

September 11

The September 11 attacks (often referred to as 9/11) were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda, against the United States on the morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001. The attacks resulted in 2,977 fatalities, over 25,000 injuries, and substantial long-term health consequences, in addition to at least \$10 billion in infrastructure and property damage. 9/11 is the single deadliest terrorist attack in human history and the single deadliest incident for firefighters and law enforcement officers in the history of the United States, with 343 and 72 killed, respectively.

Four passenger airliners which had departed from airports in the northeastern United States bound for California were hijacked by 19 al-Qaeda terrorists. Two of the planes, American Airlines Flight 11 and United Airlines Flight 175, crashed into the Twin Towers, (North and South towers), respectively, of the World Trade Center complex in Lower Manhattan, New York.

Within an hour and 42 minutes, both 110-story towers collapsed. Debris and the resulting fires caused a partial or complete collapse of all other buildings in the World Trade Center complex, including the 47-story 7 World Trade Center tower, as well as significant damage to ten other large surrounding structures. A third plane, American Airlines Flight 77, was crashed into the Pentagon (the headquarters of the U.S. Department of Defense) in Arlington County, Virginia, which led to a partial collapse of the building's west side. The fourth plane, United Airlines Flight 93, was initially flown toward Washington, D.C., but crashed into a field in Stony Creek Township, Pennsylvania, after passengers thwarted the hijackers.



A man from Norfolk, Virginia, USA called a local radio station to share this on Sept 11th, 2003, 2 years after the tragedies of 9/11/2001.

His name was Robert Matthews. These are his words:

A few weeks before Sept. 11th, my wife and I found out we were going to have our first child. She planned a trip out to California to visit her sister. On our way to the airport, we prayed that God would grant my wife a safe trip and be with her. Shortly after I said 'amen,' we both heard a loud pop and the car shook violently. We had blown out a tire. I replaced the tire as quickly as I could, but we still missed her flight. Both very upset we drove home.

I received a call from my father who was retired NYFD. He asked what my wife's flight number was, but I explained that we missed the flight.

My father informed me that her flight was the one that crashed into the southern tower. I was too shocked to speak. My father also had more news for me; he was going to help. 'This is not something I can't just sit by for; I have to do something.'

I was concerned for his safety, of course, but more because he had never given his life to Christ. After a brief debate, I knew his mind was made up. Before he got off of the phone, he said, 'take good care of my grandchild.' Those were the last words I ever heard my father say; he died while helping in the rescue effort.

My joy that my prayer of safety for my wife had been answered quickly became anger. I was angry at God, at my father, and at myself. I had gone for nearly two years blaming God for taking my father away. My son would never know his grandfather, my father had never accepted Christ, and I never got to say good-bye.

Then something happened. About two months ago, I was sitting at home with my wife and my son, when there was a knock on the door. I looked at my wife, but I could tell she wasn't expecting anyone. I opened the door to a couple with a small child.

The man looked at me and asked if my father's name was Jake Matthews. I told him it was. He quickly grabbed my hand and said, 'I never got the chance to meet your father, but it is an honor to meet his son.'

He explained to me that his wife had worked in the World Trade Center and had been caught inside after the attack. She was pregnant and had been caught under debris. He then explained that my father had been the one to find his wife and free her. My eyes welled up with tears as I thought of my father giving his life for people like this. He then said, 'there is something else you need to know.'

His wife then told me that as my father worked to free her, she talked to him and led him to Christ. I began sobbing at the news.

Now I know that when I get to Heaven, my father will be standing beside Jesus to welcome me, and that this family would be able to thank him themselves.

When their baby boy was born, they named him Jacob Matthew, in honor of the man who gave his life so that a mother and baby could live.

Writing activity

Explain in your own words how God brought about 3 positive events from tragedy. Explain how:

1. a mother and her unborn child were supernaturally protected by missing the flight
2. a second mother and unborn child was saved during the event
3. the writer's father was tragically killed in the rescue effort, but was led to Christ.

