

The Miracles of 9/11

The Headlines Missed

The Forgotten Spiritual History of September 11

10 Remarkable Stories of Providence, Prayer, Christian Courage, Sacrifice, and Hope

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Everyone remembers the airplanes.

Everyone remembers the shock.

Everyone remembers those impossible images of the Twin Towers collapsing into lower Manhattan while an entire nation watched in disbelief.

But twenty-five years later, there is another September 11 story America is in danger of forgetting.

It is the story beneath the familiar headlines:

- **The prayers spoken aboard a doomed airplane** only minutes before ordinary passengers rose to confront the terrorists who had seized Flight 93—and before one quiet expression of faith became one of the most remembered cries of courage from that terrible morning.
- **The little colonial chapel that somehow remained standing beside Ground Zero**, only to become something even more remarkable in the months that followed: a sanctuary of food, rest, prayer, and comfort for exhausted rescue and recovery workers laboring in the shadow of the ruins.
- **The enormous steel cross discovered amid the wreckage**, a structure no one had fashioned as a religious monument, yet one that soon became a spiritual gathering place and a powerful symbol of Christian hope among those working in the ashes.
- **The fire chaplain who entered the burning World Trade Center with the firefighters he served**, choosing to remain beside his flock in the greatest emergency of their lives—and becoming one of the most haunting spiritual figures of September 11.
- **The rescuers who slowed their own escape to help a struggling woman**, never imagining that the delay they feared might cost them their lives may instead have placed them precisely where survival remained possible when the North Tower came down around them.
- **The torn Bible discovered months later fused into Ground Zero steel**, still open to Matthew 5 and the Sermon on the Mount, with the words of Jesus Christ emerging from the wreckage at a moment when America was wrestling with grief, justice, anger, and retaliation.
- **The hundreds of mariners who turned their boats toward a burning Manhattan**, eventually helping carry more than half a million people away from danger in an evacuation so immense that its scale invites comparison not only with Dunkirk—but with another astonishing rescue across these same New York waters during the American Revolution.

These are not substitutes for the terrible history everyone remembers. They are part of that history—the remarkable spiritual and human story unfolding beneath the smoke that has become far easier, twenty-five years later, to overlook.

There can be no romanticizing September 11. Nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four commercial airliners and deliberately murdered **2,977 innocent people from more than 90 nations** at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and aboard United Flight 93. It was the deadliest foreign attack on American soil in our history. Families were shattered in minutes. Firefighters, police officers, military personnel, airline crews, office workers, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, and children went to work or boarded airplanes that morning and never came home.

Yet evil was not the only thing present on September 11. Courage appeared beside terror. Sacrifice appeared beside cruelty. Prayer emerged inside places where no sanctuary walls existed. Scripture was recited aboard an airplane that was almost certainly going to crash. Christian clergy walked into danger because the people they served were already there. Ordinary

Americans took boats toward a burning city, while others climbed stairwells toward people who could not get themselves out.

For Christians who believe that history is not merely a random collision of accidents, those events naturally raise the ancient biblical doctrine of **Providence**—the conviction that Almighty God remains sovereign and involved even in a fallen world where terrible human evil is permitted to unfold. Providence does not mean that every survivor was spared because he or she possessed greater faith, nor does it mean that those who died somehow lacked God's protection. Real Christianity offers no such simplistic theology.

Jesus Himself rejected the assumption that earthly tragedy can always be measured according to an individual's righteousness. Providence is often mysterious, and suffering remains painfully real. Yet Christians have always looked back across history and asked whether, amid genuine evil and loss, they can also discern moments in which destruction was restrained, courageous people were raised up, mercy appeared in unexpected places, and deliverance came through circumstances no one could have arranged in advance.

Twenty-five years later, those stories deserve to be remembered, because perhaps one of the greatest tragedies would be to remember everything hatred destroyed on September 11 while forgetting what faith, sacrifice, courage, mercy, and Providence revealed.



1. The Miracle of St. Paul's: The Little Chapel That Stood

Long before anyone dreamed of skyscrapers rising above Manhattan, **St. Paul's Chapel** stood along Broadway. Completed in **1766**, it is today Manhattan's oldest surviving church building. During the American Revolution it survived New York's devastating Great Fire of 1776, and on **April 30, 1789**, after taking the oath of office as America's first president, George Washington joined members of Congress in walking to St. Paul's for worship and prayer.

More than two centuries later, the little Georgian chapel stood in the shadow of buildings that dwarfed it. The World Trade Center towers rose nearly a quarter mile into the sky, while St. Paul's sat fewer than 100 yards from the complex. By every ordinary expectation, the destruction unleashed on September 11 could easily have devastated it.

At 8:46 that morning, American Airlines Flight 11 slammed into the North Tower. At 9:03, United Flight 175 struck the South Tower. Then, at 9:59, the South Tower came down. Twenty-nine minutes later the North Tower followed, driving enormous quantities of steel, concrete, glass, dust, office debris, and human remains through lower Manhattan.

When the cloud finally began to lift, St. Paul's was still standing.

A large sycamore tree in its churchyard absorbed falling debris and is widely credited with helping shield the historic sanctuary. The National September 11 Memorial & Museum would later remember the building simply as “[The Little Chapel That Stood.](#)” Trinity Church Wall Street records that despite being less than 100 yards from the World Trade Center, St. Paul's remained remarkably intact.

Yet what happened afterward may be even more spiritually significant than the building's survival. The chapel did not become a museum piece guarded behind ropes. It became a sanctuary in the oldest Christian sense of the word—a place of refuge for exhausted men and women working in the shadow of death.

For approximately nine months, St. Paul's served Ground Zero workers. Thousands of volunteers prepared meals, made beds, tended blistered feet, offered clothing and supplies, listened to firefighters and construction workers, and prayed with men and women carrying sights and memories they would never completely leave behind. The sanctuary where Washington's generation had once worshiped became a relief station for another generation suddenly confronting the fragility of a nation.

The historical contrast is difficult to miss. Towers built as monuments to modern financial and technological achievement came crashing to earth, while a little colonial church remained standing beside them. The point is not that stone churches are magically indestructible, but that in one of history's most striking visual ironies, a building devoted for centuries to worship became a refuge when modern power proved unable to save itself.

For Christians, St. Paul's does not “prove” Providence in a scientific sense. Providence is not a chemical reaction to be measured. But the scene offers a powerful picture of a biblical truth civilizations repeatedly forget: human achievements, however magnificent, remain temporary, and what appears permanent can disappear in minutes.

That is why the ancient words of Psalm 46 sounded so different after September 11 than they had on September 10: **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”** Less than a football field away from Ground Zero, an old chapel became exactly that—a place of refuge.

To Read More:

[St. Paul’s Chapel — Trinity Church Wall Street](#)
[9/11 Memorial — “The Little Chapel That Stood”](#)



2. The Great 9/11 Boatlift: New York's Dunkirk—And An Echo From 1776

As the towers collapsed, lower Manhattan became an island in more than the geographical sense. Bridges and tunnels were closed or restricted. Subway service was interrupted. Roads were choked with emergency vehicles, smoke, debris, and terrified people trying to move north. Hundreds of thousands found themselves at the southern edge of Manhattan looking across the Hudson and East Rivers toward safety.

They needed boats, and the maritime community answered.

[Coast Guard personnel](#) began coordinating what soon became an enormous emergency evacuation. Ferries came first, but the response quickly spread far beyond scheduled passenger vessels. Tugboats, tour boats, dinner-cruise boats, fireboats, commercial craft, and private vessels began heading *toward* Manhattan. Many of the captains could see the smoke rising above

the city and had no assurance that another attack was not coming, yet they pointed their bows toward the danger because frightened people were waiting along the waterfront.

The United States Coast Guard says that **more than 500,000 people** were carried off Manhattan by hundreds of ferries and commercial and private vessels in **less than eight hours**, with no loss of life during the maritime evacuation itself. The Coast Guard calls it **the largest maritime evacuation in recorded history**.

To understand the magnitude of that achievement, however, many Americans need to understand the historical event with which it is often compared: **Dunkirk**.

In May 1940, during the early catastrophe of World War II in Western Europe, German forces drove British, French, Belgian, and other Allied armies toward the northern coast of France. Hundreds of thousands of Allied soldiers became trapped around the port of Dunkirk with the German military closing in. If Britain lost much of its professional army there, the consequences for the survival of Britain and the future of the war could have been enormous.

Britain launched **Operation Dynamo**, assembling Royal Navy vessels, merchant ships, fishing craft, lifeboats, pleasure boats, and what became famous as the civilian “Little Ships of Dunkirk.” Between **May 26 and June 4, 1940**, approximately **338,000 Allied servicemen** were evacuated across the English Channel. Dunkirk became one of the most celebrated rescue operations in modern history because ordinary civilian vessels joined military ships in extracting an army from near disaster.

Dunkirk and September 11 were obviously not identical situations. Dunkirk was a military evacuation conducted during active warfare under enemy bombardment, while the New York boatlift moved civilians after a terrorist attack. Those differences matter, and the comparison should never minimize the danger faced by the men evacuated from France in 1940.

But the sheer numbers remain extraordinary. Dunkirk evacuated approximately **338,000 people over roughly nine days**. Lower Manhattan moved **more than 500,000 people in less than eight hours**. In simple numerical terms, the New York operation carried roughly 162,000 more people than Dunkirk, and did so in a tiny fraction of the time.

The purpose of the comparison is not to diminish Dunkirk. It is to help an ordinary reader grasp just how immense the September 11 boatlift really was.

And there is an even older American parallel—one that makes the story almost theatrical in its historical symmetry.

Nearly **225 years earlier**, those same New York waters had witnessed another desperate evacuation upon which America's future may have depended. As I addressed in more detail in [last week's Crossfire Courier](#), on August 27, 1776, only weeks after the Declaration of Independence, George Washington's Continental Army suffered a severe defeat at the Battle of Long Island. British forces threatened to trap the Americans against the East River at Brooklyn

Heights, creating the possibility that thousands of soldiers—and perhaps the central fighting force of the young Revolution—could be captured or destroyed.

During the night of **August 29–30, 1776**, Washington ordered a secret withdrawal across the East River to Manhattan. Among the soldiers entrusted with moving the army were Colonel **John Glover's 14th Massachusetts Regiment**, the famous “Marblehead Mariners,” men drawn heavily from the seafaring community of Marblehead, Massachusetts, along with Massachusetts troops under Colonel John Hutchinson.

The National Park Service records that Glover's mariners helped ferry (without engines of course) approximately **9,000 soldiers, horses, artillery, ammunition, cattle, and provisions** across the East River in a single night. The men worked against difficult currents and wind conditions, muffling their movements and laboring within dangerous proximity of British forces.

Then, toward morning, a heavy fog settled over the Brooklyn side of the river and helped conceal the final stages of Washington's withdrawal. One National Park Service account describes the fog as having “**providentially covered**” the American position. The army escaped, and the NPS concludes that Glover's contribution helped save the cause of American independence from collapse.

Now move forward 225 years.

Once again, Americans were trapped along New York's waters. Once again, boats became the way out. Once again, mariners who had not begun the morning expecting to participate in a national rescue suddenly found themselves carrying frightened people toward safety.

Washington had the Marblehead Mariners. Britain had the Little Ships of Dunkirk. September 11 had ferry captains, tugboat crews, fireboat crews, charter operators, and private sailors who steered toward a city covered in smoke.

The situations were different, but the moral thread is remarkably familiar. When another human being is trapped at the water's edge, courage does not merely sympathize from a safe distance. It moves toward the danger.

For Christians, the scene naturally evokes Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan did not stand on the opposite side of the road and admire his own compassion. He entered another man's suffering, bound his wounds, lifted him up, and carried him toward safety. On September 11, hundreds of American mariners performed that same kind of neighbor-love across the waters of New York Harbor. As Jesus said, “*Go and do the same.*” — **Luke 10:37**

“Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ [love]”—**Galatians 6:2**

To Read More:

[U.S. Coast Guard — September 11 Maritime Evacuation](#)

[National Park Service — John Glover: Sailor, Soldier, Patriot](#)



A 93-foot-tall structure with 40 individual windchimes. The [Tower of Voices](#) serves as both a visual and audible reminder of the heroism of the forty passengers and crew of United Flight 93.

3. Prayer Before “Let's Roll”: The Last Minutes of Todd Beamer and Flight 93

United Airlines Flight 93 departed Newark International Airport at 8:42 AM carrying 33 passengers, seven crew members, and four hijackers. Its scheduled destination was San Francisco, but at approximately **9:28 AM**, the hijacking began.

By then, passengers had no way to see the horrifying television images being broadcast across the nation. Through Airfone calls with family members and operators on the ground, however, they slowly learned what had happened elsewhere. Two hijacked airplanes had struck the World Trade Center, and another had hit the Pentagon.

Their own aircraft was not being held for ransom. It had become a weapon.

Evidence later established that Flight 93 was redirected toward Washington, D.C., with the **United States Capitol considered the most likely target (though some think the White House itself)**. Congress was back in session, and had the aircraft reached the Capitol at full speed, the loss of life and symbolic damage could have been catastrophic.

Among the passengers was **Todd Beamer**, a 32-year-old husband, father, Wheaton College graduate, and Oracle account manager whose wife, Lisa, was pregnant with their third child. The National Park Service describes him as deeply committed to his family and his Christian faith.

Unable to reach his wife directly, Beamer connected through telephone operator Lisa Jefferson. He calmly explained what was happening aboard the aircraft, knowing by then that he might have only minutes left to live.

What happened next is one of the most spiritually significant moments of the entire 9/11 story.

Before Beamer joined the other passengers preparing to fight for control of the airplane, he asked Jefferson to pray with him. Together they recited **the Lord's Prayer**, and Jefferson's account also describes Beamer drawing upon **Psalms 23**, the passage Christians have carried into battlefields, hospital rooms, deathbeds, gravesides, and dark valleys for centuries.

This was not prayer offered from the safety of a sanctuary. Beamer was aboard a hijacked Boeing 757 traveling hundreds of miles per hour toward a target. He understood that either the terrorists would kill him or the counterattack he was preparing to join would probably end in his death anyway.

At approximately **9:57 AM**, passengers and crew began their assault.

Near the end of Beamer's telephone conversation, Jefferson heard him turn toward the others and say the words that would become part of America's memory of September 11: **"Are you guys ready? Okay. Let's roll."**

Those words were not recovered from the cockpit voice recorder, as popular retellings sometimes claim. Jefferson heard them through the telephone connection. The cockpit recording captured the sounds of the violent struggle itself as passengers and crew pushed toward the cockpit while the hijackers rocked and pitched the airplane in an effort to stop them.

At **10:03:11 AM**, Flight 93 struck a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, at approximately **563 miles per hour**. No one aboard survived, but the hijackers did not reach Washington.

The National Park Service concludes that the passengers' and crew's counterattack prevented the aircraft from reaching its intended symbolic target in the nation's capital. Their resistance transformed Flight 93 from another successful terrorist strike into an act of sacrificial defiance.

There is a temptation to remember "Let's roll" merely as an expression of American toughness, but that interpretation leaves out something essential about Beamer's final minutes. Before the charge came prayer. Before he rose to fight, he turned his mind and heart toward God.

Christian courage is not the absence of fear, nor is it rage dressed up as bravery. It is faithfulness when fear has every reason to exist. Beamer could not reasonably expect his body to survive what was about to happen, yet his faith gave him something deeper than physical confidence. It gave him a framework in which death itself did not possess the final word.

He prayed through the valley of the shadow of death, and then he stood up and walked into it.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me.” — Psalm 23:4

To Read More:

[National Park Service — Todd M. Beamer](#)

[National Park Service — The Story of Flight 93](#)



4. Rick Rescorla: The Watchman Who Refused To Be Complacent

Long before September 11, [Rick Rescorla](#) knew what it meant to walk toward danger.

Born in Cornwall, England, he served in the British military and later joined the United States Army. In Vietnam, he fought at the brutal Battle of Ia Drang with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry. The 9/11 Memorial & Museum displays his military dog tag, which is stamped “[Protestant](#).”

By 2001, the combat veteran had become vice president of corporate security for Morgan Stanley, whose employees occupied numerous floors inside the World Trade Center complex.

After the 1993 terrorist bombing beneath the World Trade Center, Rescorla became convinced that the towers remained vulnerable targets. He developed disciplined evacuation procedures and

repeatedly drilled the people under his care. Morgan Stanley's own history says he practiced the evacuation procedure twice each year, despite complaints from employees who considered the exercises inconvenient interruptions to business.

On September 11, inconvenience became preparation. After the North Tower was struck, public-address instructions in the South Tower initially reassured occupants that the building was secure. Rescorla refused to gamble thousands of lives on an announcement he did not trust. He began moving Morgan Stanley personnel down the stairwells.

Because employees had practiced the route repeatedly, the evacuation did not begin as a chaotic stampede. The drills many had resented now gave frightened people something priceless: they knew what to do. Rescorla moved among them with a bullhorn, singing Cornish songs and even **“God Bless America”** as people descended. The singing was not theatrics for its own sake. It kept people moving, helped restrain panic, and reminded them that someone was leading them through the confusion.

Then came perhaps the most revealing decision of his life. Having helped thousands reach safety, Rescorla went back toward the building to search for anyone who might still be inside.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum records that **more than 3,700 of his colleagues escaped**, while Rescorla became one of only 13 Morgan Stanley employees or contractors killed. Morgan Stanley's own historical materials use somewhat different employee totals depending on whether the count is confined to the South Tower or includes its broader World Trade Center workforce, but the central fact is beyond dispute: Rescorla's preparation and leadership saved thousands of lives.

His story belongs in a spiritual history of September 11 because it embodies an ancient biblical principle: the responsibility of the **watchman**. In Scripture, the watchman is not a pessimist merely because he sees danger first. He warns because the lives of those inside the walls matter. Rescorla understood vulnerability long before most people around him did. He practiced evacuation when others rolled their eyes, and when the alarm finally became real, the drills they had resented became pathways to life.

Christianity does not commend paranoia. It commends vigilance joined to responsibility. The watchman is valuable because he refuses to confuse comfort with safety.

Rescorla's final action took that responsibility even further. He did not merely send other people toward the exits. He returned for those who might still be behind, living out in secular form a principle Christians recognize immediately: the good shepherd does not abandon the flock when danger comes.

“The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” — John 10:11

To Read More:

[9/11 Memorial — Rick Rescorla and the World Trade Center Evacuation](#)
[Morgan Stanley — Rick Rescorla Saved Lives](#)



5. The Cross In The Rubble: A Symbol Rises From Ground Zero

Two days after the attacks, on **September 13, 2001**, construction worker **Frank Silecchia** was laboring among the wreckage near the remains of 6 World Trade Center when he encountered something extraordinary.

Standing amid a landscape of twisted structural steel was an intersecting column and crossbeam unmistakably [shaped like a cross](#).

It had not been created as religious artwork. It was structural steel from the fallen complex. Yet there it stood, approximately **17 feet high**, amid one of the darkest scenes in American history.

For many recovery workers, it quickly became more than debris.

Franciscan priest **Father Brian Jordan**, who ministered extensively at Ground Zero, encountered the structure days later and interpreted it as a symbol of hope. On October 4, 2001, Jordan blessed the cross after it had been moved to a more visible location. During the long recovery effort, Masses were celebrated and communion offered near its base. The 9/11 Memorial Museum now preserves the actual steel structure in its historical exhibition.

The museum itself describes the cross as having become “**an icon of hope and comfort**” during the recovery effort, and that language helps us understand why the structure became spiritually important without turning it into a claim history cannot prove.

Its later history is also significant. After standing for years near Ground Zero, the steel cross was formally transferred to the 9/11 Memorial Museum and incorporated into the permanent historical exhibition. That preservation matters because it shows that the cross was not merely a passing emotional reaction in the weeks after the attacks; it became part of the documented memory of the recovery itself. A piece of structural steel that had once helped hold up a building was ultimately preserved because of the spiritual meaning exhausted workers had attached to it.

Christians do not need to assert that God supernaturally manufactured a steel cross inside a collapsing building. The symbolism is powerful precisely because the structure was real and because of where it appeared.

The Christian cross began not as a polished piece of jewelry or an ornament mounted above a quiet sanctuary. It began as a Roman instrument of humiliation, suffering, and death.

Christianity's central symbol is therefore already a declaration that God can enter places of horror and transform the meaning of suffering through redemption.

Seen in that light, the Ground Zero Cross appeared in theologically appropriate surroundings. It stood not beneath stained glass but among smoke, shattered concrete, human remains, grieving workers, and steel distorted by catastrophic force.

That is exactly where Christian theology says the Cross belongs.

Christianity does not promise that believers will never enter darkness. It says something far more profound: God entered the darkness Himself. The Cross stands at the center of Christian faith because suffering is not ignored, denied, or explained away. It is confronted.

For exhausted firefighters, police officers, construction workers, clergy, and recovery personnel in 2001, those intersecting beams became a visual reminder that catastrophe had not erased every symbol of hope. Workers gathered around it, priests celebrated Mass there, and men who spent their days searching among the dead looked upon it and found strength to continue.

The towers had fallen, yet the Cross stood among the rubble, and for many Americans that was not merely an architectural curiosity. It became a sermon made of steel.

“The word of the cross ... to us who are being saved ... is the power of God.” — 1 Corinthians 1:18

To Read More:

[9/11 Memorial — The World Trade Center Cross](#)

[9/11 Memorial — Father Brian Jordan and the Cross](#)



6. The Pentagon Wedge: Protection Prepared Before Anyone Knew It Would Be Needed

At **9:37 AM**, American Airlines Flight 77 struck the western side of the Pentagon, carrying thousands of gallons of aviation fuel into one of the most important military buildings in the world. The attack killed **184 people** at the Pentagon and aboard the aircraft and created an inferno inside the western section of the building.

Yet one circumstance surrounding the attack remains particularly remarkable.

The aircraft struck [Wedge 1](#).

For years, the Pentagon had been undergoing a massive renovation program. Wedge 1 had been stripped down and rebuilt with significant safety improvements, including structural reinforcement, blast-resistant windows, and upgraded fire and life-safety systems.

On September 11, the renovation of that wedge stood only **five days from official completion**.

Detailed Pentagon histories record that the strengthened outer wall included structural steel tubing supporting new blast-resistant windows. The wedge housed approximately **3,800 people** that morning, below its intended eventual occupancy of roughly 4,500 to 5,000. Nearby Wedge 2 had also been largely emptied because renovation work there was beginning.

It would be irresponsible to claim exactly how many additional people would have died had Flight 77 struck elsewhere, because history cannot rerun the attack under different architectural conditions. Yet the documented facts themselves are remarkable enough: the hijacked aircraft struck the portion of the Pentagon that had just undergone substantial structural and safety improvements at a time when occupancy there had not yet reached its intended level.

Post-attack engineering studies gave those renovations even greater significance. Investigators found that the strengthened columns, upgraded structural connections, blast-resistant windows, and fire-protection improvements in Wedge 1 helped the building resist progressive collapse long enough for many occupants to escape. The damaged section did eventually give way, but not immediately; portions of the structure remained standing for roughly half an hour after impact. In a disaster measured in seconds, that delay mattered.

For Christians, this is where the doctrine of Providence becomes especially interesting.

Years before nineteen terrorists boarded airplanes on September 11, engineers, architects, contractors, government officials, and laborers had already begun strengthening that section of the Pentagon. They were not consciously preparing for Flight 77. They were performing ordinary work according to ordinary plans.

Yet Christian theology has often understood Providence not only through dramatic supernatural interventions but through the convergence of ordinary decisions whose greater significance becomes visible only afterward. Joseph's declaration in Genesis—that human beings may intend evil while God remains capable of bending history toward preservation—captures that understanding well.

None of this turns evil into good. The attack remained evil, and 184 people still died. Providence does not erase suffering or explain every loss.

But Christians are certainly permitted to look backward and wonder at the timing. Why that wedge? Why after those reinforcements? Why when adjacent space had been emptied and the renovated area had not yet reached its planned occupancy?

Some readers will call that coincidence, and historical method cannot settle the theological question for them. Christians, however, possess another word in their vocabulary: **Providence**.

It is the belief that the God who sees the end from the beginning may sometimes prepare protections years before anyone understands why those preparations will one day matter.

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’” — Isaiah 46:10

To Read More:

[Naval History and Heritage Command — Pentagon 9/11 History](#)



7. Father Mychal Judge: The Shepherd Who Went In With His Firefighters

When alarms sounded on September 11, firefighters ran toward the towers. And among them went a priest.

[Father Mychal Judge](#), 68, was a Franciscan friar who had served as a chaplain to the New York City Fire Department since 1992. Firefighters knew him not merely as the clergyman who appeared at ceremonies, but as a pastor who entered their grief. He counseled families, prayed with widows and children, attended funerals, comforted men after difficult calls, and remained close to people whose occupation meant tragedy was never merely theoretical.

On September 11, Judge responded with the FDNY to the World Trade Center and entered the North Tower. He made his way toward the command area, where he prayed and ministered as firefighters began the enormous climb above him.

When the South Tower collapsed at 9:59 AM, the shock wave and debris tore through the surrounding area and parts of the North Tower. Father Judge was fatally injured.

New York City's official [memorial account](#) records that he died amid falling debris while serving as both priest and firefighter chaplain. His body was carried from the tower by rescuers in an image that became one of the most haunting photographs of September 11.

Judge was officially designated [Victim 0001](#). That designation does not mean he was literally the first person killed in the attacks. It means his was the first body processed and numbered by the medical examiner.

New York City's own [memorial account](#) preserves an even more powerful detail: Judge died while administering the Last Rites to a dying firefighter. The city later described him as “working as a firefighter and as a priest simultaneously.” In other words, his final moments were not spent merely accompanying his flock into danger; he was still ministering to one of them as death closed in around both priest and firefighter. Few details could better summarize the vocation he had spent years living.

There is something profoundly Christian about the location of his death. Father Judge could have fulfilled many ordinary definitions of ministry from somewhere safer. He could have remained outside the building, prayed at a distance, or provided counsel afterward.

But his flock was inside. So, their chaplain went inside with them.

He had prayed with firefighters, counseled their families, buried their dead, and walked with them through grief. When the greatest alarm in FDNY history sounded, he did not send a blessing from a safer location. He entered the building with them.

The FDNY lost **343 firefighters** on September 11. Father Judge became one of the enduring spiritual faces of that sacrifice not because his priesthood insulated him from death, but because his calling placed him beside people confronting it.

There is also a quieter artifact of Judge's life now preserved by the 9/11 Memorial Museum: his [personal prayer bench](#). Its kneeler and elbow rest are visibly worn from use. Long before photographs captured rescuers carrying his body from the North Tower, Judge had cultivated the hidden life of prayer that sustained his public ministry. September 11 revealed the shepherd under pressure, but that shepherd had been formed long before the alarm sounded.

The modern world often measures successful ministry by crowds, platforms, budgets, visibility, and influence. September 11 offers another measurement altogether: whether the shepherd remains with the flock when the valley becomes dark.

Father Mychal Judge did.

“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.”— John 15:13

To Read More:

[9/11 Memorial — Remembering Father Mychal Judge](#)
[New York City — Father Mychal Judge Memorial History](#)



Josephine Harris (center) and the six firefighters who survived the twin towers collapse on 9/11

8. The Miracle of Stairwell B: When Stopping To Help May Have Saved Them All

Of all the survival stories from September 11, few are stranger or more moving than what happened inside **Stairwell B of the North Tower**.

After Flight 11 struck the building, firefighters climbed upward while thousands of civilians descended. Among those responding was a crew from **FDNY Ladder Company 6**, led by Captain **Jay Jonas**.

When the South Tower suddenly collapsed at 9:59 AM, firefighters inside the North Tower immediately understood what the sound might mean. The North Tower itself could also fall, and the Ladder 6 firefighters began moving rapidly downward.

Then they encountered [Josephine Harris](#), a 59-year-old Port Authority bookkeeper.

Harris had already descended scores of floors, and her physical strength was failing. Her progress had become painfully slow. For firefighters who knew the building might collapse at any moment, every lost minute seemed to matter.

They faced one of those moral decisions whose full importance no one recognizes until history reveals it. They could keep moving toward safety, or they could slow their own escape to remain with a woman who could not keep up.

They chose to stay with Josephine.

The Ladder 6 firefighters helped Harris continue downward, step by difficult step. Their own escape slowed dramatically as they remained beside her.

They eventually reached approximately the fourth floor.

Then, at **10:28 AM**, the North Tower began to collapse.

More than one hundred stories came down around them.

When the roar finally stopped, sixteen people remained alive in surviving sections of Stairwell B, including Harris, firefighters from Ladder 6 and other FDNY units, and Port Authority personnel.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum preserves the remarkable history. Captain Jonas later referred to Josephine Harris as their “[lucky charm](#),” and the reason is striking. Had the firefighters not encountered her and slowed their descent, they might have reached the lobby or the street just as the tower collapsed and been killed there.

The apparent obstacle to their escape may have placed them in the one area where escape remained possible.

For hours they remained trapped amid the wreckage, uncertain of the scale of destruction around them. Firefighter Mickey Kross later remembered the moment when darkness was penetrated by a **beam of sunlight**, revealing that the outside world still existed beyond the debris and eventually helping the survivors locate a path toward escape.

All sixteen ultimately emerged alive.

Even the 9/11 Memorial Museum has used the language of “miracle” in connection with the Stairwell B survivors.

We should be cautious to turning Providence into a simplistic formula. Other firefighters stopped to help people that morning and died. Hundreds gave their lives in equally sacrificial acts, and there is no biblical basis for saying these particular men “earned” survival by doing good.

Yet the moral irony is impossible to ignore.

Everything about the emergency said hurry. Compassion told them to slow down.

That delay appeared dangerous. In retrospect, it helped save their lives. That alone is a miracle in anyone’s book.

Christian teaching repeatedly overturns ordinary calculations about life and self-preservation. Jesus taught that greatness is discovered in service, that the last may become first, and that the person who gives himself for another discovers a kind of life the selfish cannot understand.

On September 11, that principle played itself out inside a collapsing skyscraper. A group of firefighters refused to abandon a struggling woman. More than one hundred stories came down above them. Hours later, sunlight broke through the darkness, and sixteen people walked out of the ruins.

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” — Matthew 16:25

To Read More:

[9/11 Memorial Museum Collection — Captain Jay Jonas and Stairwell B](#)

[9/11 Memorial — Mickey Kross and the Beam of Sunlight](#)



9. The Bible In The Steel: The Words Of Jesus Emerge From The Rubble

For months after September 11, Ground Zero remained a place of recovery.

Workers sifted through a landscape where ordinary objects had been crushed, burned, fused, twisted, and compacted together. They searched first for survivors, then increasingly for human remains and personal belongings that could be returned to grieving families.

On **March 30, 2002**, more than six months after the towers fell, a firefighter searching through compacted debris from the South Tower discovered something unusual.

It was a Bible—or more precisely, what remained of one.

The Bible was torn, badly damaged, and fused to a piece of metal. Yet enough of the page remained visible to identify the passage.

It was open to [Matthew chapter 5](#)—the Sermon on the Mount.

Whose Bible was it? We do not know. No surviving name, inscription, or other identifying mark has been publicly connected to the artifact, and the 9/11 Memorial Museum does not attribute it to any particular victim or employee. It may have belonged to someone working in the South Tower, been kept in an office or desk, or come from some other part of the building's contents—but anything more specific would be speculation. In a strange way, that anonymity deepens the power of the object. The owner's name was lost to history, but the words on the surviving page were not.

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum preserves [the artifact and documents](#) the words still visible on the surviving page. Among them are Jesus' reference to the ancient rule “**an eye for an eye**”, followed by His teaching against personal vengeance and His command concerning turning the other cheek:

The 9/11 Bible fragment is in the **King James Version**. Matthew 5:38–42 reads:

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, **An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:**

39 But I say unto you, **That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.**

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

The historical setting makes the discovery haunting.

America had suffered the most devastating foreign attack ever carried out on its soil. Nearly 3,000 people had been murdered. The nation was furious. Military action had begun. Families wanted justice, and the ruins themselves testified to what hatred could do.

Months later, fused into the steel and rubble of the South Tower, appeared the words of Jesus Christ addressing the human instinct for retaliation.

There is no responsible reason to claim that the Bible was miraculously fireproof. It clearly was not. The book was severely damaged.

The significance lies elsewhere.

Of all the pages that might have remained recognizable, this artifact survived sufficiently for part of the Sermon on the Mount to speak from the ruins. A text written nearly two thousand years earlier suddenly stood inside one of the greatest moral crises in modern American history.

That setting also gives the passage a striking historical resonance. The Sermon on the Mount was first spoken in a world marked by occupation, violence, injustice, and retaliation; Jesus' words were not delivered to people insulated from brutality. They were spoken into a culture that knew oppression and revenge firsthand. Their appearance at Ground Zero therefore did not place an ancient teaching into an alien setting. It placed one of Christianity's hardest teachings back into exactly the kind of human crisis in which its meaning becomes most demanding.

Christianity has room for both **justice and mercy**. Scripture does not teach that civil government must abandon justice or refuse to protect the innocent. Romans 13 assigns governing authorities a real responsibility to restrain wrongdoing. Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5, however, addresses personal vengeance and the hatred that can consume the human heart.

That distinction mattered profoundly after September 11.

America had every right to seek justice against those who murdered its citizens, but Christians also carried another responsibility: not to allow hatred of the enemy to transform them into the image of the enemy.

There, fused to twisted metal from Ground Zero, stood words spoken by Jesus of Nazareth centuries earlier. The terrorists could destroy buildings, murder bodies, and fill a nation with grief, but they could not make the teachings of Christ irrelevant. If anything, tragedy made them more urgent.

For a 25th-anniversary remembrance devoted to **the forgotten spiritual history of September 11**, it is difficult to imagine a more haunting artifact: a torn Bible, twisted steel, the Sermon on the Mount, and the words of Jesus still readable in the rubble.

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." — **Isaiah 40:8**

To Read More:

[National September 11 Memorial & Museum — Bible Found in South Tower Debris](#)

I encourage you to read the Bible for yourself in the language you know best at **BibleGateway**(<https://www.biblegateway.com/>) or **YouVersion Bible** (<https://www.bible.com/>), both of which offer Scripture in many languages and translations—and apps as well.



10. The 9/12 Awakening: When America Remembered God—And Then Began To Forget

By the evening of September 11, Washington had spent the day under extraordinary tension. The Pentagon was burning. The Capitol had been evacuated. No one initially knew how many additional attacks might still be coming.

Yet that evening, approximately [150 members of Congress](#) returned to the East Front steps of the United States Capitol. Republicans stood beside Democrats, Senators beside Representatives, and congressional leaders addressed a nation desperately searching for something solid.

Then came a moment that had not been scripted.

After a moment of silence, the assembled lawmakers spontaneously began singing **“God Bless America.”**

The official historian of the U.S. House of Representatives preserves the event as one of the memorable moments in congressional history. The image traveled across a stunned country: political leaders who spent much of ordinary life arguing with one another now standing shoulder to shoulder and invoking the blessing of God.

That national turn toward faith did not stop at the Capitol.

In the days following the attacks, churches and other houses of worship across America reported unusually large crowds. Prayer vigils appeared in cities and small towns. Clergy ministered to

grieving families. People who had scarcely considered mortality were suddenly forced to confront it.

Gallup's polling confirms that there was a real religious response, although not the permanent revival sometimes described in later retellings. Before the attacks, **41 percent** of Americans told Gallup they had attended church or synagogue during the previous seven days. Ten days after September 11, that figure had risen to **47 percent**. The percentage saying religion was “very important” in their lives also climbed shortly after the attacks.

Then came **Friday, September 14.**

President George W. Bush declared a National Day of Prayer and Remembrance. America's political leadership gathered inside **Washington National Cathedral**, and one of the most famous Christian evangelists of the twentieth century, **Billy Graham**, stepped into the pulpit.

Graham was 82 years old. He had counseled presidents, preached before enormous crowds around the world, and spoken to Americans through wars, assassinations, scandals, and national upheavals. Now he faced a congregation representing a nation still counting its dead.

He did not claim to possess an explanation for every mystery of September 11. Instead, he [told America](#) something simpler and more foundational.

“Today we especially come together in this service to confess our need of God.”

That sentence captured the spiritual condition of the country better than almost anything else said during those first days.

But Graham did not stop at consolation. He also spoke in the language of spiritual diagnosis. “One of the things we desperately need is a spiritual renewal in this country,” he told the congregation, adding, “We need a spiritual revival in America.”

He then drew an unforgettable contrast between the physical towers that had collapsed and the deeper foundation on which a people must build. The World Trade Center had been constructed on massive foundations of steel and concrete, yet those towers still fell.

Graham argued that America now faced a different kind of rebuilding: whether it would “implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually,” or rebuild upon what he called “our trust in God.” In other words, September 11 was not merely a security crisis or national trauma in his sermon; it was an invitation to examine what remained when visible structures failed.

President Bush likewise told the cathedral that Americans had gathered before God to pray for the missing, the dead, and those who loved them. He described the prayers of that week as carrying **“a searching, and an honesty,”** and spoke of people asking God for signs that He was still present amid the devastation. He acknowledged that tragedy does not always yield easy explanations, saying that God's purposes are not always the ones human beings expect, yet insisting that the prayers of private suffering were still “known and heard, and understood.”

That language is revealing because it captures something deeper than increased church attendance. For a brief period, September 11 interrupted the normal confidence of American life. People who were accustomed to solving problems through wealth, technology, medicine, government, or military strength suddenly confronted a kind of suffering those institutions could not undo. Prayer became more than ceremony. It became confession: an acknowledgment that human beings were not as sovereign over life as prosperity had allowed them to imagine.

The attacks exposed the limits of wealth, technology, intelligence agencies, military defenses, skyscrapers, financial systems, and political institutions. They forced people to confront questions comfortable societies can postpone for decades: What happens when I die? What really matters? Where is God in suffering? Is there anything stronger than death?

Then something equally important happened.

The spiritual surge faded.

By November, Gallup measured worship attendance at **42 percent**. By mid-December, it had returned to **41 percent**, essentially the same level measured before the attacks. Gallup concluded that the attacks had produced no lasting increase in church attendance.

That may be one of the most sobering facts in the entire spiritual history of September 11. America did turn toward God for a brief season. The deeper question is why the turning proved so temporary.

Human beings have done this throughout biblical history. Crisis strips away illusions. People pray. Danger passes. Ordinary life returns. Prosperity rebuilds the walls, distractions multiply, and lessons learned in the valley begin to fade.

That is precisely why the 25th anniversary matters. Remembrance in Scripture is not merely nostalgia. “Remember” is often a spiritual command because human beings have a tendency to forget the very truths they most need to retain.

September 11 reminded America that life can change in a morning. It reminded us that courage still exists, that sacrifice is not obsolete, and that prayer often becomes the first language people recover when every other language fails. For one brief national moment, America remembered its need for God.

Perhaps the haunting question of this anniversary is whether we remember that part of September 11 too.

“Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God...” — Deuteronomy 8:11

To Read More:

[U.S. House Historian — Congress Sings “God Bless America”](#)

[Washington National Cathedral — Billy Graham, September 14, 2001](#)

[Gallup — Religion in the Aftermath of September 11](#)



The Towers Fell. The Altars Stood.

Twenty-five years have passed, and a generation of American adults has now grown up with little or no personal memory of the morning when blue September skies suddenly filled with smoke. The wreckage has been removed. Lower Manhattan has been rebuilt. A new tower rises beside the place where the old ones fell, while memorial fountains now descend endlessly into the footprints of buildings that once seemed permanent.

But beneath the familiar history remains a deeper question: **What did September 11 teach us when, for one terrible morning, so many things we trusted to keep us safe suddenly proved incapable of doing so?**

Our skyscrapers could not save us. Our intelligence system failed to stop nineteen terrorists from boarding four airplanes. Our military power could not intercept three of them before they reached their targets. Wealth could not purchase another minute for those trapped above the impact zones. Technology could connect terrified passengers with loved ones hundreds of miles away, but it could not bring them home.

And in that moment, Americans reached again for words an advanced and prosperous culture can slowly convince itself it no longer needs: **God, prayer, sacrifice, Providence, eternity.**

Those words were not abstractions on September 11. They appeared in human form. They were seen in firefighters climbing upward while thousands descended, in passengers praying before fighting back, in mariners steering toward Manhattan when others were desperate to leave it, in

chaplains remaining beside the suffering, in rescuers refusing to abandon the weak, and in exhausted workers kneeling among ruins that seemed to testify only of death.

None of these stories erases the horror of September 11, nor should they. Christianity does not ask us to pretend darkness is light. It looks directly at evil, grief, death, injustice, and human cruelty. At the center of the Christian faith stands a Cross precisely because Christianity takes suffering seriously enough to proclaim that God Himself entered it.

But Christianity also insists that evil never possesses the final word.

The terrorists could decide what they intended to destroy, but they could not control what would rise in answer to it. They could murder, but they could not prevent courage. They could terrify, but they could not prevent sacrifice. They could collapse towers, but they could not stop a chapel from becoming a sanctuary. They could twist steel, yet steel could still become a cross. They could seize an airplane, but they could not stop passengers from praying and resisting. They could reduce a skyscraper to ruins, yet sixteen people still emerged alive. They could burn and crush a Bible, but they could not silence the words of Christ that remained visible on its surviving page.

That is why these stories matter.

They remind us that Providence is not always thunder from heaven. Sometimes it appears in ordinary preparations no one yet understands, in a delay that seems dangerous, in a decision to help one person rather than save oneself, in a beam of sunlight entering darkness, in a fragment of Scripture surviving where almost everything else was destroyed.

Psalm 46 sounded different after September 11 than it had the day before: **“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.”**

Twenty-five years later, perhaps the greatest danger is no longer that America will forget what happened on September 11. We have memorials, museums, photographs, recordings, documentaries, names carved into bronze, and two enormous pools marking the footprints of buildings that disappeared from the skyline.

The greater danger is that we will remember the event while forgetting what it taught us.

We may remember the smoke and forget the prayers. We may remember the collapse and forget the courage. We may remember the victims and forget the sacrifice of those who went back for others. We may remember where the airplanes struck and forget how quickly human strength, wealth, technology, and security proved incapable of guaranteeing one more day.

And we may forget how instinctively people began reaching toward God when every illusion of control had been stripped away.

Billy Graham's words therefore still echo across a quarter-century with remarkable simplicity: **we need God.**

We needed Him on September 11, 2001, and our need did not disappear when the smoke cleared. We needed Him aboard Flight 93, inside Stairwell B, at the Pentagon, along Manhattan's waterfront, beneath the surviving chapel, and among the dead and the living at Ground Zero.

And despite all the distance between that morning and this 25th anniversary, we still need Him now.

That is why **the forgotten spiritual history of September 11** matters. It is not merely a collection of dramatic stories from America's past. It is a reminder that what we sought when the towers fell—courage, mercy, meaning, prayer, Providence, and ultimately God Himself—is no less necessary twenty-five years later.

Perhaps the most important question of this anniversary, therefore, is not whether America remembers where they were on September 11. It is whether America remembers where God was on September 11.

Twenty-five years later, one final ancient reminder is still worth placing before the nation: **“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD.” — Psalm 33:12**



A Final Invitation: Know The Difference

September 11 also leaves us with another responsibility: **we must understand what we believe—and what competing religious worldviews actually teach.** The nineteen terrorists

who attacked America were jihadists acting from an Islamist extremist worldview, and twenty-five years later that ideology has not disappeared.

Osama bin Laden is dead, much of al-Qaeda's original leadership has been destroyed or dispersed, and ISIS lost the territorial “caliphate” it once controlled across large portions of Iraq and Syria. Yet **jihadist terrorism remains alive, adaptive, and dangerous around the world, including as an ongoing threat to the United States.**

The Heritage Foundation's 2026 national-security recommendations state directly that “**Islamist terrorism remains a real and deadly threat to American lives at home and abroad,**” noting that ISIS continues to operate through affiliates stretching across the Middle East, Africa, and parts of Asia. The FBI likewise told Congress in December 2025 that international terrorists remain among the **greatest and most immediate threats to the American homeland**, specifically warning that ISIS, al-Qaeda, their affiliates, and individuals inspired by their ideology continue to present a danger.

A major **2026 Global Terrorism Threat Assessment** from the Center for Strategic and International Studies reaches a similar conclusion from an independent national-security perspective. CSIS describes today's terrorist landscape as increasingly decentralized and fragmented, while warning that Islamic State provinces and al-Qaeda affiliates remain among the most consequential jihadist threats in the Middle East and Africa, with some branches actually becoming stronger.

The danger therefore does not necessarily look exactly like September 11, 2001. Today's jihadist threat can emerge through regional terrorist affiliates, encrypted online propaganda, extremist networks, lone actors, or individuals radicalized inside Western countries without receiving detailed operational instructions from a distant terrorist headquarters. The organizations, battlefields, communications systems, and tactics change, but the ideology that can justify violence in the name of a religious cause has not disappeared.

To Read More:

[Heritage Foundation — 2026 Solutions: Islamist Terrorism](#)

[FBI — Worldwide Threats to the Homeland, December 11, 2025](#)

[Center for Strategic and International Studies — Global Terrorism Threat Assessment 2026](#)

For Christians, however, the deeper issue is not simply terrorism or national security. It is **truth**.

Christianity and Islam are not two interchangeable versions of essentially the same religion, and Jesus and Muhammad are not merely two teachers delivering variations of the same spiritual message. The Bible and the Qur'an make substantially different claims about the nature of God, the identity of Jesus Christ, sin, salvation, revelation, the Cross, resurrection, judgment, and the way human beings are reconciled to God.

Those differences matter enormously because contradictory religious claims cannot all be true in the same sense at the same time. If Jesus was crucified and bodily raised from the dead, then religious systems denying those events cannot simultaneously be correct about Him. If Jesus

truly is the divine Son of God, then describing Him merely as a prophet necessarily falls short of His identity. These are not minor denominational disagreements. They concern the central claims of Christianity itself.

Christianity ultimately stands or falls upon **Jesus Christ**. The New Testament does not present Him merely as one prophet among many or as a teacher pointing toward another messenger who would arrive centuries later. It presents Him as the incarnate Son of God, crucified for human sin, bodily raised from the dead, and uniquely declaring, **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:6).

That is why readers should not merely inherit assumptions about Christianity, Islam, the Bible, the Qur'an, Jesus, Muhammad, or the world's other religious traditions. **Investigate them.** Compare the primary claims. Compare the sacred writings. Compare what they teach about God and humanity. Compare their understanding of sin and salvation. Compare Muhammad with Jesus. Most importantly, examine the historical claims surrounding Jesus Christ Himself and decide whether Christianity's extraordinary claims about Him withstand serious scrutiny.

For those who want to continue that investigation, we have prepared three detailed comparative studies:

HOW THE BIBLE TRULY COMPARES WITH OTHER SACRED WRITINGS

A comparative examination of the Bible alongside other major religious texts, asking how these writings originated, what authority they claim, how they were transmitted, and what kinds of historical and theological claims they make.

HOW JESUS TRULY COMPARES TO RELIGIOUS LEADERS

A direct comparison of Jesus Christ with the founders and formative teachers of other major religious traditions, examining the extraordinary differences surrounding His identity, claims, death, Resurrection, and place within the earliest historical evidence.

DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO THE SAME TRUTH—AND THE SAME GOD?

A broader investigation of the world's major religious traditions and the increasingly popular claim that all religions ultimately lead to the same God, asking whether their radically different teachings actually permit that conclusion.

September 11 taught America something about the terrible consequences of ideas taken seriously. Twenty-five years later, that should make us more—not less—willing to examine religious ideas carefully rather than retreating into the comfortable assumption that all religions ultimately teach the same truth.

They do not.

So read. Compare. Investigate. Test the claims.

And above all, do what Jesus once asked His own disciples to do when competing opinions about His identity surrounded them. After asking, **“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”**, He turned the question personally toward them:

“But who do you say that I am?” — Matthew 16:15

Twenty-five years after September 11, that question reaches far beyond terrorism, national security, politics, or comparative religion. For Christianity, it remains the question upon which everything else ultimately turns.

