

**September 11, 2001, started out as such a nice day-no, a beautiful day. Then it all turned.**

*- ABC News/Good Morning America, 9:05 am*



Terror struck America and changed us forever. None of us will ever forget where we were, who we were with and what we were doing that fateful day when tragedy struck America on what looked like a beautiful day in New York city. As we deal with the loss of thousands of innocent lives we were also reminded that history books will also tell the tale of many Americans that faced terror with courage.

I worked on the 81st floor of the North Tower or Tower 1 of the World Trade Center and my wife Mary worked on the 71st floor of the South Tower or Tower 2. It was just an incredible experience working in this incredible building especially for an immigrant who had just arrived in America in February of that year. We enjoyed so much working together in the same complex.

I left home (Teaneck, a town in Northern New Jersey) early that morning for work. The morning commute was normal and as the the NJ Transit bus rolled out of the Lincoln Tunnel into Midtown here was again the incredible sight of the World Trade Center Towers

from a distance. It was a beautiful clear day on the east-coast. I made my way to my office and as I sat on my chair I started reflecting on God's goodness on our lives. He had blessed us with good jobs and now we were expecting our first child. Everything seemed to be going well. However, I began to feel a deep sense of emptiness in my life. I knew there was a call of God upon my life but I was not doing anything about it. I decided to write an email to a friend at my church telling him how I felt and how I was looking for purpose in life. I let go of that email at 8:05 am from my office. Little did I know how the next few moments would change us forever.

At about 8:45 am, I had just faxed out some documents and as I was returning to my desk I hear this incredible explosion. Our building rattled and shook. People screamed throughout our floor.

American Flight 11 from Boston to Los Angeles had just crashed into our building. Soon debris from the plane flew into our office and everything started going up in flames. All of us tried our best to stay calm but fear descended on all of us as we had no idea what was going on or if we had a way out of this building. We could see a huge crater below and above us. It was picture of twisted steel all around us with smoke and fire spreading fast.

My heart was sinking. I wondered if the plane had also hit the South Tower where my pregnant wife worked. We fought our way through the fire and made our way to the stairwell. As we were coming down the flights I am trying to reach my wife through my cell phone. But cell phones are not working. Desperate, I stopped on the 53rd floor and tried to make a few phone calls from the land line. I was extremely worried about my wife but there was no way to reach her. As I continued my descend down we now see hundreds of firemen and policemen pass us as they

were making their way up. When we saw them there was this hope that there was a way out of this burning building. We had no idea then that these brave men were walking up to their death. As we made our way to the lowest level it was an unbelievable sight. It was a picture of death and complete destruction. Fuselage from the plane that had crashed, burning materials, shattered glass and bodies all over the courtyard. It was a war zone.

I saw people being led through the different exits of the World Trade Center. I decided to walk closer to the South Tower hoping that, if my wife had not made her way up I might see her. As I reached close to this building. There is now a huge explosion and the ground around me is shaking. This was the South Tower finally collapsing.

All 110 stories of the second tower of the World Trade Center collapsed around us as I was standing near the foot of the building. Huge boulders and steel and mortar were tumbling down around us.

The people around me huddled at one end of the building and I started praying for the blood of Jesus and asking God to give His strength. As I stared death as its face I started having this peace about this place called heaven. I felt challenged to tell people around me that all of us were going to die and if there was anyone who did not know Christ that they should call upon His name. At that point, everyone around me started crying: "Jesus!". It was incredible as we started calling on His name. There is so much power in the name of Jesus.

When you are near death, you are very ready to accept Jesus into your life. By then, the whole building had collapsed and we were in the debris. Not a single boulder or any material fell on me. I found myself in three feet of white soot and glass. I got to my feet and was surrounded by silence. I could see dead bodies all around me. God directed me to a man on the ground who had a flashlight on him. I told

him that only Jesus could save us and that we had to live.

When the man had stood up, I saw that the jacket he was wearing had "FBI" written on it. We held hands and started walking through the rubble. It was like a blizzard, one caused by all the concrete and ash that had been stirred up into the atmosphere.

I know see a light flashing on top of an ambulance, so I told the man from the FBI that we had to head to that flashing light, since the ambulance was on the street. We somehow made it to the ambulance, which had been badly hit by debris. But the light was still flashing. From that point, it was relatively easy for us to make our way out.

Nevertheless, I was gripped by the thought that my wife who was in the other World Trade Center tower might be dead. All kinds of images went through my mind.

Crowds started running from all over downtown to safer places far away from the skyscrapers. We ran and walked for an hour, and throughout the whole time my cell phone failed to work. Finally, at noon my cell phone rang. It was my wife, telling me that she was alive. When she heard my voice, she realized that I too had made it through. She had not made it to work, since her train had reached the World Trade Center subway stop five minutes after the first crash and so had not made it into the buildings. She had been hysterical on the streets, thinking I was dead and seeing people jumping out of the buildings.

Nevertheless, both of us were, miraculously, alive. My wife reached 39th Street in Manhattan near the Ferry and somehow I reached there. We looked back and could see both our buildings now only a pile of smoking rubble and ashes.

It is impossible to explain the sense of relief that flowed through us when we saw each other. Both of us had been so close to believing that we would never see each other again. When the explosion took place

and the building was crumbling around me, images of my wife, parents, grandmother, and other loved ones flashed through my mind. The relief that we were alive was almost more than I could bear. God in His mercy spared our lives.

Thousands died on this fateful day. We will all have to go one day. It is appointed for all men to die once. We are here to challenge the world with the question "Do You Know Where You Are Going?"

I salute the fallen and those that have been left standing. I thank God for our bravest Police men and women, firemen, men and women who go in harm's way and defend this nation. Many gave their today for others to see their tomorrow.

I thank God for the resilience of life that we saw in New York City. It was incredible to see the city come back to life and breathe again. But America will never be the same again. So much has happened in our world since this tragic day. This country has been in war and thousands have laid down their lives in Afghanistan and Iraq to make America safe. May we never forget their sacrifices. They did not die in vain. You that have just read our story. We all have stories in our lives. On our journey on this earth we will have trials and sorrows, times of brokenness and pain. But God is in the business of turning our tragedies into trophies of His glory and grace. Have you given your life story into His hands? Since that day God has launched us on a mission to prepare people for eternity. Are you ready?

*"Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint." – (Isaiah 40:31)*

## **MAY WE NEVER FORGET 9/11/2001**

What started as invitations to share his and his wife's miraculous deliverance on September 11, 2001 birthed an international evangelistic ministry that has touched many nations of the world.

### **Quick Facts about September 11, 2001**

- 19 hijackers (Al Qaeda terrorists) hijacked 4 jets.
- [American Airlines Flight 11](#), a [Boeing 767-200](#), crashed into the northern side of the North Tower of the World Trade Center (WTC) at 8:46:30 a.m. local time (EST).
- [United Airlines Flight 175](#), a Boeing 767-200, crashed into the South Tower at 9:02:59 a.m. local time.
- [American Airlines Flight 77](#), a [Boeing 757-200](#), crashed into the [Pentagon](#) at 9:37:46 a.m. local time.
- [United Airlines Flight 93](#), a Boeing 757-200, crashed in a field in southwest Pennsylvania just outside of Shanksville, about 150 miles (240 km) northwest of Washington, D.C., at 10:03:11 a.m. local time.
- The South Tower collapsed at 9:59 am
- The North Tower collapsed at 10:28 am
- There was 2,974 fatalities.

### **Suggested readings:**

The 9/11 Commission Report or online <http://www.9-11commission.gov>

The Cell by John Miller and Michael Stone – Hyperion Books