

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER — I STILL REMEMBER

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Twenty-five years. I have a hard time even saying that. September 11, 2001, doesn't feel like twenty-five years ago. In some ways, it feels like yesterday.

I remember the shock. I remember staring at the television, trying to understand what my eyes were seeing. I remember the anger—the frustration, the sadness, and honestly, the hatred I felt toward those who could deliberately inflict such unimaginable evil on innocent people.

America had been attacked. We were stunned. We were hurting. We were afraid. But something happened in the middle of all that smoke, death and uncertainty that I will never forget. We became UNITED Americans again.

For a little while, the things we argued about didn't seem so important. Republican or Democrat didn't matter. Rich or poor didn't matter. Black or white didn't matter. Where you came from didn't matter. We were simply Americans. One nation. One people. Under one flag. And I believe there was something deeper happening in those moments. We were reaching for one another because God created us for community, for compassion and for love. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." — Matthew 22:39

For a little while, America seemed to remember what that looked like. I remember seeing American flags everywhere. People stood together. Churches filled. We prayed. We cried. We hugged people we didn't even know.

And those heroes...Firefighters. Police officers. First responders. Military personnel. Ordinary men and women who did extraordinary things. While most were running away from the danger, they were running toward it. That kind of courage still humbles me. And when I think about those men and women, I think about something Jesus said: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." — John 15:13

We saw glimpses of that kind of sacrificial love that day. People put themselves between danger and someone else. Some never came home. And twenty-five years later, we should still say their names with gratitude. But there is an even greater sacrifice I cannot overlook.

Jesus didn't simply risk His life for us. He willingly gave His life for us. He went to the cross knowing exactly what awaited Him. He bore our sin. He bore our shame. He bore our rebellion. And He did it because of love. "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." — Romans 5:8

That's where September 11 eventually takes me. To the cross. Because the greatest answer to the evil in this world isn't found in human strength alone. It is found in Jesus Christ.

Twenty-five years later, I don't want to romanticize that day. There was nothing beautiful about the destruction. Nearly 3,000 people went to work, boarded airplanes and began ordinary mornings, never knowing they would not see another sunset. Families were changed forever. Empty chairs remained at dinner tables. Children grew up without mothers and fathers. And thousands of people carried physical and emotional scars long after the television cameras left. Yet somehow, through the darkness, hope showed up.

I think about Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." I didn't fully understand the depth of those words then. I understand them differently now. God never promised us a life without trouble. Jesus never promised that either. In fact, He told us plainly: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." — John 16:33

That's the hope of a Christian. Not that bad things won't happen. Not that evil isn't real. Not that we won't grieve. But that evil does not get the final word. Jesus does.

Twenty-five years later, I find myself wondering: What happened to that America? Where did that willingness to stand together go? When did we become so determined to divide ourselves again? We have become pretty good at finding reasons to dislike one another. Politics. Race. Religion. Money. Ideology. Social media. One opinion against another. And somehow we can forget that underneath all those labels is a human being created in the image of God.

Maybe September 11 should remind us that we don't have to agree with somebody to love them. We don't have to think alike to stand together. And we don't have to surrender our convictions to show compassion. Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." — Matthew 5:44

That's hard. It was hard then. It's hard now. But that's Jesus. And perhaps twenty-five years later, that's one of the greatest lessons we can carry forward. We can stand firmly against evil without allowing hatred to consume our hearts. We can defend what is right without becoming consumed by bitterness. We can remember what happened without allowing the darkness of that day to become the darkness within us. Because Jesus changes what happens inside a human heart. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." — Romans 12:21

I love America. I love the flag. I am grateful for those who have sacrificed so I can live in freedom. I'm grateful for the men and women who still stand watch while most of us sleep. I'm grateful that I can pray, worship Jesus, open my Bible and speak about my faith freely. But as I've gotten older, I've learned something important: America isn't my Savior. Jesus is. Our government isn't our Savior. Our military isn't our Savior. Our wealth isn't our Savior. Our political party isn't our Savior. Jesus Christ alone is our Savior.

America can be strong and still be broken. America can be prosperous and still be spiritually poor. America can have the greatest military in the world and still desperately need God. Psalm 33:12 says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD." That verse isn't simply something to put on a patriotic sign. It's a reminder.

A nation can have tremendous power and still need to bow its knee before the One who gave us life. And someday, every knee will bow. “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” — Philippians 2:10-11 That’s the kingdom I’m ultimately living for.

I love this country. But my citizenship in heaven is greater. “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” — Philippians 3:20 That doesn’t make me less patriotic. It makes me understand patriotism differently. I can love America deeply without worshiping America. I can honor the flag while remembering that Christ is my King. I can be grateful for freedom while remembering that Jesus offers a freedom no government can give. “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” — John 8:36

Twenty-five years later, I still remember the smoke. I still remember the towers. I still remember the fear. I still remember the anger. I still remember the flags. I still remember people coming together. And I still remember hope.

Today, I want to remember those who never made it home. I want to remember the husbands and wives, moms and dads, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters and friends whose lives were taken. I want to remember the heroes. And I want to pray for the families who, twenty-five years later, still carry an empty place in their hearts. But I also want to remember something else. God was there. He was there in the chaos. He was there in the rescue. He was there in the tears. He was there in the prayers. He was there in the courage of those who ran toward the fire. And He is here now. Because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” — Hebrews 13:8

The world changes. America changes. We change. But Jesus doesn’t. And that is where my hope rests. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” — John 1:5

Twenty-five years have passed. The buildings were rebuilt. The skyline changed. The nation changed. We changed. But the scars remain. The memories remain. The names remain. And God remains.

So today, September 11, 2026, I will pause. I will remember. I will pray. I will honor. I will grieve. And I will thank God. Thank Him for those who sacrificed. Thank Him for those who served. Thank Him for the freedom I have been blessed to experience. And thank Him most of all for Jesus—the One who entered our darkness, carried our sin to a cross, walked out of a grave and promised that one day death itself will be defeated. That is a hope September 11 cannot take away. No terrorist can take it. No government can take it. No political division can take it. No tragedy can take it. No darkness can take it.

Jesus has overcome the world.

Twenty-five years later, I still remember. And I pray America never forgets. Not just the day. Not just the lives lost. Not just the heroes. But the lesson. Life is fragile. Evil is real. Courage matters. Unity matters. Prayer matters. Freedom matters. And Jesus matters most.

May we never forget those who were lost. May we never forget those who served. May we never forget the families who still grieve. May we never forget what it felt like when America stood together. And may we never forget the One who was with us then, who is with us now, and who will be with us forever.

God bless those who were lost. God bless those who still grieve. God bless those who serve. God bless America. And above all—Jesus, have mercy on us. Turn our hearts toward You. Heal what is broken. Unite what we have divided. Teach us to love as You loved us. And keep our eyes fixed on You. Because twenty-five years later, I know this much: America needs Jesus just as much today as she did on September 11, 2001. Maybe even more. Never forget. Never stop praying. Never stop loving. And never lose hope. Jesus Christ is our hope. And when the darkness seems overwhelming, I hold onto the promise of Jesus: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” — John 8:12 And one day, the darkness will be gone forever: “There will be no more night... because the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.” — Revelation 22:5

So we remember September 11. We remember the darkness. We remember the loss. We remember the heroes. But we do not end in darkness. We end with Jesus. The Light still shines. The darkness has not overcome Him. It never will. And it never can. Because Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, the hope of the nations, the King who conquered death, and the Savior who will one day make all things new.

God Bless America