

How the Holy Spirit Used 9/11 To Fulfill This Biblical Truth

Something good can come out of even the worst of situations. It's certainly true in the life of New York-born-and-raised international relief leader Sean Malone.

A native New Yorker, Long Island to be specific, 40-year-old Sean Malone grew up in the shadows of his father, a union movie industry worker. New York City's skyline and unique backdrops provided plenty of opportunities for showbiz.

During his twenties, Malone followed in his father's footsteps pursuing a living while working in the movie industry for celebrities and movie stars, rubbing shoulders with New York's elite visitors and natives.

It was this occupation that positioned Malone to be of assistance on September 11, 2001 as well as the efforts following the day the World Trade Center towers fell.

The influx of first responders, fire fighters and police—rushing to help the victims moved Malone's heart. Working on a movie at the time, Malone and his father quickly moved their equipment to Ground Zero to provide lighting for the search and rescue operations. Continuing the work at Ground Zero day after day, Malone knew he was meant for a purpose beyond himself.

"9/11 was a wakeup call for me. I was living the New York high life scene, enjoying the success, money and opportunity when the tragedy hit me like a ton of bricks. It hit so close to home. I mean arguably the most powerful city in the world, in ashes overnight. The Lord got a hold of my heart that day."

Thirteen years later, Malone now through his work as director of Crisis Response International—the organization he later founded in 2007, is leading a network of 2,500 trained disaster relief workers around the world. His organization is also currently involved in one of the nation's largest relief effort to bring basic needs to thousands of displaced Yazidis, Iraqis and religious minorities fleeing the atrocities of ISIS.

Positioned to Respond

That change of heart led Malone along a path to know how to prepare, respond and lead when major crisis happens. It became an overwhelming passion and calling—to bring aid and leadership to dire crisis situations, whether natural—hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes or man-made—terrorism, war, etc.

“It was one confirmation after another that led me into this work. But I would say it all stemmed from my experience at 9/11 in New York.”

Those confirmations included living in New Orleans during Katrina. Seeing the desperate need of food and supplies, the Malone family decided to stay and relocated to the inner-city of New Orleans, where they hosted teams of volunteers to cook and serve food. Later, while vacationing in New York, Superstorm Sandy hit New Jersey and Malone again assembled resources and teams to aid relief efforts for over five months.

Developing the network

The experience in New York at 9/11, Katrina and Superstorm Sandy in New Jersey, proved eye opening to the massive need and opportunity, even in America. When disaster strikes, chaos ensues. First response agencies like police, fire and EMS, are understandably not equipped and staffed to handle major disasters. They may not be able to respond quickly to the

immediate needs of victims due to communication, lack of access, or power failure. Government agencies such as FEMA, recognize volunteer organizations active in disaster relief as long as they are properly trained and networked with the National Volunteer Organization Active in Disaster.

Recognizing the opportunity, Malone along with his wife Laura, developed the vision and plans for their organization, Crisis Response International (CRI). Rooted in their shared Christian faith, the Malone's developed CRI to provide a framework for values and resources to come into influence and be delivered to otherwise off-limits areas. The organization focuses on creating teams of well-trained and prepared individuals who know what to do and how to react to crisis, and are able to bring hope and solutions where there is confusion and desperation. CRI also helps avoid what disaster service workers call "the second disaster," as funds and resources get mishandled or spontaneously brought on to the scene, only to make more work for already overloaded volunteers.

"For me, it is about turning the worst tragedies into an opportunity to reach people with the love and gospel of Jesus Christ," explained Malone.

When crisis strikes, teams of staff and trained volunteer responders are lined up to deploy into the specific geography. Resources are raised quickly and sent to aid the teams and crisis victims with basic needs including food, shelter, clothing and medical supplies. Trained staff and volunteers are equipped with skills including Trauma Counseling and Debriefing, Disaster First Aid, Grief and Loss, Light Search and Rescue, Spiritual and Emotional First Aid, Christian Evangelism, Personal and Community Preparedness, Crisis Ministry, Deployment Operations and Protocol are deployed to bring hope to the darkest of times.

"In the midst of some of the darkest, saddest situations on earth, our teams are bringing answers and solutions, there's

something so rewarding about tangibly seeing the need and being the answer to the vast needs in crisis. It keeps me going day in and day out,” explained Malone.

That passion and desire has taken Malone and CRI across the world a number of times responding to international crises since the organization was founded in 2007: Manilla, Philippines typhoon response, Tennessee tornado response, Southern California earthquake response, earthquake in Japan relief efforts—to name a few.

On the Front Lines

Today, CRI continues laboring to help the ongoing crisis in Iraq and the middle East.

“We already had teams on the ground and were positioned to respond to the thousands that needed us when the ISIS crisis broke out last year,” said Malone, “And we’re still there today.”

“CRI has established a Safe House right in Iraq, housing and caring for persecuted women and children escaping the grip of ISIS and come into a place of healing and hope,” stated Malone.

While other relief organizations fled, Malone and his team stayed the course, in the midst of the dangers of ISIS only ten minutes away at one point. But for Malone and CRI, people’s lives are worth the cost. The Ministry of Defense in Iraq and local officials are working with CRI responders to assure their safety and the good of the people CRI is relieving.

“We are not your typical relief organization that gauges our impact by how many thousands of pounds of resources we move but rather how much we move the hearts of those around us,” stated Malone.

The need is truly massive as disasters continue to plague cities and nations. Upcoming deployments to Nepal and continued response in Iraq continue to keep the ministry busy.

“It’s time like these that make all the difference. This work was birthed at Ground Zero and now we are taking hope to the nations and helping those who are experiencing similar situations to what we experienced in New York.”

Today, on top of sending teams around the world including Iraq, Nepal and anywhere crisis happens, CRI is working to assure more people are prepared and ready when disasters strike. Though CRI is now moving their headquarters to Wilmington, NC, Malone still has the Long Island accent and is fast on his feet, something he no doubt picked up living in America’s biggest and fastest paced city. Now raising three daughters with his wife Laura, together they are seeing and experiencing good coming out of one of America’s worst tragedies.

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