

'Don't Waste Your Sorrows'

NYC AREA
CHRISTIANS
TALK ABOUT
THE LESSONS
OF SEPT. 11

BY KRISTEN DRISCOLL

ANDY DEANE'S CELL PHONE RANG at 8:50 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001. The NYU sophomore's mother was calling from their home, 40 minutes away in Old Bridge, N.J.

"What's happening down there?" she asked, telling him that a plane had crashed into one of the World Trade Center towers, five blocks from where he lived. The night before, Deane had been out drinking and partying, but he jolted awake, looked out the window and saw smoke streaming from the World Trade Center. Grabbing his camera, he headed for the towers, not knowing that by the end of the day, God would save him from destruction and call him back to a relationship with Christ. Twice he sensed that God protected him as he ran from the collapsing towers and ensuing debris clouds.

As a result of God's protection on that day, Deane repented of his sins and returned to the faith he'd known as a child. In the days that followed, God also called him into ministry, as he worked with pastors from his home church. Today, Deane is youth pastor at Calvary Chapel Old Bridge, and he frequently tells youth about the mercy and forgiveness God showed him in the middle of Sept. 11. His pastor, Lloyd Pulley, says the way Deane allowed God to use the tragic events of that day to change his life is an example of the most important lesson his church learned during Sept. 11.

Andy Deane at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF ANDY DEANE

"Don't waste your sorrows," Pulley says. "Sorrow is one of the best tools that you have to connect with people. So when you're down, take it with dignity and respond 'OK, Lord, what do you have in mind here?'"

Many in Pulley's congregation commuted daily to New York, and he realized that they could not go on with business as usual. Within a couple of days, the church was heavily involved in ministry near Ground Zero. It began when Deane told the church that a makeshift memorial had formed in Union Square, a public park near Ground Zero. Thousands of people passed through it daily, looking for answers for their pain. Initially, the staff and members of the congregation went to hand out evangelistic literature, but soon they discovered that no one was listening to the people's stories of grief. When they started listening to the mourners, they had many more opportunities to share the hope of Christ.

Pulley says the experience impressed on churches the importance

of being ready. About 100 members of Calvary Chapel Old Bridge have gone through Community Emergency Response training and have responded to tragedy in their own community, as well as to events such as Hurricane Katrina and the earthquakes in Haiti and Japan.

This kind of ministry needs a foundation of relationships, though. Abounding Grace Ministries, a church only a few minutes' drive from Ground Zero, learned this in the first hours after the terrorist strike.


Pastor Jack Del Rio rushed to the towers when he heard the news. After the fire chaplain on-site was killed, Del Rio was the only identifiable clergyman at Ground Zero for hours. His son Jeremy began working with him Sept. 12 to coordinate with other pastors who wanted to help.

But as churches sought to minister to the hurting, the Del Rios realized that the churches were disconnected from each other and that many believers were afraid of their neighbors. "We clearly hadn't

processed what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves," Jeremy Del Rio says.

The Del Rios and other pastors formed the Ground Zero Clergy Task Force to give churches a structure they could work through as they communicated with city officials. Jeremy worked as a liaison between the task force, Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Prayer Center during emergency training events for pastors.

Today, churches continue to build on the lessons of Sept. 11.

"Have we counted the cost of what it means to become a neighbor our communities can trust?" Del Rio asked. He quoted a sermon his father preached years ago: "Alone we cannot do it, but together we can take the city for Jesus.' To this day, I believe that's true, and the greatest evidence I have seen is in the years following Sept. 11, in the ways that churches came together inter-generationally, inter-denominationally and inter-racially. And that is hard work."  ©2011 BGEA

9/11 Tragedy Sparked Creation of BGEA Rapid Response Team

IN THE AFTERMATH of 9/11, churches willingly responded in Christ's Name to physical needs, but few were prepared to respond effectively to people's emotional trauma and grief.

At the request of church leaders, BGEA began developing biblically based training seminars on how to care for the emotional and spiritual needs of people affected by tragedy.

The Billy Graham Rapid Response Team was established to train qualified volunteers as crisis chaplains and deploy them after major disasters to represent the One who "heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds (Psalm 147:3, NIV).

Since 2002, more than 4,500 chaplains have been deployed to 106 crises in the U.S. and another 14

internationally. RRT chaplains have prayed with more than 160,000 people, with nearly 12,000 committing their lives to Jesus Christ.

"The Rapid Response Team has opened doors for BGEA to train and equip Christians to effectively and appropriately share the compassion of Christ and the hope of the Gospel with those who are suffering in times of crisis," explained Jack Munday, RRT director.

Regarding the impact that the Rapid Response

Team has made over the past decade, Franklin Graham said since 9/11, BGEA chaplains have been able to bring the love and comfort of Christ to thousands of people who have suffered substantial loss and grief.

"They wrap their arms around people, weep with them, pray with them, and share God's love," Graham explained. "Pastors from across the country have told us what a tremendous help the chaplains have been to their communities in the wake of tragedy."