

A LIGHT DAWNING IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Calvary Chapels minister in New York after the attack

photographs and story by Tom Price

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned.
Isaiah 9:2

A HARVEST IN NEW YORK

A group of exhausted New York City firemen sat in the back of a pick-up truck at Ground Zero. Mike Finizio, pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Manhattan, approached them to check on their condition.

“How are you guys doing?” Mike asked in his New York accent.

“Hey, not so bad, friend,” they responded. One could detect the weariness the men were feeling after being at the site of the World Trade Center for close to two months.

“You fellows take care of yourselves. All of you are doing a terrific job and the whole country appreciates it,” said Mike. The truck was ready to roll back toward the piles of rubble. The men thanked him for his concern. There was no time to share the Gospel, lead people to the Lord, or pray with someone.

“You have to take every opportunity to let these men know that you are concerned about their welfare,” said Mike. “Sometimes a pat on the back can make all the difference.”

Mike and his Harvest Christian Fellowship have been veterans in the ministry at the World Trade Center disaster site everyday since September 11 and have



Pastor Mike Finizio, right, Harvest Christian Fellowship in mid-town Manhattan, inquires about the workers condition at Ground Zero.

been thrust into the national spotlight. Teams from Calvary Chapel churches across America have been arriving nonstop, desiring to help.

The New York Harvest team has been put to the test. Strategically located in midtown Manhattan, they coordinate outreaches to various sites around the city. Teams arrive

Sunday afternoon. They meet every morning for prayer, praise, and assignments for the day. Grief counseling training specific to the World Trade Center tragedy is required on Monday morning before any outreach begins. Operations Director Rick Camacho makes assignments and handles concerns while office manager Erika Lee deals with inquiries from other churches.

Ninety people arrived from various churches the week of October 21. CC Albuquerque, CC Philadelphia, and CC Perris Valley, California brought teams in addition to those from Samaritan's Purse, Franklin Graham's relief organization. Billy Graham's organization sent teams as well. The ministries include manning a restaurant for the police, outreaches in Central Park, the perimeter at Ground Zero, the Billy Graham Prayer Center, and a continuous intercessory prayer team.



Pastor Mike converses with a New York City policeman.

Firemen or police from the visiting churches go to Ground Zero, funerals, firehouses, or anywhere they can reach out to safety and law enforcement personnel. Businesses surviving the tragedy moved across the river to Jersey City. Teams have had great success ministering there. Recently six passengers on the Staten Island Ferry dedicated their lives to Christ on their lunch hour.

Harvest has been dispersing financial aid from across the country. A colorful Italian-American opened his restaurant and provides meals to the police free of charge. Nino's, named after the owner, has become a



Pastor Chris Brown, CC Fredericksburg, VA, talks about the tragedy with a NYC policeman outside of Nino's restaurant.

“We got 40,000 people out of those buildings before they collapsed. But now everyone is emotionally and physically exhausted. They need encouragement.”



Nino's restaurant provides free meals to emergency personnel. It has become a haven for those working at Ground Zero and is funded by donations from ministries across the United States.

place of laughter and family; a place to forget for a moment about the tragedy that took so many lives. Mike routinely brings financial support from national Calvary affiliates for this outreach.

Al Serino leads a ministry, Willing Hearts, Helping Hands from CC Uncasville, Connecticut. He felt the Lord leading him to journey to New York two weeks after the attack. He went to Union Square and started witnessing to a radical crowd. Other Calvary Chapels joined him and the ministry there began to flourish. They are reaching backslidden Catholics, Hasidic Jews, Hindus, and Muslims. Willing Hands has begun coordinating their efforts with Harvest Christian Fellowship. The youth ministries that arrive from across the U.S. will be coordinated through Willing Hearts, Helping Hands while Harvest will continue to facilitate the adults.

Pastor Gerry Brown directs U-Turn for Christ, a Calvary Chapel addiction recovery ministry. He felt led to help and headed for New York City. Two hours after arriving, he presented his chaplain credentials and began ministering at Ground Zero. He asked the Lord to stir a renewed respect for the policemen and firemen. The battalion fire chief



Pastor Gerry Brown, left, from U-Turn for Christ, pauses before taking two Calvary Chapel pastors into Ground Zero. Roger Stahlhut, CC Open Doors in Anaheim, center, and Joe Paskewich, CC Uncasville, CT, survey the destruction.

Two firemen stood as sentries atop a dangerous area of loose rubble. As Gerry walked by, he asked how they were doing. One of the firemen seemed to be struggling with a question.

“Where was God in all of this?” he finally

“These evil men worship a false god and represent Satan,” added Pastor Roger. “The Bible talks about the thief coming to kill and destroy.” Roger moved in closer, within inches of the fireman’s face. “But Jesus said He came to give life that we might have it more abundantly.” The fireman’s posture

“How can I be sure I can have this eternal life?” the fireman asked.

requested that Gerry continue praying with the men at Ground Zero.

“September 11 was America’s darkest day and New York’s fire and police department’s greatest hour,” said the chief. “We got 40,000 people out of those buildings before they collapsed. But now everyone is emotionally and physically exhausted. They need encouragement.”

Later in the week Pastors Gerry Brown, Roger Stahlhut, CC Open Door in Anaheim, CA, and Joe Paskewich, CC Uncasville, CT, continued the work at Ground Zero.

They encouraged workers as firemen gingerly dug in the rubble next to a crushed fireman’s helmet. Silence fell over the site; everyone saluted as a flag-draped stretcher removed the remains of a victim.

blurted. He stretched a gloved hand over the mass of destruction that unfolded below him.

“My lieutenant was crushed in the second tower when it collapsed,” he said. “I had just made it out before him.” Muscles in his jaw clenched, as he sought to fight back his emotion. “He had a family, and a strong belief in God,” he added. Gerry moved directly in his gaze and moved closer to overcome the deafening roar of the heavy machinery.

“God gives all people choice in this world,” said Gerry. “Evil men did this awful act. God chose to help over 40,000 people escape this tragedy here, some miraculously.”

“None of us are guaranteed tomorrow,” Gerry continued. “Your lieutenant is in heaven as we speak, in incredible glory with the Lord.”

relaxed a bit, as it all began to make sense.

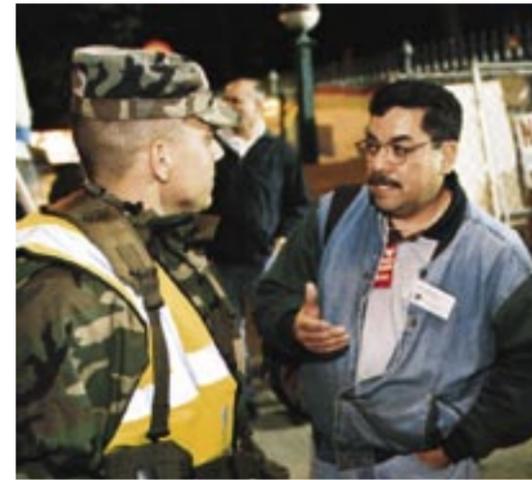
“God has given you another chance,” encouraged Roger. “He wants you to raise your children to know Him so you can spend eternity together, along with your lieutenant.” The fireman pondered the last statement. He swallowed.

“How can I be sure I can have this eternal life?” the fireman asked. The pastors smiled and laid their hands on his shoulders.

“We invite you to say this prayer along with us.” The thunderous sound of the equipment seemed to lessen, if only slightly. The fireman solemnly nodded, bowed his head, and prayed to accept Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Another light had just dawned in the shadow of death. ☞

Due to the terrorist attacks in New York on September 11th, the lives of many people have been dramatically affected. Thousands of children have lost a parent or are now orphaned. People are unemployed. They need prayer, comfort, and financial assistance. Volunteers from Calvary Chapel churches across the United States have ministered to the needs of people affected by these events. If you feel led by the Lord to help, several Calvary Chapel affiliates are directing volunteers as well as handling relief funds.



Pastor Bob Ybarra, CC Perris Valley, CA, shares with a young soldier on the perimeter of Ground Zero.

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Pastors Jeff Johnson, CC Menifee, CA, and Gerry Brown pray with NYC policemen on the perimeter.



Pastor Gerry Brown, U-Turn for Christ, and all present salute

as a fireman's flag-draped body is carried from the rubble.

PATIENT EVANGELISM

INSIGHTS FROM PASTOR LLOYD PULLEY, CC OLD BRIDGE

As Christians we often assume it is our responsibility to have someone commit their life to Christ when sharing our faith or witnessing. We feel pressured to plant the seed, water it, and have it grow, all in a five-minute interaction. Instead, we may just be a piece of the puzzle, which, when assembled, will be complete with the knowledge of Christ as Savior. By being a genuinely caring person, without a hidden agenda, you might plant a seed when the individual realizes that you are Christian. Your behavior might encourage them to be more open to the next person. We should not feel that we must do it all. As the Apostle Paul pointed out, *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.* 1 Corinthians 3:6

Ministering in New York City in the days and weeks since the tragedy, we have learned a profound lesson. We coined it patient

evangelism. It is about caring for people, and listening to them. That is how we instructed the teams that reached out in Union Square. The key to patient evangelism is 90 percent empathy and only 10 percent message. We did not want the team to gather in a large crowd and begin praying in front of people, which makes them feel like a project for us.

It was important to spend time with indi-

As St. Francis Assisi once said, "Share the Gospel at every opportunity, and if necessary, use words."

viduals in the crowd and to see if God would open a door to share the Gospel. Everyone had a story that day and even now, so many people in New York still have a story to tell. Unfortunately, there are very few listening

ears. The Lord is telling us to listen. Jesus said to the disciples; look on the fields for they are already white with harvest.

In the Book of John, Jesus speaks with a Samaritan woman at a well. He speaks to her openly, though she would be considered an outcast in that day. He asks her for a drink of water. In this culture, such a request would greatly honor her and even elevate her to His level. It is amazing, with few words and an open attitude, the Lord immediately created an ideal atmosphere for personal ministry. With just a little attention and love, Jesus incited an openness to hear from Him. I used to admire the bold

courage of Bible-thumping street preachers. Now I question that technique of ministry. It seems to say, "No longer do I need to pray and seek God for an open door to reach this crowd, nor waste time listening

to the Spirit's guidance. I can just go out on the street and start shouting."

Consider Paul the Apostle. Although he was bold, when it came to ministering to people, *he really was gentle as a nursing mother* (1 Thessalonians 2:7). Three times the Scriptures mention that Paul asked for prayer for an effectual door of ministry would be opened to him:

Ephesians 6:19 And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the Gospel.

Colossians 4:2-4 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

2 Thessalonians 3:1,2 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.

When Paul came into Philippi, he went down to the river and began to speak with the women there, and the Lord opened the heart of a woman named Lydia.

On the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. Acts 16:13-14

Here we see again a sensitive approach to ministry, one that is patient to wait for the Lord to open a door. We encouraged teams to have a genuine interest in the New Yorkers' stories and to dress like tourists, without emboldened Christian t-shirts and official badges.

"Your sensitivity to those suffering may just earn you the privilege of sharing the Gospel to a listening ear. If not, then don't push it. Take on a style of ministry that isn't about quantifiable results, but about people, one that reflects the Lord Jesus in His patience and genuine affection." 🙏



Pastor Jeff Johnson, CC Menifee, CA, prays with a worker at Ground Zero. Jeff accompanied Gerry Brown, U-Turn for Christ. Photo by Tom Price



Photo by Johnny Reno

Calvary Chapel pastors endure the smoke and fumes alongside the firemen, policemen, and workers as they dig for remains of their fallen comrades at Ground Zero. The pastors came in as chaplains and spent most of their time simply listening to the men's concerns.

"The key to patient evangelism is 90 percent empathy, and 10 percent message."

Pastor Lloyd Pulley

Attack on the Pentagon

Story by Tom Price

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Ephesians 6:12

Dee Parlato, from Calvary Chapel Largo, MD, immediately began praying for the men in the room and the decision they were about to make. The Pentagon, where Dee would normally have been at that time of day, had just been attacked.

It was now certain that terrorists had hijacked the jets that had slammed into the World Trade Center. Another plane had also crashed in Pennsylvania.

Dee sat in on a high level meeting with her supervisor, Gordon R. England, Secretary of the Navy. Commercial airliners were still in the air, but contact had not been made. The Chief of Naval Operations and five top admirals conferred via telephone with the Commandant of the Marine Corp. Fighter jets could begin shooting down passenger aircraft if they headed for another target.

Dee did not focus any of her thoughts on matters outside the room. Her military training did not allow her to think about the human consequences of what was being decided.

"I felt God had me here to pray for these men and the awful decision they might be

forced to make," said Dee. "I prayed for discernment and wisdom. There was no fear or hesitation. They would act within the best interests of our nation."

Thankfully, the flights eventually responded and landed safely at the nearest airport. With much of the area's communications down, there was a struggle to locate people. No one knew at first who was missing, who was in a hospital, or who had just left the Pentagon for safer ground. Rumors abounded of impending attacks.

The next morning Dee returned to the Pentagon. Assigned as the Secretary of the Navy's personal photographer, her office is 800 feet from the area of impact. It was covered with soot and dust. She walked through the darkened hallways until poor visibility and fumes chased her back. There were no sentries guarding that section of the inside of the building.

She experienced a tremendous sense of anger and a spiritual heaviness. Evil, she felt, had permeated the building, gloating with the success of its operation. Just a little distance ahead, victims lay in the rubble; fires were burning. Dee marched back to her office and decided to fight back. Pulling her Bible out of her desk, she began methodically writing out Bible verses and taping them all over the corridors nearest to her office. Soon words of encouragement and comfort appeared on every doorway, window, hall, and bathroom stall in the immediate vicinity.

Dee also slid verses under locked doors so that it would be the first thing people saw when they returned. "I felt I needed to raise up a standard, or a banner, letting them know that our Lord would be a God of comfort to them, if they would turn to Him."



above photos are courtesy of the Navy Public Affairs Centers

Months later, some of the verses are still there. Many believers as well as non-believers have thanked her for her efforts. Before September 11th it was unadvisable to even have a Bible on your desk. Now God's Holy Word has brought healing to a place of death and destruction.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging... Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah. Psalm 46:1-11

Fighter jets could begin shooting down passenger aircraft if they headed for another target.



U.S. Navy photo by Journalist 1st Class Mark D. Faram.



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