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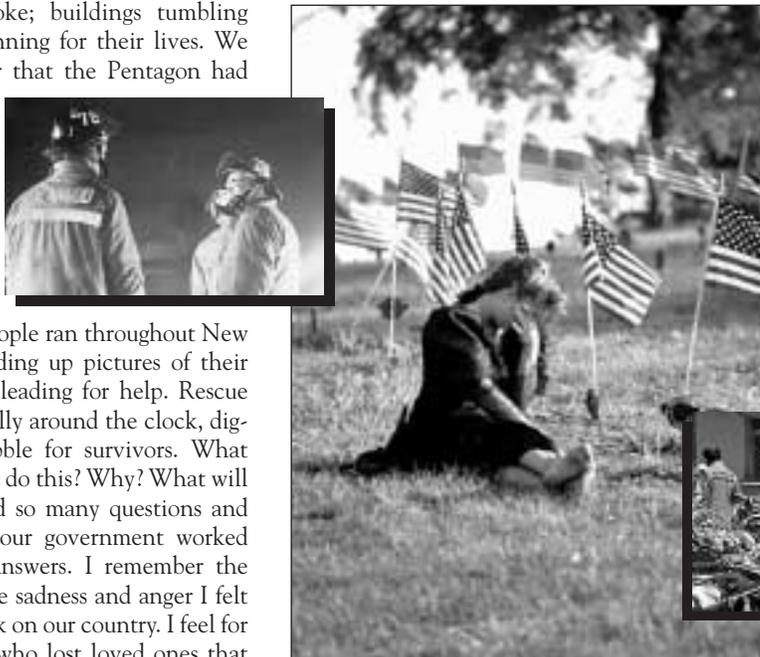
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WORLD VIOLENCE: *Living in Troubled Times*

September 11th, 2001 will never be forgotten. The horrific events of that day in New York, Washington DC, and Pennsylvania, remain permanently imbedded in our hearts and minds. I vividly remember the videotapes of the plane crashing into the World Trade Center Tower: fire and smoke; buildings tumbling down; and people running for their lives. We were shocked to hear that the Pentagon had been hit by another hijacked plane. Our whole nation was stunned by the sheer magnitude of this violence. Over 6,000 people were killed and 8,000 injured. Distraught people ran throughout New York City streets holding up pictures of their missing loved ones, pleading for help. Rescue teams worked frantically around the clock, digging through the rubble for survivors. What happened? Who could do this? Why? What will happen next? We had so many questions and very few answers as our government worked aggressively to find answers. I remember the President's address, the sadness and anger I felt over this vicious attack on our country. I feel for the families of those who lost loved ones that

day. World violence never hit so close to home like it did on September 11. We are living in the most violent, troubled times in our history. Terrorism and war threaten our national safety, security, stability, and freedom.



Rippling Effects

The September 11 bombing set off a chain reaction of events impacting America and the rest of the world. The American people have been on a heightened state of alert. The airline industry was shut down and hasn't fully recovered. People are afraid to fly, causing the industry to scale down and lay off workers. Security in the airports was intensified, making longer waiting times. Armed guardsman patrol our airports. Air travel will never be the same. Our sagging economy also took a major hit after September 11th. The stock market plummeted as we headed deeper into recession. Guns and gas masks sales rose sharply. Fears of biological and chemical warfare prevail. Fear and displaced anger unfortunately moved some U.S. citizens to attack innocent Arab Americans. Many people fearing an energy crisis rushed to the gas stations to fill their tanks. Anger, panic, instability and war talk filled the air. Americans rallied together behind President Bush, resolving to pull through this

crisis, go after the terrorists, and defend our country. Major League Baseball, Football and other sporting events were postponed for a week after the tragedy. Multitudes of people flock to churches in record numbers, seeking answers, consolation, and hope during these troubled times.

Fear, Anger, Uncertainty

Terrorism evokes a fundamental fear of helplessness. These violent actions are random, unprovoked, and targeted at defenseless citizens. We are forced to cope with the irrational information that is beyond normal comprehension. This culminates in feelings of helplessness, vulnerability, and grief (APA, 2001). Most of us will experience an array of emotions as the events of this atrocity unfold. Watch for feelings of anxiety, fear, and worries about safety. We can expect our children to go through similar reactions too. They will be worried about reoccurrences of violence. You may see their worry reflected in increased levels of distress, irritability, negativity, defiance, activity,

America Grieves

The American people grieve this catastrophic loss on many levels. One poll revealed that seven out of every ten Americans were depressed after this tragedy. Our minds are still consumed with this traumatic event. We mourn the loss of innocent fellow Americans. We also mourn the loss of our freedom as we knew it, to come and go as we wanted, to travel without fearing deadly hijackings. Americans lost that sense of security. Our country is not invincible against foreign attacks. We are vulnerable. Nuclear,

chemical and biological warfare are more possible than ever. Our lives are changed forever. We long for happier, safer, times. The World Trade Center Towers, symbols of American prosperity, are gone forever. The song "God Bless America" moves us to tears, and the American Flag takes on a very special meaning these days. Grief and patriotism unite people who opposed one another prior to the September 11 attack. Sadness and anger replaced our initial shock shortly after the attack. Many Americans developed acute anxiety disorders and may have post traumatic stress disorder (P.T.S.D.) like symptoms in the near future as a result of the September 11 attack. Our lives are disrupted. People who were already on the edge were doubly stressed by the events surrounding September 11. Those who had just survived a major crisis or loss prior to the attack were especially vulnerable.

withdrawal, concentration difficulties, angry outbursts, aggression and absenteeism. You may also see more somatic complaints (e.g., headaches and stomach aches), changes in their school performance and statement/questions about death and dying. In some cases you will see changes in their appetite and sleep. In addition to displaying most of the reactions noted above, teenagers are at increased risk for substance abuse. We believe God prevails over evil, and know America has the greatest military, but we still have anger over this atrocity, fears about more Americans dying, and uncertainty about our future.

Healing

Recovery from a traumatic event depends on the degree of the intensity of the loss, a person's general ability to cope with emotionally challenging situations, and other stressful events preceding the traumatic experience. Remember, there is no standard pattern and time table of reaction to traumatic experiences. Some people respond immediately while others have delayed reactions sometimes months or years later. Some have adverse effects for a long period of time, while others recover quickly. Reactions can change over time too. Some respond to the challenge, initially energized, and later become depressed and discouraged.

We can do a lot of things to help restore emotional well being and sense of control following a terrorist act, disaster, or other traumatic experience (APA, 2001). Identify the feelings you may be experiencing. Your feelings are a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Remember, you have overcome adversity and trauma in the past. Give yourself time to heal. Allow yourself time to mourn the losses you have experienced. Be patient with the changes in your emotional state. Talk to others about your fears. Don't get preoccupied with things you can't control. Don't allow terrorism to make you fearful and uncertain about the future. Our government is taking comprehensive action to combat terrorism and restore safety and security. Limit your exposure to the media. Ask for support from people who care about you and will listen. Utilize local support groups for disaster survivors. Consider joining a group led by trained and experienced professionals. Eat well-balanced meals and get plenty of rest. Establish regular routines for eating and exercising. Take time off from daily demands and engage in hobbies and enjoyable activities. Avoid major life decisions like switching careers or jobs. These changes can be highly stressful.

There are ways to promote healing in your children and students. Encourage them to say how they feel about the event. Assure children that their parents are taking care of them and will continue to do so. Let children know that institutions of democracy are still in place. Reinforce ideas of safety and security. Spend more time with your children and let them become more dependent on you during the months following



the trauma. Let them cling to you a little more than usual. Give them physical affection. This can be very comforting. Provide play experiences to relieve tension. Use drawing and other non verbal activities with young children. Encourage older children to speak with you and with one another about their thoughts and feelings. Respond with answers they can comprehend. This helps reduce confusion and anxiety related to the trauma. Dispel misconceptions about what occurred and might happen in the future. Keep regular schedules and routines. Limit their exposure to media coverage. Pray with your children. Assure them that God listens and responds to our prayers and concerns. Seek professional help when overwhelming nervousness, lingering sadness, or other prolonged reactions adversely affect school and job performance, interpersonal relationships, or daily functioning. The healing process takes time. Be patient with yourself, family, and friends. Some effects will subside soon and others will linger for weeks, months, and even years. Allow God and His people to minister to you during traumatic stressful times. Reach out and help others who have been impacted. This facilitates your healing too.

Victorious Living

What do we do about September 11th, 2001? How should we live our lives? What do we tell our children? The terrorist attack was evil and intended to perpetuate fear in every American. Our enemies are dead set on destroying us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We will continue to mourn and live with these tragic losses. More pain and suffering probably lies ahead. We are taking aggressive action to prevent our enemies from overtaking us. As Christians we know that God is Sovereign and in control. God loves us. He does not want us to live in fear. God comforts us and clearly tells us what we should do. Listen to His Words. "For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind." (2 Timothy 1:7). "The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Psalm 18:1). "We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Rom. 8:37). "Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38). "Do not be afraid." (Isaiah 41:10). "Do not

let your hearts be troubled, trust in God; trust also in me." (John 14:1). "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff will comfort me." (Psalm 23:4). "I will be with you to the very end of the age." (Matt. 28:20). "Though I walk in the midst of trouble you preserve my life." (Psalm 137:7). God's Word is clear, we are to live courageously and victoriously, trusting in Him. We already have the victory. We will also spend eternity with God after this life because we belong to Him.

We need to live one day at a time, believing God. We should tell our children that evil does, and will happen, but we are in God's hands, no matter what. Certainly we need to remain alert for future terrorist attacks, but we have to go on living our lives. We have much to accomplish before the Lord returns. We need to share the love of God to those who are shaken, paralyzed with fear, and grasping for answers. Christians know that God is the only real source of hope, security, provision, power, comfort, peace, and salvation. This tragedy brings a tremendous opportunity for all of us to draw closer to God. We need to reach out to one another too. We must go on living the way God intended for us to live. Pray for His Divine intervention in all areas, especially for healing, comfort, safety, and protection. We should also pray for God's Divine intervention in the spiritual war (demonic principalities) waged against us. Our country was founded on God's Word, Love, and Promise. We should go on living every day, believing, "In God we Trust," and standing united as one nation under God. We have hope.

Call me if you have any concerns about the traumatic effects of terrorism. My colleagues and I are available to speak to your church, school, or group on this or related topics.

F.Y.I.

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11/10 - KSBJ Volunteer Training

11/11 - Fear, Anxiety and Worry
Second Baptist Church - Woodway

11/27 - Building Self-Esteem
First Presbyterian Church