Christian Plane Crash Victims Transformed This Man's Life

As the nation continues to mourn the 67 lives lost when an Army Black Hawk helicopter collided with American Airlines Flight 5342 Wednesday night, victims' personal stories are beginning to be told.

Among those killed was married couple Bob and Lori Schrock, farmers from Kiowa, Kansas who reportedly ran Premium Grain Inc. Their friend, Michael Simpson, told CBN News about their powerful influence over his life—and their deep faith in Jesus.

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He said his friendship with Bob started decades ago when Simpson, president of Freedom Gates Boys Ranch, a Christian residential program that serves kids in need in Hazelton, Kansas, was just 12 years old.

"A few other men in the weight room taught me how to lift weights, kept me accountable with that," he said, calling Bob's influence "ridiculously encouraging." "The weights were great, but the encouragement … as a 12-year-old kid, having people that are adults that are taking the time to walk across the gym, and encourage you, and tell you 'good job,' and give you advice … it's not a common thing."

Simpson said this motivation helped him as a young person, noting that, decades later, he still maintained the same friendship with Bob.

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“Up until a few weeks ago … we’d see each other in the gym,” he said. “We’ve been doing it since I was a kid.”

In addition to those personal acts of service to Simpson, he said Bob and Lori were also known for kindness, goodness and faithfulness in their local community.

“The best definition of integrity is doing the right thing when nobody’s watching,” he said. “And they just did the right thing and didn’t need people to know.”

The couple, according to Simpson, was driven by their Christian faith and values, expressing a “tremendous, walked-out, fruitful faith.”

As time went on, Simpson began to have more spiritual conversations with Bob. And, about a decade ago, Simpson confided in him about a calling on his heart: to work with at-risk kids from “hard places.”

When he told Bob he was considering quitting his job and getting into this ministry, Bob gave him faith-filled advice.

“I was getting ready to quit my job running cranes in the oil field to come out and be a part of the ministry full time,” Simpson said. “Bob … just encouraged [me], like, ‘Man, is this what you feel like the Lord’s wanting you to do?’”

It was then Simpson realized Bob truly follows the Lord’s promptings and he was encouraged to head down the path of helping young people. Simpson suddenly understood that “this is a guy that just doesn’t go to church and just doesn’t say that he’s a follower of Christ.”

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