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My Memorable “9/11s”

To those of the “Baby Boomer” generation we all remember where we were when we heard the news that President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Many of us were in school and were promptly paraded to pray, watch TV about the event or just discuss an event that, to many, spelled the end to a nation’s innocence. Less than six years later we also remember where we were when man first walked on the moon. The just recently deceased astronaut Neil Armstrong spoke those words of man’s seeming greatness “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Millions across the globe witnessed the event on black and white television. I, however, was listening to the event on the BBC World Service Radio spending the summer with the Yononami Indians in Brazil where my sister was a missionary nurse. Our generation’s memories then jump over 32 years later to September 11, 2001. I was in a shop that had a radio turned on. The commentator described how “a small plane has hit a tower of the World Trade Center”. Yawn! That had happened so many times before. I then drove home and contacted a businesswoman that I know. She was almost speechless. “I can’t talk right now”, she said. “Turn on your TV set. They’ve hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.” I promptly did this and saw footage of devastation thinking “America is at war.” I also thought of school groups that I had assisted through the years in taking them to the top of WTC. There was always an eagerness to be there just when they opened to avoid the hundreds of other school groups visiting that day. Nowhere in my mind was a thought of the future. Only of the past that had, once again, changed irrevocably.

Now eleven years have passed and the war continues but on the soil of so many countries. In this war, like many others, there are only losers. The Patriot Act now supercedes the Bill of Rights and so many laws and freedoms won by bloodshed and battles. America is now one of the most difficult countries to get into and out of. As I travel with the Gospel of Jesus Christ there is even more of a suspicion on the parts of many people in the world of foreigners. Yet even with these memories of innocence lost and freedoms past I think of my own 9/11s lived since that fateful day. In 2010 I was at a wedding telling the groom that this was a great way to be able to remember your anniversary. It’s in the news every year. On that date in 2008 I was filming an interview with singer / songwriter Graham Kendrick for our ministry’s “Principles of Praise” TV series. It took place at the London School of Theology - such a place full of hope and expectation for a future serving God. In 2007 I was on my way to a Christian broadcasting conference being held near Lucerne, Switzerland. Meeting together with the heads of most of Europe’s Christian broadcasters it was the start of an uplifting and constructive few days. It was on that date on 2006 that I find my most memorable positive September 11th. In a London hotel I spent the better part of the day interviewing evangelist Dr. Luis Palau for our TV series “Principles of Leadership” and sharing his plans and ours for reaching some of the most unreached locations in the world to date. We spoke, on camera and off, about the changes in the world in those preceding five years. Dr. Palau even, graciously, promised to assist making contact in one of the largest mostly unreached countries in the world. We are still working through and with those individuals and ministries. In 2003 on that date I was sharing with church and ministry leaders from across central Italy in one of our church leadership training weekends. There in the midst of a part of the globe that was harvesting grapes and figs it was almost another world - one which time seemed to forget. The participants attending were hungry for peace - but the peace that passes all understanding.

All in all the world has, thankfully, moved on from concentrating on blame and hatred, war and revenge. The Church of Jesus Christ has, I believe, had to find more ingenious ways of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a culturally sensitive world. In these years I’ve met (missionary) teachers, (missionary) filmmakers, (missionary) singers and (missionary) comedians and actors. We’re just completing post-production on our second instalment of “Post Modern Trends in World Missions”. With input from some of the world’s most loved and respected Christian personalities and ministers it is eye opening to see how strategies in major outreaches have changed in just 11 short years. Yet, in spite of all of it, God is still on the throne and it is He who is in charge of world events.

The author, David Sullivan, is the Director of HFC International which is on a mission to assist in raising up and encouraging leaders personally and through the media in over 50 countries and on all 5 continents for work in churches, charities, NGOs and other humanitarian assistance groups. Using the media and cutting edge technology they attempt to work alongside those knowledgeable in each culture and people groups and develop the tools needed. Their website is at: www.principles.tv.