

God Inspired the Heroics of 9/11

This weekend marks the 20th anniversary of one of the most disheartening events of my lifetime. Nationwide television broadcasts of the horrific sight of American Airlines flight 11 crashing into the North Tower at the World Trade Center rocked our world. 8:45 AM on September 11, 2001, is forever etched in our memories. It was only the beginning of a tragic day. Then, at 9:03 AM, United Airlines Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower. At this point, we instantly knew that a coordinated attack against the United States was in progress. At 9:37 AM, American Airlines flight 77 crashed into the western wall of the Pentagon. Air traffic controllers quickly instructed all non-military aircraft to land immediately. Any pilot who did not respond to communications from air traffic controllers was suspected of having been hijacked. United Airlines Flight 93 did not respond. It was a flight originating from Newark International Airport, bound for San Francisco. Flight 93 changed to a collision course with Washington, D.C. As we later found out, terrorists had killed the flight crew and aimed the aircraft at the nation's capital.

In the days following the tragedy, we became aware of the heroism of our First Responders. They ran into the World Trade Center Towers when the sensible action would have been to flee. Their goal was to save as many lives as possible, despite the obvious danger to themselves. For some, it was a suicide mission.



There was heroism on the planes as well. Todd Beamer, a young salesman on a business trip, was aboard United Airlines Flight 93. Todd was a man of strong faith and a loving family man. His wife, Lisa, had two children at home and was expecting their third child. Todd attended Bible study classes and was a popular adult leader for youth groups at his church.

Onboard Flight 93, Todd Beamer organized a small group of passengers to surprise the terrorists and retake the aircraft. Todd used the Airfone on the seatback in front of him, reaching GTE supervisor Lisa Jefferson. Todd provided information to Ms. Jefferson about the hijacking, and then, together, they recited the Lord's Prayer. Strengthened by his faith, Todd then uttered the now-famous words, "Let's Roll," put the phone down with the line still open, and sprang into action. The heroic actions of Todd and his fellow passengers prevented the plane from reaching the US Capitol, crashing in an open Pennsylvania field. Everyone on board died, but they had saved thousands of lives.



One of my favorite inspirational books is Lisa Beamer's story chronicled in her book, Let's Roll. Her book provides insight into what happened on the doomed flight, thanks to Todd's phone call. It also tells how she was able to face such a tragedy and loss. Hers is a story of hope and inspiration, showing God to be her source of strength.

Lisa Beamer viewed the roughly 3,000 who died on 9/11 to be not just victims but people who touched the lives of many. According to her, "Their lives are of eternal value to others." The end of the story is not the memories of those who perished but one of sacrificial action. Those on Flight 93 and First Responders at Ground Zero gave witness that we all should do what we can for others with whatever time God gives us. Live like there is no tomorrow.

We all face tragedies in our lives. Tragedies include the loss of loved ones, health, or events that shake our world. There is no shortage of tragedies. Tragedies are tests of faith and can be a testimony of how people draw upon God's strength to get through difficult situations. Heroic actions inspire others to rise to the challenges they face.

Lisa Beamer is a prime example. She exhibited inner strength. She points out that the source of her strength is the “strength of the Lord who is in charge of her life.” The book’s subtitle reads, “Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage.” We don’t have to be a superstar to be heroic. Follow God’s lead, and He will give you strength. Lisa is an ordinary person showing extraordinary courage because of her faith.



There is another important dimension in this story. Lisa commented that she has “no idea how people without faith can possibly make it through a crisis like this.” God provides people of faith with other resources:

- People of faith are surrounded by positive-thinking Christian friends who are willing to help them through whatever troubles they face. (read Galatians 6:2).
- People of faith know where their loved ones are headed. (read John 1:12)
- People of faith look to Jesus for strength. (read Psalm 28:7 and Deuteronomy 31:6)
- People of faith know that God will help them renew their strength and purpose as they recover from the emptiness of such a loss. (read Isaiah 40:30-31 below).

On the other hand, people who don’t know the Lord don’t have the hope that Christians have for the future.

Lisa Beamer closed her book with the familiar verse from *Isaiah 40:30-31*, which talks about the source of strength:

*Even youth grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;
But 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.*



In the face of tragedy and the loss of a loved one, know that with God’s help, we can finish our journey well. Death is not the end, and Satan does not win. Because of our faith, we will see our loved ones later. But now, with God’s help, it’s time for action. Let’s roll!

The Bible Says:

- *He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3).*
- *I will remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness (Lamentations 3:20-23).*

Question: How does being a person of faith give you strength and hope, and help you through the difficult events of your life?

Prayer: Dear Lord, we pray we will be able to have peace as we overcome difficult times in our life. With your help, Lord, we can be ordinary people with extraordinary courage. Amen.

This devotion is inspired by Let’s Roll: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage, by Lisa Beamer, Tyndale Publishing, 2002.