

Evangelist Reflects on 9/11, State of Church 10 Years Later

On Sept. 11, 2001, the World Trade Centers in New York City crumbled under the power of two planes, taking thousands of lives with them. Ten years later, many churches, ministries and individuals are taking a day to reflect.

When terrorist attacks, natural disasters and persecution occur around the world, Mission Network News often looks to the question: "How can the church reach out to people with the hope of Christ in this crisis?"

Many American churches were certainly asking this question 10 years ago, and a Barna Group study even shows that since 2011, church attendance, Bible reading and active faith participation have all increased in New York City.

"When tragedy strikes, I think the first natural place for all of us to look is UP," notes evangelist Sammy Tippit. "We begin to seek God, and I think that's what happened. There was a potential for revival in the nation at that time. However, when things settled down, we just went back to business as usual."

Tippit says the church did respond in New York City, especially since the tragedy was in front of them on a daily basis. It couldn't be ignored. Yet throughout the last 10 years, the United States as a whole has experienced a decline in church attendance. The Barna Group reports that Bible reading has more or less remained flat across the country.

"People were really traumatized, and they were open to the gospel at that time. However, I think what happened is that we [believers] never put the focus on, 'OK, what are we going to do at this point in time?'"

What had the potential for revival fell flat with a lack of long-term focus and an unwillingness to wait for results. Tippit points out that even as things improved spiritually in New York, it was still a slow process. Barna studies show that church participation didn't really rise in New York City until 2004.

In light of the 10-year anniversary of the September 2001 attacks, Tippit believes this could be a time to set our efforts right again. It could be a second chance at revival.

"I think this is a critical moment," reflects Tippit. "We're 10 years later. Economically, things are at a very low point, and the nation sits in a crisis mode. I think if we reflect on what happened back then and the potential there was for a great move of God's Spirit, if we will take some concrete actions now and make some very definite plans to really mobilize people, we could see a great move of God's Spirit."

Tippit adds, "Pastors and churches would do well to say, 'OK, where do we go from here?' Not just look back, but say, 'Let's look forward.'"

As you remember where you were 10 years ago, reflect on how your life has changed since then, and mourn the lives lost that fateful day, take the time to pray for lives to be saved as well.

"Let's pray for a prayer movement to rise out of this, and for God to stir and move in the hearts of people ... right now to see a great revival and to seek God in a fresh way."