

# **Voices: Among the tragedies, a missing defining moment**

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This month marks the 17th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. I was only a sophomore in high school in 2001, but 9/11 probably will be the defining moment in my lifetime. I pray nothing worse takes its place. So much of our society has changed as a result of that day, but only recently has my oldest child, a fourth grader, learned about the attacks.

As we approached the anniversary of 9/11, my thoughts went from 9/11 to the other defining events in my life so far. The first real-world events I remember are Operation Desert Storm and the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. I remember seeing video of explosions lighting up the night sky as the air campaign of Desert Storm began. I also remember the sci-fi look of the F-117 Nighthawk stealth bomber.

I thought about the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. I remember the way the building looked and the heartbreaking picture of the firefighter holding a lifeless baby pulled from the rubble.

Columbine was also a defining event. I was in junior high in 1999. I remember the news coverage and the images of SWAT team members escorting students from the building with their hands on top of their heads.

Now that I sit here, I think about the first World Trade Center bombing, the bombing at the Atlanta Olympics and the Boston Marathon bombing.

And I wonder: Are there any positive defining moments in my lifetime? Are there any events that stand out and cause me to say, "I'm proud that happened during my lifetime?"

# Tragedies don't have to be the only defining events

Sure, there are proud moments as people came together to help one another in response to these tragedies, but I'm not sure there is a positive defining event.

At least not yet. But I am hopeful.

Maybe it's naïve, but I believe there is still time. I'm only 32, after all. I don't believe my lifetime has to be defined solely by bombings, shootings, terrorist attacks and wars. My lifetime can be defined by something more; it can be defined by something positive; it can be defined by something God-inspired.

Jesus said in John 14:12-14 that his followers will be able to do even greater things (greater works) than him because he would accomplish his mission and send the Holy Spirit to live within us. Jesus was one man who taught 12, who later taught thousands, who in turn taught millions and eventually billions. Estimates are there are 2.2 billion Christians in the world.

With 2.2 billion Christians, how is there not a defining God-inspired event in my lifetime?

God is moving in the world. There are stories of how God is moving in China and in the Middle East. Worship movements and Pentecostalism have been on the rise in South America. But there hasn't been a "Pentecost," a "Great Awakening" or a "Jesus Movement" in my lifetime.

Why?

# Can Pentecost happen again in our time?

Maybe we are the seeds growing in shallow, rocky soil or amidst the choking thorns of worry, riches and the pleasures of life. Maybe constant infighting among Christians, who keep calling out “heretics” for their specks while ignoring their own logs, holds off a Pentecost event. Maybe we are lazy. Maybe we’re more content with our iPhones and Netflix than we are desperate for God. Maybe we are waiting on someone else to do what God is calling us to do.

Maybe these are some reasons we haven’t seen a Pentecost event among all our tragedies.

I am wary of the term “revival” as it’s commonly used now because the term often is equated with a return to an idealized past that never really existed. There can be no return to a reality that never was.

For a Pentecost event to happen, though, we don’t need to look into the past but gaze into the future and have God inspire us to do the greater work Jesus said we would do. We need to be people and churches willing to do God-inspired things.

Maybe when we are, the defining moment of my lifetime will not be one more tragedy but instead will be a God-event.

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