

## **Courage at 36,000 Feet**

by iPriority

Todd Beamer's now-immortal words echo across the world: "Are you ready? Let's roll." Calmly, the 32-year-old software salesman ended his September 11 phone call to a GTE Airfone operator from United Flight 93.

Todd's "let's roll" signal was one he often gave to his wife, Lisa, and their two boys, David, almost 4, and Drew, almost 2, as the family prepared to head out of their home in Cranbury, N.J. But that Tuesday morning, Todd's words rallied a stalwart handful of passengers to storm their attackers.

The next few moments unfolded with screams. Silence. More screams. Then nothing. No more hurried cell phone calls and countless whispers of "I love you" to family and friends on the ground. At 10:06a.m. the fuel-laden plane slammed into a Pennsylvania field.

The scheduled six-hour flight from Newark, N.J., to San Francisco lasted only 84 minutes, killing all 44 on board. Instant comrades in their last moments, Todd and the flight's other brave souls saved unknown thousands of lives.

With composure like Jackie Kennedy after the President's assassination, Lisa Beamer stands steady for her boys and the baby inside her womb. "Everybody has a certain degree of human courage that you can draw on in a difficult situation," she says, "but human courage only goes so far."

Todd kept his composure during those final minutes on Flight 93 as the plane roared toward Washington, D.C., asking the Airfone operator to call Lisa and his family and tell them that he loved them. He prayed the Lord's Prayer with the operator and let go of the phone.

Lisa is convinced that what gave her husband courage is the assurance that he would see his family again in heaven-that what was happening right then, however horrific, was not the final reality. That's what keeps her going too.

"If I were trying to hold my life together based on my human strength, I wouldn't get out of bed," said the 32-year-old. "I am so thankful to have my God-given strength and courage. Every day seems like such a dichotomy, because I'm human, with emotions and sadness and grieving. But on the other hand, my perspective is much bigger than just the things that happen in this world."

For the young mother and widow, there's another side to the terrorist mayhem that shattered our nation's comfort and illusions of security.

"If your perspective is only this life and you are holding onto your little world at all costs," she says, "that's going to be a very fearful thing. Despite the best efforts of our government, we will always be vulnerable in some places."

"You can't rise above fear completely, but if you gain a perspective about God and your ultimate purpose, you can feel confident and secure, and some of the fears pale."

"Most people's knee-jerk reaction to the events of September 11 was to look to something higher than themselves-go to church or a prayer service-and think that's an indication that people deep down know that this isn't all there is to life."

"It's easy to forget about those deeper issues when life is good, but when a true crisis strikes and people's earthly security is knocked out from under them, that God-given desire for looking above yourself comes through. I hope that all this gives people cause to take stock, because Todd and I were the last two people on this earth who looked like we would be facing this type of tragedy."

"You just don't know when it's your time, so you need to be prepared."

*from "Courage: Finding Hope in Uncertain Times"*