old. Laura Rochelle said, "I promised her that something like that would never happen again, and last night, Megan said, 'But it did.'" The tragedy of Hilda Mayor and the families in Queens are but further proof of a truth we already know, death is relentless and will eventually find us all. Therefore, preparation for our eternity is always of utmost importance. *Houston Chronicle*, 11/14/1, p.7A

DECEPTION: Although it's hard for a rational mind to comprehend, the hijackers of September 11, 2001 believed they were earning God's favor by what they did. Four handwritten pages of prayers and directions were found in some belongings of Mohamed Atta, a hijacker who crashed an American Airlines jet into the north tower of the World Trade Center. Photocopies of that Arabic document were also found in the car of a hijacker who crashed into the Pentagon, and in the wreckage of United Flight 93, which crashed in Pennsylvania. Details included what to wear (tight clothes for fighting purposes) and what to say as your last words in this life ("there is no God but Allah"). The document called for the hijackers to "look cheerful and satisfied. Be happy, because the distance between this life and your joyful new life is short. You're doing a job which is loved by God, and you will end your day in heavens where you will join the virgins." Numerous prayers on the same pages motivated Attorney General John Ashcroft to say, "it's a stark reminder of how these hijackers grossly perverted the Islamic faith to justify their terroristic acts." The closing lines addressed the final moments of flight. It read, "Open your chest welcoming death in the path of God and utter your prayer seconds before you go to your target. Let your last words be, 'There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger.' Then, inshallah, you will be in heaven." The events of September 11th reveal the unbridled power of Satan's cunning deception (2 Corinthians 11:14) and his ability to blind people from the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). *Houston Chronicle*, 9/29/1, p.4A

DETERMINATION: Success requires determination and that sheds light on the men who waged war against impossible odds at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Each of those firefighters knew jet fuel cannot be extinguished with water, yet they climbed the stairs to fight it anyway. It's a reflection of the determination required for the job. Every four years a test is given for anyone who aspires to be a New York City firefighter. Each time more than 30,000 take the test and about 5,000 are accepted. Many of these who are

accepted must then wait years to actually get in... all for about \$45,000 a year (2021 salary figures). *Houston Chronicle*, 7/21/2, *Zest* p.18

EVANGELISM: Al Marchand was on the United Airlines plane that hit the World Trade Center's South Tower. His wife, Rebecca, saw it as a divine appointment. She said, "I know it was no mistake he was on Flight 175." Four years earlier, Al was a policeman who did bartending on his days off. God had no place in his life, yet he had to listen to the preaching of Greg Laurie when the morning cleaners played his tapes while mopping. Although initially annoyed, the idea of a personal relationship with God was somewhat intriguing. Eventually, both he and his wife became Christians. It was a total change and he frequently shared his faith with old buddies from the bar. Ultimately, his faith led to a second career as a flight attendant. Promotions in the police department meant more office work and less time with people, so Al retired at twenty years. While buying airline tickets via the Internet, he was struck by an ad to become a flight attendant. He got the job and felt like it was his life's calling. He told Rebecca, "What if there is a time when a flight is going down? What if I am the only one who can share the gospel?" Just one month before his death, Al flew home on standby next to a nervous passenger named Linda Links. She asked if Al would talk to her to ease her fear of flying. Upon learning of his death, Links recalled something Al said: "I became a flight attendant so if a plane went down I could have 30 - 40 seconds to speak the gospel to people so they could receive Christ." Rebecca is certain those passengers heard the gospel before they crashed because nothing gave Al Marchand greater joy than speaking of Christ's love. Maybe that's why it isn't surprising his wife got to share this story on *NBC's Today Show* during an interview with Tom Brokaw, and that at his memorial service over one hundred people responded to an altar call. *New Man*, January/February 2002, p.12

EVANGELISM: Dawn Robinson was living in California when she made a trip to New York City during 1998. She was a Christian who planned to attend the Brooklyn Tabernacle for a few weeks while she worked through some personal problems. Her temporary visit became permanent when Morgan Stanley offered her a managerial position on the sixty-first floor of the World Trade Center. Her Christian influence quickly became felt as she started sharing her faith with a colleague named Cassie. During their lunchtime conversations, Cassie recognized her need for God but ended each discussion by claiming she wasn't quite ready to "get on the bus." On September 11, 2001, Dawn's office went into a panic when two huge fireballs came roaring toward them from the north tower. They quickly rode the elevators down to the forty-fourth floor plaza, as this was where they always went during the many fire drills that had been conducted since the 1993 bombing incident. The people who congregated there seemed to be in a festive mood and nobody was alarmed. Within a few minutes a loudspeaker announcement declared everything was fine and people were instructed to return to their offices. Dawn moved with the crowd toward the elevators, but was suddenly overcome with anxiety when the elevator doors opened. Although the authorities said they were safe, Dawn felt an unexplainable uneasiness. It defied logic to just leave the building but that's exactly what she did. She moved against the crowd and headed toward the stairs even though she felt strange for not first retrieving her keys and wallet up in her office. After descending just two flights of stairs, Dawn and others in the stairwell were thrown against the wall as United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower twenty floors above her office. With the flood of people, smoke, and water, it took Dawn another forty-five minutes to reach the concourse level. The challenge to get out was enormous but she finally made it to the street and ran for her life. Falling debris hit her yet she kept running with blood streaming down her side. A few brief minutes later the entire south tower collapsed. Dawn was engulfed in a thick cloud of dust and smoke. She said it

was as dark as midnight and she once again thought she would die. While gasping for breath, she noticed her friend Cassie just a few feet away. They ran down the street together until they found an abandoned bus. Both ladies jumped in because the cloud had not yet invaded the closed-up bus. Dawn then pleaded for Cassie to commit her life to Christ. She said, "We can't be sure we will survive this. Please, Cassie, don't wait one minute more! Invite Jesus Christ into your life right now!" At that moment, on a bus, Cassie gave her life to Christ. The woman who had repeatedly told her friend she wasn't ready to "get on the bus" became a Christian on an abandoned bus in the war-zone of downtown Manhattan. The invitation for every non-Christian is to "get on the bus" and receive God's offer of salvation. *God's Grace From Ground Zero, Jim Cymbala, 2001, p.25-38*

EVIL: Sometimes we picture evil as that which is primarily demonstrated by only Satanists, terrorists, hardened criminals, or immoral reprobates. An insightful thought from the late physician and author Scott Peck helps to counteract this limited view. Dr. Peck noted evil is simply "live" spelled backwards. It's the opposite of God's intentions and desires for our life. Such a perspective helps us to take greater inventory of the evil in our own lives, and reduces the judgment we may have been reserving for others. *People of the Lie, Scott Peck, 1998, p.42*

EVIL: Questioning the source of evil has been a regular practice since the beginning of time. By looking to northeastern Kenya we find an interesting response to this issue. The Sakuye (sah-KOO-yay) are a semi-nomadic group who herd camels and goats. This people group of about 13,000 practice cultic worship known as Ayaana. At the core of this belief is Satanic appeasement. They believe it is necessary to appease Satan because he brings harm to them. Conversely, there is no provision for appeasing God because they think He does not harm people. Although these people have not yet responded to the gospel, they do have a basic understanding of evil. Satan is indeed the instigator of all evil (John 10:10), while God alone is the initiator of good (James 1:17). *Commission, September 2001, p.5*

FAITH: In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, stories of faith and prayer surged to the forefront of television news. One Washington, D.C. commentator stated, "No one is asking for atheists they can interview on their talk shows." On September 15th, *Fox News* reported, "We've seen a resurgence of public religion – Americans are rediscovering the power of faith." But for the 10th anniversary commemoration in New York City, prayer wasn't formally incorporated into the program, and it was on a Sunday no less. Ironically, and providentially, even though many want to scrub the thoughts of God, faith, or prayer from the equation of that day, one of the most prominent recordings you hear when beginning the tour through the National September 11 Memorial Museum is... 'after we heard what happened, we prayed.' *America Out of the Ashes, Honor Books, 2001, p.203; Houston Chronicle, 9/3/11, p.A11; Editor's visit to the 9/11 Museum*

FEAR: Shortly after 9/11, Frank Prince and his wife boarded a plane for China. No one knew what the future held and everyone wondered if more attacks were soon to follow. The terror alert was high, security at airports looked like military outposts, and airplanes were nearly empty on most flights. When people asked Frank why he was risking the safety of flight in the new era of post 9/11, he had a clear and simple answer: "I don't make decisions out of fear." He wasn't cocky or rude, just forthright. Fear was not a deciding factor for this man of faith. Scripture affirms this perspective by repeatedly reminding God's people that when we fear God, we needn't fear anything else (Isaiah 8:13). *Crown Financial Ministries, Money Matters, June 2003, p.7*

FEAR: Nine months *before* September 11, 2001, *The Report Newsmagazine* released a sobering piece of information. In their January 22, 2001 edition was this assertion: "ordinary children today are more fearful than psychiatric patients were in the 1950s." To be fearless in today's world we must fear less and that can only be accomplished through a vital relationship with Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 1:7). *Fearless, Max Lucado, 2009, p.5*

FREEDOM: "Freedom to be your best means nothing unless you're willing to do your best." **Colin Powell** *Editor's Files*

GENEROSITY: David Letterman returned to the air on September 17, 2001 after canceling his show during the days following the September 11th crisis. On that first night back, he spoke of a small agricultural town in Montana. The 1,600 people of Choteau had suffered through three years of drought and economic hardship. Yet, on the Sunday after those attacks, they held a rally in the high school auditorium to raise money for the people in New York City. Letterman told his audience, "If that doesn't tell you everything you need to know about the spirit of the United States, then..." his voice trailed off. True generosity involves great sacrifice. The people of Choteau, Montana demonstrated that. *Bits & Pieces, 11/1/1, p.9*

GOD: Concerning the events of September 11, 2001, an avowed atheist mocked God. Ellen Johnson, who was then the president of American Atheists said, "If that wasn't a wake-up call to a religious nation, I don't know what is. That said to me, 'There is no God.' Where was he, on a coffee break?" A simple review of the statistical facts reveals a completely different picture. When you add up the number of employees at the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon, and the number of seats available on the four jets that crashed, you have a minimum of 75,000 potential victims. Of that number, the final fatality count was fewer than 3,000 people. That means 96% of the potential victims survived. The towers did not immediately collapse, and they stood longer than engineering logic can explain so that 15,000 people could escape. The portion of the Pentagon that was attacked was the first of five sections to undergo renovations to strengthen it against terrorist attacks. Three of the four jets were carrying less than a quarter of their maximum occupancy and the fourth was only one-third full. Although the horror of that day will never be forgotten, we must also remember the divine hand of protection that God provided on 9/11. *Pastor's Weekly Briefing, Focus on the Family, 10/5/1, America Out of the Ashes, Honor Books, 2001, p.6-7*

GOD: Rudy Giuliani encouraged people to pray after the events of September 11, 2001. The New York City Mayor said, "All of us should pray to the God of his or her choosing." This eclectic suggestion sounded poetic to those who long for political correctness, but truth is frequently lost in the search for that which is politically correct. The Bible clearly states "there is only one God" (1 Timothy 2:5). When Joshua addressed the people of his day, he reminded them there was but one choice: serve the one true living God, or serve lifeless idols (Joshua 24). A good politician would never tell his constituency to pay taxes to the entity of his or her choosing. It would be chaotic and destructive - just like praying to any god you might choose. *Idolatry Is Alive and Well In Postmodern America, Mark Blocher, Christian Worldview Concepts, 2004*

GOD: In the weeks following the September 11th national tragedy, Dennis Rainey, founder of *FamilyLife*, provided a powerful word picture. Almost every American can recall the fear and chaos surrounding the twin towers of the World Trade Center. People by the thousands were running away from the towers in pursuit of safety. Photographs of horrified faces are forever etched in our minds as cameras captured the stampede of fleeing people. The once

strong and sturdy towers were no longer safe so people ran from them. In Proverbs 18:10 we read the antithesis of this scene as it declares, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." The most expensive piece of real estate in America proved to be a place of uncertainty and death from which people fearfully fled. Yet Scripture reminds us that God is an unfailing tower to which we can always run and find safety. *"Faith, Family, and Flag," Dennis Rainey, 9/21/1*

GOD: The fall season is a great time to think about the presence of God because nature offers such a beautiful illustration. This season is filled with color as the tree leaves transform to a palette of autumn brilliance. The blanket of green becomes a speckled quilt of red, yellow, and orange. The biggest surprise of this metamorphic experience is that the colors of fall have been in the leaves all along. They were simply hidden by the green chlorophyll. When the hours of sunlight start decreasing, the chlorophyll begins to break down and the green colorization starts disappearing. Then, the hidden fall colors start appearing. In our experience of life, we can be easily blinded to the presence of God. Yet, like the hidden colors of fall, He is always there, even when we think He's not. *Houston Chronicle, 10/6/1, Mini Page, p.1*

GOSPEL: Randy Scott died in the South Tower on 9/11, but years later his family learned some heart-wrenching truth about his death. Since his office was near the impact of United Airlines Flight 175, they had hoped and assumed he died instantly. In August of 2011, just a month before the 10th anniversary, the Medical Examiner's Office of New York contacted Denise Scott. Dr. Barbara Butcher, chief of staff and director of Forensic Investigations, told her they had a note from her late husband. Scott apparently dropped a desperate note from his Euro Brokers office on the 84th floor and it had miraculously been identified. It read, "84th floor West Office 12 people trapped." It was picked up on the street and handed to a guard at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, but the building collapsed shortly thereafter. Eventually, it was turned over to the National September 11 Memorial & Museum. Because it had a small spot of blood on it, it was ultimately matched with the DNA of Randy Scott. Jan Ramirez, chief curator of the museum, said the note is "exceptionally rare. I don't know of anything else like it." Although paper streamed from the burning towers, nothing compares to this small note that reveals the gravity of that tragic day. It's redefined what happened for Denise Scott and her two grown daughters as they've come to grips with a reality that is far different than what they had believed for a decade. Equally tragic is the possibility that Randy Scott and his colleagues may not have truly been trapped. Eighteen people in the South Tower escaped certain death by working their way down a stairwell that was open from the top of the building all the way to the ground. Most assumed they were trapped with no way out, but a way of escape did indeed exist because one set of stairs miraculously survived the planes catastrophic impact. The Gospel is God's escape from certain spiritual peril, but unless people hear about it, they will perish as if they are hopelessly trapped. *Houston Chronicle, 9/11/12, p.A1; Beaumont Enterprise, 9/11/12, p.3A*

HEROISM: The late Arthur Ashe didn't live to see September 11, 2001, yet years ago the great tennis player provided a rich thought on heroism. He said, "True heroism is remarkably undramatic. It is the urge to serve others at whatever cost." *Men of Integrity, May/June 2002, May 29th*

JESUS: Stephen Baldwin built a 'wild child' reputation in Hollywood because he was known to live without any constraints. That changed after he became a Christian. He became an adamant proponent of faith and wrote a forthright book about his conversion called, *The*

Unusual Suspect: My Calling to the Hardcore Movement of Faith. When telling about his change of heart, Baldwin notes it happened immediately after 9/11. He said, "It was an event I deemed to be a total impossibility. So, I thought, now *anything* is possible. And if that's true, then it's possible Jesus Christ is the Savior." The youngest of Hollywood's famed Baldwin brothers did what relatively few people are willing to do - honestly assess the possibility that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God and the only One who can take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). *People*, 10/9/6, p.32

LIBERTY: The Statue of Liberty stood prominently as a backdrop to the world's fixated gaze on September 11, 2001. The majestic icon of hope states: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore; Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door" (Emma Lazarus). This message from one of the world's greatest symbols of liberty is reminiscent of similar words spoken by the greatest Liberator of all, Jesus Christ: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He appointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). *America Out of the Ashes, Honor Books, 2001, p.183*

LIFE: Hilda Marcin died on September 11, 2001 at the age of 79 as a passenger on United Flight 93, which was hijacked and ultimately crashed in Pennsylvania. She was a woman filled with life who frequently said, "Life is for living. Go do it." Her unexpected death gives greater credence to these words. As noted in Scripture (James 4:14), the opportunity for living on this earth is brief so make the most of every day. *Guideposts, September 2006, p.13*

LIFE: "Life's brevity exhorts us to make the most of every day." **Raymond McHenry**

LOVE: Brian Birdwell was a Lt. Colonel working in the Pentagon when terrorists attacked it on September 11, 2001. He sustained burns over 60 percent of his body and has been through 39 surgeries. Before he was taken into surgery on that horrific day, he asked for a special favor from one of the men who assisted him. Sensing he might not survive, he had the man remove his wedding ring. Over the searing pain of a charred hand, the ring was taken with Brian's clear instructions: "Tell Mel that I always loved her." He then prayed with a chaplain and acknowledged God's sovereignty over his life. Birdwell's strong faith served him well through relentless pain and years of excruciating recovery, but it served him best in identifying what mattered most when the uncertainty of his life surrounded him. *HomeLife, September 2011, p.19*

MEMORIALS: Each year, from dusk to dawn on September 11th, 88 special searchlights are used to create two giant beams of light that resemble the twin towers. The light stretches 4 miles into the night sky and can be seen from 60 miles outside of NYC. The cost for this memorial exceeds \$700,000 per night. *Houston Chronicle, 7/10/4*

MIRACLES: Plenty of people have blamed God for the September 11th tragedy, but Genelle Guzman isn't one of them. She was in the stairwell on the 13th floor of Tower One when the building collapsed. She was thrown from side to side, and then landed with her head caught between two pillars. As this member of the Brooklyn Tabernacle lay trapped in the carnage of that massive tower, she prayed for a second chance at life. Up until that time she only attended church sporadically. Amid the dark, dusty debris, the Trinidad immigrant cried out to God and asked, "Please just give me this one miracle." Nearly

twenty-seven hours after the collapse, Genelle became the last survivor pulled from the rubble. For those who no longer believe in miracles, Genelle Guzman is living proof that God can still cause them to happen, even when your world is crashing all around you and you're caught on what seems like the unluckiest floor of all...13. *America Out of the Ashes*, Honor Books, 2001, p.89

OBSTACLES: When the World Trade Center was attacked on September 11, 2001, confusion exacerbated the tragedy. One aspect of the confusion occurred after the structures were altered by the impact of the two planes. The movement in the two towers caused many doors to seal up due to the pressure created on doorframes. People literally became prisoners in their own offices. Survivors told of being locked in their office with no hope of getting out when suddenly rescue workers knocked holes in the walls. They felt trapped because the walls were painted to look like concrete and they thought they couldn't get out. In reality, the walls were nothing more than sheetrock and they could have easily escaped much earlier had they only known. Many of life's obstacles are no different. We believe we are staring at impassable walls, but they are not as impregnable as we might think. *Inside The Twin Towers*, Discovery Channel, 8/25/6

OPPORTUNITY: Thomas Franklin's photograph of three firefighters raising a flag at Ground Zero became one of the most famous pictures of the September 11th tragedy. Franklin said he instantly saw the similarities of Iwo Jima when looking through the lens of his camera. The 35-year-old photographer for New Jersey's *The Record* said, "I knew by September 13th this was going to be a really popular picture." That single picture was used to raise over \$300,000 for disaster relief, and has been a part of countless memorials and memorabilia. For 2001, the image was named photo of the year by both the Associated Press Editors Association and Editor & Publisher magazine. Of the shot, which frames (left to right) George Johnson, Dan McWilliams and Billy Eisengrein, Franklin noted, "It was a quick, unceremonious moment. They had taken the flag off a boat in the marina and brought it to Ground Zero." Opportunities for memorable achievements frequently occur during "quick, unceremonious moments." *Houston Chronicle*, 12/19/1, p.15A; *People*, 12/31/1, p.108

OPPORTUNITY: A.B. Curtiss wrote a book about 9/11 to help her grandchildren understand the horror and the heroism of that day. This children's book, which was published in 2003, is titled *The Little Chapel That Stood*. Through poetry she wrote about historic St. Paul's Chapel, which amazingly survived the carnage. The old church, located just east of Ground Zero, was built in 1766 and George Washington worshiped there. On September 11, 2001, the wrought iron fence around its perimeter became an icon of both loss and bravery. Scores of firefighters stopped there to put on their boots as they rushed to the burning towers. They hung their shoes on the old fence, but most didn't return. In one line Curtiss wrote, "Oh, what gallant men did we lose who never came back to get their shoes!" As we contemplate that horrific day, it's fitting to remember that we have opportunities those courageous firefighters no longer possess. We can put on our shoes and go make a difference because, at least for now, the opportunity is still ours. *Guideposts*, September 2011, p.62 (On the 10th anniversary of 9/11, I began our special service by having everyone leave their shoes at the altar and then had them retrieve them at the end of the service after making this point about opportunity – fortunately the idea is not restricted to 9/11 remembrances).

OPPORTUNITY: The passengers on Flight 93 will always be remembered for their heroics in thwarting the September 11th plans of those terrorists who commandeered their plane.

Officials later realized the intended target of that jet was the U.S. Capitol, where Congress was in full session. Instead, the plane crashed in the rural area of Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Had the plane remained airborne just twenty minutes longer, the terrorists would have hit their mark. Opportunity is fleeting and those who seize it must do so during a limited window of time. *Reader's Digest, September 2002, p.184*

PARENTING: The role of parenting must never be taken lightly because the words and actions children experience can literally change the world. September 11th now stands as a date that needs no introduction. On that fateful day, Mohamed Atta helped lead the tragic assault on America. Atta was the leader of those four hijacked jets. Although it's hypothetical at this point, you can't help but wonder what might have happened if Atta had not been in charge. Things could have turned out differently if his home-life had been better. His father, Mohamed al-Amir Atta, was interviewed two weeks after his son flew a jet into the World Trade Center. The 65-year-old retired lawyer in Egypt said he never encouraged his children to be social and even limited their contact with relatives. He noted that in his home family members rarely said more than "Hello." Even though Atta denied his son's role in the attacks, his interview was laced with fierce verbal assaults against the United States and he repeatedly called America a "tyrant nation." It was no doubt the type of conversation his son heard growing up. Coupled with that hostile influence was his father's disapproval. Atta said of his son, "He was so gentle. I used to tell him, 'Toughen up, boy!'" Could it be that a young man of thirty-three was simply seeking his father's approval when he decided to "toughen up" and attack the country his father despised? *Houston Chronicle, 9/19/1, p.10A*

PATRIOTISM: On September 11, 2001, Wal-Mart sold 116,000 flags. They sold just 6,400 flags on that date in 2000. *Bits & Pieces, 11/1/1*

PERSPECTIVE: After 9/11, the United States government put a \$25 million bounty on Osama bin Laden. Although Americans had no problem understanding that amount, it was far more confusing to the people of Afghanistan. When reporters asked Afghans what they would do if they collected the reward, their responses reflected both the poverty and perspective of that tumultuous land. Ahmed Samir figured \$25 million would feed his family for ten years. Mohammed Agha, an 18-year-old balloon salesman, said he could buy 100 party balloons with that kind of money. Some felt it would be enough to last them the rest of their lives. Indeed, based upon the average monthly wage of just \$4, the bounty would cover their cost of living for the next 500,000 years. Sadly, Mohammed Asef, age twenty-five, spoke for many when he said, "I can't look for him because I'm looking for food." *Houston Chronicle, 11/23/1, p.26A*

PERSPECTIVE: "You can't change what happened, but you can change what happens after the tragedy." **Amy Komarnicki** (In a speech concerning the creation of their "Fallen But Not Forgotten" quilt made in memory of six Brown University alumni killed on 9/11) *George Street Journal, 11/16/1, p.1*

POSSESSIONS: In their prime, possessions seem extremely valuable and important. A new car is cherished, we're extra careful in a new house, and who would think of throwing around a new football in the street. Estate sales are made up of possessions that were treasured by the deceased but of little interest to the heirs. When the sun rose on September 11, 2001, a prized & expensive statue looked out over the skyline of New York City from the 100th floor World Trade Center office of Cantor Fitzgerald. Auguste Rodin, the sculptor, had signed the statue, which was a symbol of elegance and power. After 9/11, it became a part of the Fresh Kills landfill in Staten Island. Clean-up crews brought 14,000

tons of debris to the dump each day as they cleared roughly 1.6 million tons from Ground Zero. What a sobering attestation to the temporal value of possessions. *Houston Chronicle*, 1/16/2, p.5A

PRAYER: Bill Bangham was Editor in Chief for *The Commission*, a monthly magazine of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board that is no longer in circulation. In September of 2001, Bangham was in Asia participating in a prayer retreat led by one of his friends. The two men typically gathered at a local restaurant for a leisurely breakfast and lively conversation about the upcoming day. On this day things were different. Bangham's friend was strangely quiet. When asked about his silence, he simply said, "I can't follow the agenda we have for today. I have an abiding feeling that right now there is a battle raging in the heavenlies." Later that morning at the prayer retreat, Bangham again heard his friend's concerns and simply suggested they pray for guidance. Although awkward silence followed, the day soon progressed into an amazing experience. People prayed, sang, and read Scripture. Refreshments went untouched, and when lunch was served no one ate. The powerful season of prayer lasted the whole day and words seemed inadequate to describe what they had experienced. It was what God wanted them to do and they were blessed because of their faithfulness, yet why they were called to alter their plans was not understood until they passed a shopkeeper after dinner. Sensing these Americans were unaware of what had happened, he led them to a small television set in the back of his shop. It was September 11th and the first jet had just hit the North Tower. Effective prayer certainly requires a heart that is sensitive to the gentle promptings of God. *Commission*, December 2001, p.2

PRAYER: A denominational leader in the Southern Baptist Convention offered an interesting analogy related to the events of September 11, 2001. Jerry Rankin, who was then the president of the International Mission Board, used this perspective to defend a decision, but his remarks offered some great insight on prayer. In reflecting back to that fateful day, Rankin hypothetically imagined what might have happened had our government known about the impending attack and intervened with overpowering preventive measures. The increased security and subsequent delays at airports would have enraged both passengers and airline companies. Racial profiling of Middle Eastern men would have caused unprecedented outrage against the Bush administration by national and international leaders. Heightened security alerts in the pre-9/11 American mindset would have been perceived as dangerous fanaticism and the backlash of criticism would have been enormous. Yet, with hindsight, every American would gladly have embraced these actions to prevent the atrocities we encountered. God's response to our prayers evokes emotions that are similar to the scenario above. Even though we have at times been angered by actions that seemed unfair or illogical, no doubt countless tragedies have been prevented by God implementing drastic measures for the enrichment of our lives. A missed promotion that ultimately saved a marriage... an illness that kept us from self-destructing with unhealthy work habits... a relational struggle that led to better management of conflict... a financial setback that caused us to finally realize we can't serve both God and money. Even when God's work in our lives seems wrong, we can trust He is always right. *Baptist Standard*, 9/11/2, p.3

PRAYER: Mychal Judge was a New York City Fire Department Chaplain who became the first official fatality at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. The Franciscan priest had been a firehouse chaplain for ten years and was part of the FDNY family. He lived across the street from Ladder 24 and often shared meals with the men he served alongside. Whenever emergency called, Judge was there to pray with both the victims of fire, and the men who battled those blazes. On the morning of 9/11, Father Judge threw on his fireproof uniform and raced to the burning towers. At the site, he was mortally struck

by falling debris. This well-loved priest, who had ministered in the fire stations, on the streets with drug addicts and the homeless, who had traveled on three occasions to Ireland for the cause of Protestant/Catholic reconciliation, was now gone in an instant. His place in the hearts of so many was poignantly captured in that famous picture of five men carrying his lifeless body from the Twin Towers. The 68-year-old priest's death certificate bore the number "1" as his body was the first to be released from Ground Zero. Found on his body was the prayer he had written years before. It's now known as Mychal's Prayer. "Lord, take me where You want me to go; Let me meet who You want me to meet; Tell me what You want me to say, and; Keep me out of Your way." *America Out of the Ashes, Honor Books, 2001, p.43; One Nation, Little, Brown and Company, 2001, p.70; Parade, 1/6/2, p.2*

PREPARATION: Amidst the great tragedy on September 11, 2001 is a saddening irony. In the Spring of 2001, New York City's Port Authority, which owned the World Trade Center, leased the buildings to a consortium led by Larry Silverstein. The 99-year lease went for \$3.2 billion dollars (roughly twice the value of the complex). Silverstein's company had a meeting planned for the morning of September 11th on the tower's 88th floor. Because one participant could not attend this meeting, it was canceled on Monday night. That meeting, which would have been in progress during the assault, was for the purpose of discussing what to do in the event of a terrorist attack. Preparation that we postpone for a later time may be in fact the very thing we most need to accomplish now. *Houston Chronicle, 9/12/1, p.2B*

PRIORITIES: Sadly, everyone knew what rescue workers were looking for underneath all of that rubble at the World Trade Center. Nothing mattered but trying to recover some hopeful survivors. Nobody was voicing concern about something else which lay beneath that pile of debris. In an underground vault, nearly twelve tons of gold and thirty million ounces of silver were stored on behalf of the Comex metals trading division of the New York Mercantile Exchange. About \$230 million worth of gold and silver became inaccessible when the towers collapsed, but that never became a public concern. Finding and saving people were what really mattered most. Times of crisis frequently help us identify the true priorities of life. *Houston Chronicle, 9/14/1, p.C1; 12/11/1, p.12A*

PRIORITIES: The Flight 93 National Memorial was opened to the public on September 10, 2015 – one day before the 14th anniversary of 9/11. The \$26 million complex near Shanksville, Pennsylvania pays perpetual tribute to the 40 Americans who heroically died while taking back the plane from terrorist hijackers. The memorial offers visitors the opportunity to hear recordings left for family members by two passengers and a flight attendant. Linda Gronlund can be heard leaving a message for her sister. She explained she was on United Flight 93, which had been hijacked by terrorists. In normal voice she said, "Apparently they have flown a couple of planes into the World Trade Center already, and it looks like they're going to take this one down as well." She then broke down and started sobbing as she said, "Mostly I just wanted to say I love you, and I'm going to miss you." Roll the clock forward nearly 14 years to the day when news broke about a British Airways jet engine catching on fire just before takeoff from Las Vegas on September 8, 2015. The passengers were abruptly evacuated down the inflatable emergency slides. In contrast to Flight 93, a sampling of passengers grabbed their carry-on luggage, which could have easily punctured the slides and jeopardized everyone's safety, and others paused for selfies during the emergency evacuation. Priorities change for cultures and individuals so it's wise to continually evaluate what we deem important. (Both articles were in the same paper on the same day) *Houston Chronicle, 9/10/15, p.A2 & A7*

PROTECTION: The tragic dimensions of what took place on September 11th will never be disputed, yet there have been remarkable outcomes that have taken place since then. The divine protection over those who cleaned up the site is but one inspiring thought. Those who gave of their very best in the harshest of conditions, logged in 3.1 million hours of work as they removed 1,640,707 tons of debris. The clearing of this very unstable and tangled site could have easily resulted in more loss of life, yet not a single person died in this heroic effort. (Sadly, deaths have occurred since then as a result of the exposure to the air quality conditions the workers inhaled in the initial aftermath). *Parade*, 7/21/2, p.4; *Beaumont Enterprise*, 5/30/2, 9A

PURPOSE: Just five days after Osama bin Laden was killed, Lisa Beamer gave the commencement address at Wheaton College. The 9/11 widow could have easily used the platform to speak of justice concerning her husband's heroic death on United Flight 93, but she shared a much more redemptive message instead. She told the graduates of her alma mater (where the student union building was named after Todd Beamer in 2004) to yearn for lasting significance – not the type that's found in the media or on the Internet. She said, "the kind that brings individuals to the person of Christ and teaches them to operate according to the values of His Kingdom." She warned them, "Don't be dismayed to find your lives turn ordinary soon enough." But in the rather unglamorous nature of your days, "Ask yourself who is becoming whole again on your watch, what is being healed through your influence, how is God redeeming His creation through your life? Your good answers will surely be the mark of significance, even in an ordinary life." *World*, 9/10/11, p.42; *Chicago Tribune*, 5/7/11

REDEMPTION: The heroism of Todd Beamer is a well-chronicled piece of American history, and his faith is a well-documented piece of Russian history. After seeing Todd's wife, Lisa, interviewed on national television, a group of Russian reporters flew over for an interview of their own. Lisa Beamer invited the Russians to Princeton Alliance Church in New Jersey and showed them the classroom where Todd taught Sunday School. On the marker board was a diagram depicting the chasm between God's holiness and man's sinfulness. A cross was drawn to symbolize the bridge that was created by Christ's sacrificial death. Eugene, a Russian bureau chief, said he had never seen anything like this and wanted to know more. After further explanation, he committed his life to Jesus Christ. Eugene returned to Russia and prepared a news broadcast about the Beamers that included the bridge diagram. As a result, millions of Russians heard a clear presentation of the gospel - all because a brave, young widow believed the redemptive truth of Genesis 50:20..."You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." *Be Still, America...I Am God*, Amy Bartlett, 2002, p.173-8

REDEMPTION: The USS New York is a state-of-the-art Navy warship that was launched in 2007. What's unique about this battleship is that it was built with twenty-four tons of scrap steel from the World Trade Center. It's now being used for various missions including special operations against terrorists. The 684-foot ship can carry 360 sailors and 700 Marines for deployment to shore by helicopters and a surface assault craft. This \$700 million vessel was followed by the building of additional ships named USS Arlington for a remembrance to the Pentagon, and USS Somerset for the western Pennsylvania county where Flight 93 crashed on September 11, 2001. It is also significant to know the USS New York was built in a shipyard near New Orleans and survived the onslaught of hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2006. No wonder its motto is, "Strength forged through sacrifice. Never forget." The very towers that were destroyed by terrorists are providing materials to wage war on terrorism. The redemptive nature of God takes that which has been destroyed

and gives it purposeful new birth. *Beaumont Enterprise*, 4/9/6, p.2E; *Houston Chronicle*, 3/25/6, p.A6; *Wikipedia.org*

RELEVANCE: When the National Security Studies Seminar at West Point was interrupted on the morning of September 11, 2001, the cadets might have thought it was just part of the class. Their pre-planned class topics for that particular day were terrorism, nonstate actors, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In the wake of 9/11, journalists swarmed the prestigious military school with questions about the restructuring and rewriting of curriculum. Unbeknownst to them, the leaders of that great institution had begun contemplating a whole array of what-ifs long before they became headlines. Although some cadets might have wondered about the significance of their education as they studied on September 10th, the events of the following morning could only confirm the absolute relevance of their education. In similar fashion, the Bible may at times seem dated or irrelevant, but time will do nothing but prove the sheer relevance of God's Word. *Fast Company*, June 2003, p.36

REVENGE: During the September 11, 2001 attacks, Wilton Sekzer lost his son in the World Trade Center. Jason Sekzer worked for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 105th floor of Tower One. He died at age thirty-one, less than nine months after getting married. Wilton, a retired New York City Policeman, wanted revenge for his son's death. Remembering some of what was done during his years in Vietnam, he petitioned the military to have his son's name placed on a bomb. That 2,000-pound guided missile hit its target with 100% success on April 1, 2003 and Wilton felt a sense of vindication. He carried the picture of that bomb which had been inscribed: "In loving memory of Jason Sekzer." He later received an email from a guy who asked, "What about the other fathers whose sons were killed by that bomb?" It caused him to reconsider his actions. He said, "It's not easy to be calm when you lose your child. You want revenge." He resolved to change his son's remembrance to something entirely different. He took the necessary steps to have a street renamed after Jason. In Queens, New York there is now a street sign that reads: "Jason M. Sekzer Memorial Place." Wilton said, "People ask me which I'm more proud of - putting his name on a bomb or putting it on a street sign. The answer obviously is the street sign. The bomb was a reaction to anger. The street sign will be here forever. Two different categories." (See Ephesians 4:26-27) *Parade*, 9/10/6, p.6

REVIVAL: September 11th is etched into history as a day when the whole world was literally changed. Perspectives on life were altered, daily living was affected, and the global economy recoiled from the attack. Terminology like "Ground Zero" became a commonly used and understood word. It's hard to believe all of these changes were brought about by fewer than two dozen men. When standing at Ground Zero ten months after the attack, it was surreal to realize only ten men were needed to cause such incredible devastation. How could so few do so much? Thankfully, evil doesn't have a monopoly on change. In fact, Scripture reminds us of that very truth..."greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). We have seen what Satan can do through a small band of committed terrorists. May we now see what God can do through an army of devoted Christ-followers. *Editor's Perspective from a Mission Trip to Ground Zero in 2002*

SALVATION: When the World Trade Center towers collapsed on September 11, 2001, sixty-nine percent of the fatalities occurred with people who were at or above the entry point of those two jets. In the South Tower, six hundred civilians died above the plane's impact. Unknown to them was the fact that there was an open staircase that connected the upper floors to the street below. Of the hundreds who were trapped on the top thirty-three floors,

only eighteen people used that staircase to escape. The tragedy is horrible enough, but to think how many more could have been saved had they known about the open stairway. The gospel is much like that life-saving staircase; only those who find it can escape certain death. Illuminating the pathway to eternal life is the ongoing responsibility and privilege of every Christian. *Associated Press*, 5/27/2

SALVATION: While sharing his testimony at a *Firefighters For Christ* function, New York City fireman Frank Costa gave a good analogy regarding salvation. Speaking on how we are incapable of saving ourselves even though many have tried to devise their own pathway to God, Costa said, "You know how when you want something done right you do it yourself? Well, when it came to salvation, God rolled up His sleeves and did the job Himself." Only God could do it right...so He did! *Firefighters For Christ CD*

SATAN: In Greek mythology we can learn a wise lesson about conflict from the travels of Cadmus. The warrior came upon a crowd of giants who seemed destined to hinder and hurt him. He remained in hiding until he devised a plan for deceiving them. By throwing a rock and hitting one of the giants, he created dissension among their ranks. The giant thought a comrade had hit him so he struck back in retaliation. They soon began taking sides and started fighting against one another. As the battle intensified and giants were felled, Cadmus slipped on by toward his destination. Many a church and fellow Christians have been sadly duped by the same simple strategy of the evil one. He has turned brothers into enemies and wounded their resilience as a family. The next time you get plunked in the head, check for fingerprints. Chances are good they're from the dissentious Deceiver. *Baptist Standard*, 8/13/1, p.14

SATAN: On September 11, 2001, when the twin towers in New York were burning, a rather interesting Associated Press photograph was taken and picked up by several major newspapers. The billowing smoke from the World Trade Center created what some readers felt was a clear outline of a Satanic image. Readers from across the country called to ask if the picture had been manipulated because the shape of the smoke appeared to have eyes, a nose, a mouth, and horns...a perceived sketch of Satan's face. The AP photo editor, Vin Alabiso, issued a statement to assure readers the photograph was untouched. He noted they were just reacting to natural indentations in the smoke clouds. Of course nobody had to look to the clouds for the signature of Satan. The tragedies of that day carried the same fingerprints he leaves on all his work. He takes that which is good and makes something bad, and often uses our own stuff to inflict the pain, all the while, hurting innocent people. His presence and practices are evident, so let's not waste time staring at weird looking clouds. Instead, strive to "stand firm against all his schemes" (Ephesians 6:11). *Houston Chronicle*, 9/13/1, p.31A

SECOND CHANCES: The National September 11 Museum in New York City displays a unique collection of personal artifacts recovered from that day. Robert Gschaar worked on the 92nd floor in the South Tower for Aon Insurance and died in the collapse. His wallet was later recovered and it contained a very special \$2 bill. When he proposed to his future wife in 1988, he used two \$2 bills to remind them both that this second marriage would be their second chance at love. It was a reminder he never took out of his wallet, which was recovered along with his wedding ring at Ground Zero over a year after his death. *No Day Shall Erase You*, Alice Greenwald, 2016, p.67

SERVICE: Mike Spann was the first American killed in Afghanistan after the September 11th attacks. The 32-year-old CIA commando was beaten and shot by the Taliban while

interrogating prisoners suspected of being tied to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization. This Christian husband and father was cut down in the prime of life on November 25, 2001. His father said, "Mike wanted to make the world a better place for us." He also noted what Mike said when he took on the dangerous CIA job, "Someone has got to do the things no one else wants to do." Mike Spann understood service. *People*, 12/17/1, p.63; *World*, 12/8/1, p.15

SOVEREIGNTY: Richard Del Rio pastored the Abounding Grace Church in New York. His involvement with over 250 area pastors and the activity at Ground Zero led him to say, "Had Satan known the unity in this city that would come to pass, he would not have torn down those towers - there is a new determination in God's people." The same benefit could be said of our nation as well. Even when the forces of darkness seem to succeed, it is but a temporary state because the sovereignty of God will always prevail. *Decision*, September 2002, p.14

SPIRITUAL WARFARE: When President Bush declared war on terrorism, an ensuing discussion followed as to what this war would be called. Wordsmiths went to work and some interesting pieces of history were rediscovered. One such vignette involved the naming of World War II. Many suggestions had been given to President Roosevelt as he agonized over an appropriate name for the war. He announced his preference at a press conference in April of 1942. He asked Americans to join him in calling the global conflict "The War for Survival." The American people chose "World War II" instead and that led to "The Great War" getting its retrofitted title of "World War I." FDR's preferred name was rejected for the war against Hitler, but his suggestion should certainly be applied to our war against the forces of evil because Scripture does indeed teach us it is "The War for Survival." *Houston Chronicle*, 2/25/2, p.5D

SPIRITUAL WARFARE: When you read John 10:10 and hear of Satan's agenda for humanity (steal, kill, and destroy), it's easy to see his fingerprints all over September 11, 2001. On June 17, 2004, the September 11 Commission held its final public hearing. At that meeting, recordings from the hijacked planes were heard for the first time. One tape clarified the calculated evil and deception behind that Satanic mission. Passengers on American Airlines Flight 11, were told a chilling lie by what is believed to be Mohamed Atta. He told those innocent people, "We have some planes. Just stay quiet, and you'll be OK. We are returning to the airport." Not long after that message, Flight 11 slammed into the north tower of the World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m. The lies of Satan haven't changed that much over time. It's the same message uttered through those voices of evil on 9/11, "Just stay quiet, and you'll be OK." Staying quiet is not the answer. Staying filled with the Spirit of God is the only way to victoriously stand against the reality of evil (Ephesians 5:18; 2 Corinthians 10:4). *Houston Chronicle*, 6/18/4, p.21A

TEAMWORK: In the days following September 11, 2001, the airline industry was plagued by the fear of future terrorism. Authorities began implementing new measures for tightened security, but passengers still feared terrorists might commandeer their plane. A brilliant counterattack of defense was offered by an insightful pilot who was flying on the Saturday after those four planes went down. Passengers aboard United Airlines Flight 564 at Denver International Airport heard their pilot give these instructions: "If someone were to stand up, brandishing something such as a plastic knife and say, 'This is a hijacking,' or words to that effect, here is what you should do. Every one of you should stand up and immediately throw things at that person... pillows, books, magazines, eyeglasses, shoes... anything that will throw him off balance and distract his attention. Most important, get a blanket over him, then wrestle him to the floor and keep him there. We'll land the plane at the nearest airport

and the authorities will take it from there. Remember, there will be one of him and maybe a few confederates, but there are two hundred of you. You can overwhelm them. I don't think we are going to have any such problem today or tomorrow or for a while, but sometime down the road it is going to happen again and I want you to know what to do. Now, since we're family for the next few hours, I'll ask you to turn to the person next to you, introduce yourself, tell him a little about yourself and ask him to do the same." How apropos that a United Airlines pilot would talk about the power of teamwork because just a few days earlier it was the teamwork of heroic passengers on United Flight 93 that overpowered the hijackers and diverted the strike of a fourth target. *Be Still, America...I Am God*, Amy Bartlett, 2002, p.75

THEOLOGY: We all espouse to some form of theology, even an atheist has theology, but most people don't think it's terribly relevant. The events of 9/11 should dissuade such erroneous thinking. Dr. David Shibley has accurately written, "The terrorists who carried out these atrocities were driven – not by money or fame – but by a destructive belief system. Don't ever think personal theology doesn't have public consequences." *Charisma*, September 2011, p.30

TRANSFORMATION: High above the sightlines of Ground Zero, a number of cameras were set up to capture all of the activity through time-lapse photography. Three initial cameras were installed on top of nearby buildings in May of 2002 and then additional ones were later included. These cameras were programmed to take regular footage of the 16-acre site as the work progressed. (*The building of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum is an example of their work and can be easily accessed on the Internet*). Those in charge of the project created "an extraordinary historical record of the rebirth of the World Trade Center site." With millions of pictures and countless hours of video from which to use, the finished product provides a fascinating look at the gradual and ultimate transformation. From the beginning, sponsors believed something great would rise from that enormous pit of tragedy, and God believes the same thing about each of His followers. As Psalm 40:2 declares, "He lifted me out of the pit..." *Houston Chronicle*, 8/18/2, p.8A

TRUST: When terrorists snuffed out the life of Todd Beamer on September 11, 2001, it wasn't the first time Lisa Beamer experienced the harsh reality of premature death. Her father died when she was 15-years-old so she was already acquainted with grief. The experiences of Lisa's younger years helped her deal with the loss of her husband. Through her father's death she gained a new understanding of Jeremiah 29:11. She wrote, "the plans God has for us don't just include "good" things... the "prospering" he talks about... is often the outcome of a "bad" event." This led to an important discovery that guided her through two enormous tragedies: "Somewhere along the way, I stopped demanding that God fix the problems in my life and started to be thankful for his presence as I endured them." It's no wonder she became an icon of strength and peace in the days that followed those horrible events of September 11, 2001. *Let's Roll, Lisa Beamer*, 2002, p.68

UNCERTAINTY: The events of September 11, 2001 are enough to convince anyone that life is filled with uncertainty. Few people understand that better than real estate developer Larry Silverstein. After completing the construction of 7 World Trade Center in 1987, Silverstein wasn't satisfied. He said, "Here I was with this beautiful 47-story, two million-square-foot building, but when I walked outside I realized it was totally eclipsed by the towers and thought, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful to own that, too?' It was a compulsion with me." Just six weeks before New York City's twin towers fell, Silverstein got his wish by signing a 99-year lease on the World Trade Center. At the age of seventy-one, the head of

Silverstein Properties negotiated a \$3.2 billion deal for the two impressive skyscrapers. Less than two months later his enormous investment was leveled by hijacked jets. Benjamin Franklin is often quoted for his statement about taxes and death being the only two certainties of life. We must add to his list the certainty that life will always contain some level of uncertainty. *Houston Chronicle*, 2/24/2, p.3D

URGENCY: While flying during the days before September 11, 2001, William Faye struck up a conversation with a flight attendant and felt deeply impressed to share Christ with her. As an evangelist, such promptings weren't uncommon, but there was a strong urgency about this particular encounter. He gave her a tract about Cassie Bernall because he was a chaplain to the Denver Police Department when the Columbine shootings occurred and it's a story close to his heart. She quickly responded: "You know, this is weird. You are the sixth person to hand me one of these in the last two weeks. Why did you give this to me?" That opened the door for him to tell her about the love of Christ and she committed her life to the Lord. Soon after, she died in a hijacked plane on 9/11. *Be Still America*, Amy Bartlett, 2002, p.79

WAR: "War is the result of man trying to play God." **Spiros Zodhiates** *Editor's Files*

WAR: Historians Will & Ariel Durant have calculated that in the past three & a half millennia of recorded history, there have only been 268 years without war somewhere in the world. And since 1968, there has not been a single year without war somewhere on the planet. *A Passion for Leadership*, Wayne Kehl, 2008, p.206

WISDOM: "There is nothing so likely to produce peace as to be well prepared to meet an enemy" (John Adams). "The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave" (Patrick Henry). "The sum of the whole matter is this, that our civilization cannot survive materially unless it is redeemed spiritually" (Woodrow Wilson). "Today we come together in this service to confess our need of God" (Billy Graham, Washington National Cathedral, September 14, 2001). "I recognize we must be cautious in claiming that God is on our side, but I think it's all right to keep asking if we're on His side" (Ronald Reagan). *America Out of the Ashes*, Honor Books, 2001, p.175-208

WORSHIP: In the wake of September 11, 2001, Matt Redman penned *Blessed Be Your Name* as a worship response to the tragedy we had all experienced. He and his wife, Beth, were on sabbatical in the United States from their homeland of Britain when the terrorist attacks occurred. They co-wrote this piece as both an anthem of praise and a response to the reality of human suffering. This popular worship song states, "When the darkness closes in, Lord still I will say, Blessed be Your Name." He said, "It struck me how little vocabulary we have in church worship music to respond appropriately in dark times of life. We all face seasons of pain and unease. And in those times, we need to find our voice before God. The Church, and indeed the world, needs songs of lamentation." Regardless of our circumstances, Redman has wisely noted, "worshiping God is a choice, and the best choice we'll ever make." *Today's Christian*, May/June 2007, p.17

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