

REFLECTIONS OF 9/11

15 YEARS LATER

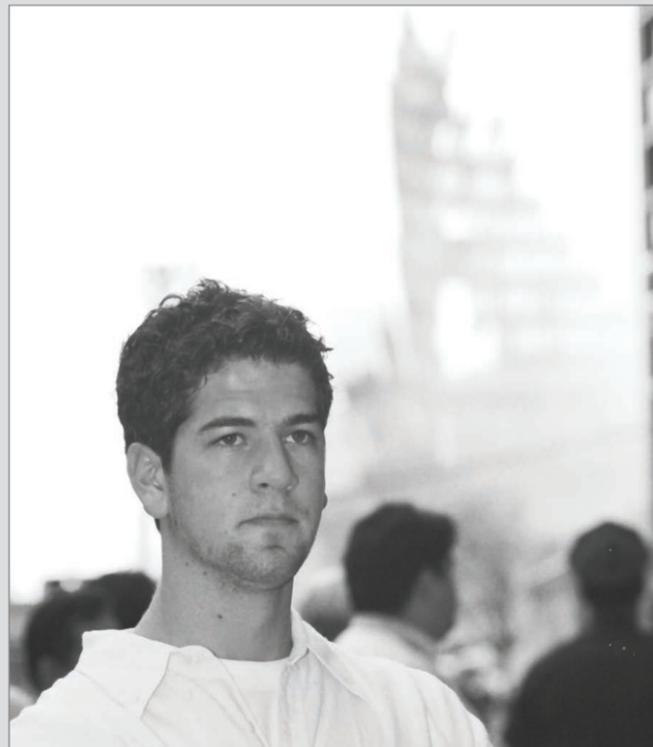
TRAGIC EVENTS PROPELLED ANDY DEANE TO RETURN TO CHRIST AND SET HIM ON A NEW PATH IN LIFE

Testimony by Andy Deane

Andy Deane remembers the day that God radically changed his life. Now director of Calvary Chapel Bible College (CCBC) in Murrieta, CA, Andy had attended church as a youth but drifted away from Christ while attending New York University (NYU). Andy lived blocks from the World Trade Center (WTC) and worked in its shadow. On September 11, 2001, Andy ran toward the towers after planes crashed into their upper floors. Since that morning 15 years ago, Andy has gone on to serve the Lord full-time in ministry—first as a youth pastor at CC Old Bridge, NJ, and then as the director of CCBC. This is a condensed remembrance of his account of that day.



Andy at CCBC



I heard a terrible noise. It was a mixture of screams and a deep rumbling from above. I looked up and saw the South Tower of the WTC collapsing. I froze for a second and then began to sprint toward the police line. It did not appear that I was going to make it and that I would be crushed. I felt a strong wind as the smoke engulfed me.

I jumped into a candy store filled with people. I turned to look back outside and saw a lady slowly moving along. I stepped out into the smoke and grabbed her hand and brought her into the store. The smoke completely surrounded us, and it became totally dark. Twenty people were crammed inside of the small store as it filled with smoke. We were having trouble breathing.

“Is there a basement here?” I yelled to the owner. She said no. So I looked up to God and began to pray: *Lord, forgive me for my filth, for my sin. I pray that You would accept me into heaven based on my belief in Jesus Christ. I apologize for not being the example that I needed to be for You. If You can use me, then give me the strength, Lord.*



I realized my office building, 11 John Street, was nearby. I ran to it, singing a line from a worship song, “Let the weak say I am strong.” I was blinded by smoke. Two women were banging on the glass door. I kicked it in and told them to go upstairs. Running back to the candy store, I told them I had found a place with oxygen and instructed everyone to grab someone else’s hand and follow me.

Ten minutes later the smoke began to lighten. Firemen gathered, and I asked where I should go. They told me to run toward the seaport. “No, I mean where can I go to help?” They looked puzzled and said that firemen were missing and they were going to look for them.

We walked up onto the rubble of the WTC. “Is anyone alive?” I shouted, and I remember thinking how dumb that sounded. We did not hear even one person yell back. I saw a lone pigeon escape from the rubble.

A fireman was assisting an Asian man lying on the ground, bleeding. An African-American fireman was also on the

ground in a lot of pain with two firemen bent over him, holding his hands. I couldn’t tell if he was going to live.

A fireman helped me move a piece of metal that had been blocking a door, so the people inside were able to escape. We began to look for trapped firemen—there were five firefighters and three policemen in our group. Suddenly there was another deep and powerful rumbling. The North tower began to collapse.

A fireman yelled, “It’s coming down!” We ran across the street and into a building. Once again I thought I was going to die. It was right above us. Then it hit, shaking us—the loudest sound I have ever heard. Smoke came, and we couldn’t breathe. My eyes were stinging.

Above: Pastor Skip Heitzig, serving as a chaplain at Ground Zero, took this image of the destruction.

Left: Andy Deane in front of the remains of the World Trade Center. Photo by Tom Price

Minutes later we walked outside. The firemen's flashlights only pierced five feet into the darkness. Someone told me to look and see if a nearby restaurant had any water, so I went over, broke the window, and jumped in. I took all the bottled water I could find. I ran to the window; the glass was angled toward me but I was able to jump over it without cutting my legs. I walked around, handing out water.

We began to put out car fires. The firemen thought it was important so that the vehicles would not explode. I helped carry a hose line a few hundred feet and held it for them as we went from car to car.

A fireman came up to me and asked me my name. I told him that I was a NYU student. He looked at me and said, "Well, thanks, you're doing a great job today." All the firemen seemed really appreciative; throughout the morning they called me "brother." I felt honored to be with them. I was in awe of them and their bravery.

Ground Zero was the worst-looking thing I had ever seen. It looked like a complete war zone. All of the WTC had been crushed down into the basement. The only piece left of one of them was this frayed outline, six stories high. I stared at it and realized that this wasn't just a bad dream. Our lives would never be the same again. ✈

Andy Deane spent the rest of September 11 carrying water for the firemen and helping where he could. Later that afternoon he returned to his college, his hair white with cement dust, face blackened from the smoke, and shirt bloody from a cut. In the subsequent days and weeks, Andy struggled with his close encounter with death. He became even more adamant about sharing his faith in Jesus Christ and grateful for the solid teaching he received growing up that allowed him to reach out to his classmates.

In 2004, Pastor Lloyd Pulley of CCOB, having kept in touch with Andy throughout college after 9/11, sensed a pastoral call on Andy's life and invited him to intern with the church staff. Step by step, Andy was prepared for pastoral ministry. Eventually he was asked to pray about leading the junior high ministry. He joined CCOB's staff and began serving there as the youth pastor.

At an outreach in Union Square Park a few days after the towers fell, Andy met Pastor Brian Brodersen of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa. After serving eight years as CCOB's

youth pastor, Andy was led to serve as the director of CCBC under Pastor Brian, where he has continued to serve for the past four years.



Andy Deane looks at the burning WTC towers moments before they crashed to the ground, killing thousands and engulfing the entire area in complete darkness. At the time he was a 20-year-old NYU student who had wandered from his faith. He remembers September 11 as the day he turned wholeheartedly back to the Lord.

Photo by Eric Anderson



Video

Fifteen years later, Andy Deane revisits New York City and shares his experience of what happened on 9/11, including what the Lord has done in his life since.

www.CCBC.info/September11th