

Did America Really Change After 9/11?

Sept. 11, 2001—the day that changed the face of America forever.

Who among us will ever forget the image of those blazing, then crumbling towers? Who could forget the gruesome sight of those who jumped to their deaths from the 110-story towers or the images of ash-covered New Yorkers in the streets? Or the days and weeks of sorrow that followed as the death toll climbed during search and rescue efforts?

But did America really change? Or did we too quickly forget and go back to business as usual?

“God please help us!” were the words of many in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001. But let us take a look at the 10 years after that tragic day.

In September 2001 and the weeks that followed, Americans turned to God. Church services across the nation hit record numbers in attendance as people searched for answers, comfort and peace. But instead of experiencing a spiritual awakening and the fruits of righteousness that could have occurred, it seems that we are experiencing a deterioration of life as we knew it 10 years ago. We are seeing God moved more and more out of the public sector of our nation.

In 2003, Judge Roy Moore was removed as Chief Justice from the Alabama Supreme Court for refusing to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from the state courthouse. Shortly after that in Houston, a Bible was removed from a privately maintained display on the Civil Courts building lawn honoring the faith and motivation of one of the city’s benefactors whose organization helps thousands of widows, single mothers, and homeless men and women. Last year, we saw the opening of the

largest late-term abortion clinic in the western hemisphere, and this year, the director of Houston's veteran's cemetery issued a mandate that the name of God could not be mentioned in military burials at the cemetery.

Marriages continue to fall apart all around us, leaving behind a broken generation of young people, while government leaders in New York and California openly celebrate the legalization of same-sex marriages. Church leaders have fallen to adultery, immorality and pornography. Those who oppose any expression of Christianity continually harass Christian educators with frivolous lawsuits. Atheist groups even protested The Response prayer meeting held in Houston in August, attempting to prohibit the governor from attending.

"God help us!" we cried in 2001. But on Sept. 11, 2011, His name will not even be mentioned at Ground Zero.

Shaking, Groaning and Rage

The late theology professor Harold O. J. Brown, wrote in 2005: "The distinctiveness of marriage has been abolished (*Baird v. Eisenstadt*); prayer and Bible reading in schools has been stamped out (*Abington, Schemp, et al.*); the mother's womb has become the most dangerous place for a baby (*Roe v. Wade, et al.*); the rights (but not the duties) of fathers and parents of minor girls have been voided (*Planned Parenthood v. Danforth*); divorce has become easier than marrying; the Ten Commandments have been banned from public view; and now the natural distinction between male and female is being abolished (*Goodridge, Lawrence, etc.*). the Pledge of Allegiance is forbidden; the Boy Scouts are under attack; and Christmas carols are banned. Pornography is everywhere. The structure of American society is being demolished brick by brick."

Throughout various articles and teachings I have done in the past couple of years, these three themes continue to emerge:

- All that can be shaken is being shaken;
- The whole earth is groaning;

–The nations are raging.

No institution is exempt from God's shaking, not our government or the economy or even the church. Unemployment rates have steadily remained at all-time highs, thousands of families have been unable to pay for their homes, and white-collar scandals are continually exposed. As a nation and as individuals, our spending is out of control.

The past 10 years have seen tsunamis, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods and droughts like never before. This year alone, our nation has experienced an unprecedented number of disasters, including one 24-hour period in which over 300 tornadoes were recorded. As the South and Midwest were still reeling from the summer's deadly storms, an earthquake rocked our nation's capital and the East Coast began recovery from Hurricane Irene and resulting floods. And even as I write this, personal friends and their families are fleeing from wildfires right here in Texas.

Globally, political unrest abounds as revolutionaries rise up to overthrow government after government. War still continues in Afghanistan and Iraq. Even peaceful nations like Norway are victims of terror. And in our own nation, we've seen innocent bystanders murdered in the attempted assassination of a U.S. Congresswoman, and mothers on trial for the murders of their own children.

Asleep from Sorrow

Pastor Jim Garlow from San Diego spoke at Grace Community Church the day after 35,000 individuals (some estimate 44,000 to 50,000) came to Houston's Reliant Stadium to participate in a day of fasting and prayer for our nation. Drawing a spiritual parallel to the natural disasters our nation has experienced, Jim so aptly stated: "Our nation has been experiencing a series of earthquakes—and the church has been sleeping through them."

In Luke 22:45-46, the Bible tell us when Jesus “rose up from prayer and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. And He said, ‘Why do you sleep? Rise up lest you fall into temptation.’” That word ‘sorrow’ means stress, anxiety or grief. The disciples were overwhelmed with all they were facing. But Jesus told them to stay awake so they would not enter into temptation. Likewise in the midst of the shaking, the groanings and the raging of nations, we are to stay awake and watchful so all of these situations can be become an occasion for our testimonies (Luke 21:13).

In 2 Timothy 4, The Apostle Paul says to be ready in season and out of season. The Amplified Bible says we are to keep our sense of urgency; to be at hand, ready, whether the opportunity is favorable or unfavorable, convenient or inconvenient, welcome or unwelcome. As the late Leonard Ravenhill once wrote to me: “Let others live on the cutting edge, but you and I should live on the edge of eternity.” There are multitudes upon multitudes in the valley of decision who need to have what you and I have.

I published an article shortly after the tragedy of 9/11, in which I wrote the answer I had given to national media at the time when asked if 9/11 was a judgment of God:

“We asked God not to be in our schools, not to be in our public venues, not to be the Lord of our lives any more except in image. Yet we want to blame God when things like this happen? If you’re saying God’s not present so judgment comes, then the answer is yes. But, the Bible says sin produces death. It was our choice to ask God not to be in our everyday lives and not to be present in our land. This is not an act of judgment, it’s a wake-up call. God is longing to be in the midst of His people again.”

Transformation will not come from trusting in our institutions, our political leaders, our banking system, our housing industry or in any other institution. It will not even

come from trusting in the institution of the church. It will only come when the church that Christ has established becomes once again the heart of our cities, the heart of the communities, the heart of our nation.

A Revival of Character

Amid the heart-wrenching stories that emerged from 9/11, there also emerged stories of great heroism: the valiant firemen, policemen, rescue workers and citizens who rushed to rescue the victims, many of them losing their own lives in the process of trying to save others. Although the fates of many were sealed as the towers collapsed, rescue workers labored for days in the faint hope of finding some of their brethren alive beneath the chaos and rubble. The passengers on Flight 93 made a conscious decision to give their lives in a crashing plane in order to spare the lives of many. Each of these became modern-day heroes.

There is a battle for the soul of our nation and for the soul of a generation. The only hope is the hope of glory that lives in you and me. Now more than ever we need courageous leaders to give our nation a vision of hope again, a vision of purpose, a vision of destination. We need a revival of character, from the pulpits to the White House and all in between. We need heroes, like those 9/11 firefighters, who are unafraid to lay down their lives and rescue the perishing.

Blood donors from around the nation responded to the call on 9/11, mirroring the greatest act of love ever—Jesus Christ, who gave His own blood so that we might live. He was the greatest fireman of all, who gave His own life to rescue perishing humanity from hell's flames.

Jesus Christ is our Savior, Healer, Deliverer and Liberator. There is nothing too difficult for Him if He truly is on the thrones of our hearts and truly back on the thrones of our pulpits of America.

God can do exceedingly beyond all we can think or imagine. May we not look back 10 years from now and say that the harvest is past; the summer has ended and the people are still not saved (Jer. 8:20).

This is not a time for the church to draw back, it's a time for us to move forward. In the midst of the darkness, God is still calling us to be a city on a hill. Ten years ago, He gave us a wake-up call—it's time to stop pushing our snooze buttons!

Doug Stringer *is the founder and president of Somebody Cares America/International. You can find him on line at .*