

# ARTICLES

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## Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death

*A Young Man's Account of God's Protection as the Towers Fell*

**Andy Deane grew up at Calvary Chapel Old bridge in New Jersey and attends New York University. He lives blocks from the World Trade Center and worked in its shadows. Like many in that area of Manhattan on September 11, Andy ran toward the towers after planes crashed through their upper floors. This is his personal account.**

**I** heard a terrible noise. It was a mixture of screams from the people nearby and a deep rumbling from above. I looked up and saw the World trade Center collapsing. I froze for a second and then began to sprint toward the police line. It did not appear I was going to make it and would be crushed. I felt a strong wind as the smoke engulfed me. I jumped into a candy store filled with people. I turned to look back outside and saw some women running our way. I stepped out into the smoke and grabbed them and threw them into the store. The smoke completely surrounded us, and it became totally dark. Twenty people were crammed inside of the small store as it filled with smoke. We had trouble breathing.

"Is there a basement here?" I yelled to the owner. She said no. So I looked up to God and began to pray "Jesus, I know I am going to go to heaven if I die, but I am scared. If you can use me, then give me the strength Lord." Almost instantly I realized that my office building, 11 John Street, was across from my current position. So I ran to it, singing a line from a song from Calvary Chapel, "Let the weak say I am strong." I crossed the street completely blinded by the smoke. I found two women banging on the glass door. I kicked it in and told them to go upstairs.

I then ran back across the street to the candy store. At first I couldn't find it. I yelled to them that I had found a place with oxygen and instructed everyone to grab someone else's hand and follow me.

Ten minutes later the smoke began to lighted. Firemen gathered. I asked where I should go. They told me to run towards the seaport. "No, I mean where can I go to help?" They looked puzzled and said, "Firemen are missing, and we are going to look for them." So we started to walk onto the rubble.

"Is anyone alive?" I shouted, and I remember thinking how dumb that sounded. I was jogging across pieces of the WTC. We



Eric Anderson

Andy Dean, silhouetted by the burning WTC towers, looks on moments before it crashed to the ground, killing thousands and sending those around into complete darkness. The 20-year-old NYU student grew up at CC Old Bridge. He spent September 11th helping firefighters.

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did not hear even one person yell back. I saw a lone pigeon escape from the rubble.

I saw a fireman assisting an Asian man lying on the ground, bleeding. An African-American fireman was also on the ground in a lot of pain. There were two firemen bent over him, holding his hands. I couldn't tell whether he was going to live.

A man yelled down at me that they were trapped. A fireman helped me move a piece of metal that had been blocking the door and the people escaped. I noticed a man trying to put out a small fire on his balcony. I yelled to him, "The whole area is ruined, and you are trying to save your apartment. Get out, because the other tower will fall."

We began to look for trapped firemen. There were five firefighters and three policemen with us. We heard the sound of a plane. Everyone began running. We realized it had to be an American fighter plane.

Seconds later there was another deep and powerful rumbling. The other tower began to collapse.

A fireman yelled, "It's coming down!" We ran across the street and into a building. Once again I thought that I was going to die. It was right above us. The building had all glass windows. Then it hit, shaking us all. It was the loudest sound I have ever heard. It sounded like a powerful wave. The smoke came again and it became black. We couldn't breathe. It was frightening as my eyes were stinging and beginning to shut.

Minutes later we walked outside. The firemen's flashlights only pierced five feet into the darkness. We gathered ourselves, and someone told me to look and see if that restaurant had any water. So I went over and broke open the window and climbed up a pole and jumped in. I took all the bottled water I could find. I ran over to the window and tried to get out, but I could not escape at first. The glass was angled toward me. I managed to jump over it without cutting my legs. I started to walk around and hand out water.

We began to put out car fires. I helped carry the hose line a few hundred feet and held the lines for them. We went from car to car putting out fires. I wondered why we weren't trying to find people. The firemen thought it was important to put out the fires so vehicles would not explode. A fireman came up to me and asked me my name. I told him that I was a NYU student. He looked at me and said, "Well thanks, you're doing a great job today." All the firemen seemed really appreciative. I was in awe of them and their bravery. I felt so honored to be with them, realizing they face dangers all the time. Throughout the morning they called me 'brother.' It felt good to hear that.

Ground Zero was the worst looking thing I had ever seen. It looked like a complete war zone. All of the WTC had crushed down into the basement. The only piece left on one of them was this frayed outline, six stories high. I stared at it and realized that this wasn't just a bad dream, and that our lives would never be the same again.

Andy Deane spent the rest of September 11 carrying water for the firemen and helping where he could. Later that afternoon he returned back to his college, his hair white with cement dust, his face blackened from the smoke, and his shirt bloody from a cut. He was tested for asbestos contamination that proved negative.

In the subsequent days and weeks, Andy has struggled with his close encounter with death. He has become even more adamant about sharing his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior as he conveys his story on surviving the collapse of both towers. Andy is grateful for the solid teaching he received growing up that has allowed him to share Christ with his

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classmates. He spoke at several outreaches with Calvary Chapel Old Bridge about his experiences. Andy now realizes the Lord has an incredible plan for his life and is now dedicated to fulfilling it.

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