

Among the passengers on board American Airlines flight 11 from Boston scheduled for Los Angeles on September 11, 2001, was Karleton Fyfe, the father of a young child and husband of a woman expecting their second. Karleton's uncle is Bill Tammeus, the former Faith columnist for *The Kansas City Star* and a local Presbyterian elder. Bill recently published a memoir, *Love, Loss and Endurance: A 9/11 Story of Resilience and Hope in an Age of Anxiety*. He tells the repercussions of the events that day on one particular family. His account evokes tears, anger, consolation, and determination to build a better world.

As a man of faith, Bill was struck by the twisted motivations of the attackers, who purported to be people of faith. The wounds from the 9/11 attacks afflicted families, municipalities and our entire nation, and Bill points out the harm they also did to religion. He writes that the attacks show “what can happen when simple, naïve, caustic versions of religion get lived out by people who miss the generative, wholesome, loving point of religion.” We all know people we wish would get more involved in religion, but we also know people who get involved in religion the wrong way, even among Christians. Islam is filled with generative, wholesome and loving people, but many of us Catholics do not have Muslim friends, and our impression of that religion has been harmed by its extremists.

Midway through Mark's gospel, Jesus tested the waters to discern the religious bent of his disciples. At first he beats around the bush, “Who do people say that I am?” But then he asks more directly, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered for the group and nailed the correct response: “You are the Christ.” But when Jesus continued to explain his future—rejection by caustic religious leaders, murder, resurrection—Peter took him aside. Jesus had declared his future publicly, but Peter challenged him in private. Peter rebuked Jesus, revealing that Peter was simple and naïve. He had some of it right, but not all of it. Peter had convinced himself who Jesus was and what his future must be and must not be. Peter was sure of this. But Peter mistook his certitude for faith.

We saw this in the worst way on 9/11: attackers who mistook their certitude for faith. Bill Tammeus indicates that we believers would produce more good if we sustained a healthy questioning about our certitude. We aren't always right, even in areas where we consider ourselves the experts. Even St. Peter—the leader of the disciples who followed Jesus and learned from him in person every day—even Peter was sometimes wrong.

Bill wrote his book to get people engaged in eradicating the false religious certitude that leads to violence. He concludes with these eight suggestions: Respect and love others. Become more religiously literate. Get outside your comfortable religious and worldview surroundings. Engage in interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Teach your children and grandchildren well. Deepen your knowledge of both American and world history. In this remarkably divisive time in our nation, become competent in civil discourse. And finally, spend time with people who have experienced profound grief.

American Airlines flight 11 crashed into the north tower and changed the world. Proper religious values can change the world again.