



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** A Pilot's Close Call on 9/11 – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dr. Steve and Megan Scheibner

**Air Date:** September 12, 2024

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and on yesterday's broadcast, we listened to a fascinating interview featuring Dr. Steve Scheibner and his wife Megan. They were discussing Steve's close call on September 11th, 2001. Today, the Scheibners returned to the studio with Dr. Dobson and they'll share their perspective on how they moved forward from that historic day.

**Dr. Steve Scheibner:** It's been a lot of years since 9/11. I still can't describe the feeling of that moment. It's a vacant feeling. You can't feel happy, you can't feel sad. I didn't feel angry right away. I just felt empty and we held each other, stared. After all these years, I still can't describe the feeling of that moment. But knowing that you should have been someplace and you weren't, there's an obligation that comes with that. You see, the Lord spared my life for a reason.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, that was the voice of Dr. Steve Scheibner. He was a pilot for American Airlines back in 2001 and was nearly scheduled to co-pilot a flight on the morning of 9/11. However, he was bumped at the last second by a senior pilot. Steve realized later that the flight he was originally scheduled to be on was that plane destined to crash into the North Tower World Trade Center building. Today here on Family Talk, the Scheibners will continue sharing their unthinkable testimony of God's protection through and beyond that tragedy. Steve will also explain why the pilot who took his place is the perfect picture of Christ's sacrifice. This substitution, our view of salvation, inspired the Scheibners to be more outspoken evangelists, which they'll address in just a moment. Okay, let's listen now to the conclusion of Dr. James Dobson's powerful conversation with Steve and Megan Scheibner, right here on Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Megan, I'm going to throw the first question to you because you are right in the middle of this story from start to finish, and I would like you to tell us about your afterthoughts. You were beginning to realize that you had a near miss here. I mean just by a hair's breadth.

Megan Scheibner: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: And yet it happened to somebody else and it didn't happen to you. What were your thoughts? What are they now?

Megan Scheibner: Well, part of my personality is, I just get very quiet. And so I think that night I was pretty silent, but if you remember, president Bush had downed all the airplanes for a short period of time, but we didn't know how long that was going to be. And so on September 11th, later in the afternoon, Steve got called by American Airlines and they said, "We have a trip for you for tomorrow. It's Flight 11 to Los Angeles." And it was the same flight, same flight number as the one that had crashed into the World Trade Center. And for me, that was the moment I fell apart and just said, "You can't go and I'm not okay with this. You're not leaving us. Look what just happened." Which is very odd for me, but it just was too overwhelming.

Dr. James Dobson: Every woman alive would've had that same reaction.

Megan Scheibner: Yeah. I hope so. And he didn't fly. President Bush kept the planes down for what? Three days?

Dr. James Dobson: Three or four days, yeah.

Megan Scheibner: Three or four days. And he didn't have to take the flight. But for me, that was one of those times. There'd been several times in the military where I'd been frightened and I had to turn Steve over to God and say, "You know what? You're in charge of him and I can't take care of him and I can't make him stay here and hold my hand." But I'm thankful for those few days. So that when he went flying again, I was able to say goodbye without being a total mess at the door.

Dr. James Dobson: And today, you're okay with it?

Megan Scheibner: I am. There's moments, especially with the cell phone technologies we have now, if I don't hear from him and I should, I have to take my thoughts captive. Scripture talks about that and make myself not worry because there's nothing positive that comes from that. There's no good that comes from the, "What ifs?" And if something happens to Steve, I know that God's going to give me the grace to deal with it, and I can't live my life fearful of what's going to happen to him. And that was the same with the traveling and the speaking and everything he's done, is God has made Steve Scheibner a certain type of man, and I can't be a wife that tries to put him in a cage because neither one of us will glorify God that way.

Dr. James Dobson: Every one of us almost, in the entire United States and many millions around the world were affected by what happened. There we're not over it yet. In fact, I regret the fact that people are trying to forget it because there's meaning in what happened there. But it happened to me too because I was having breakfast with a former president of the college that Shirley and I graduated from. And we

walked out of the restaurant and there was a TV there and everybody was gathered around. And I saw it for the first time. I got in my car and rushed to focus on the family where I was at the time. I was about a mile away when I heard that the second building had been hit. I went on to the ministry, I called everybody together. We had well over a thousand employees at that time.

I think it was 1200 or so. And we all stood and we cried and we prayed and we prayed for the people who had lost loved ones, both in the towers and on the plane, and prayed for our country. There was an aura around it. I can't really... You said yesterday, Steve, that you couldn't describe the feelings at that time. It was true for a lot of us, and I think it was three days later, I got a call from the White House asking if I would like to come and be part of, as not a participant, but in the audience at a service that the president was holding in the Washington Cathedral. And he spoke that day and Billy Graham was there. Billy Graham prayed, and it was the day I will absolutely never forget.

So everybody's got a story, right? Everybody can say, "Let me tell you where I was when that happened."

Dr. Steve Scheibner: "Yeah, well we talk about that, when I share my 9/11 story, share the film and my story afterwards, one of the things I start out with is I say, "Everybody remembers where they were on September 11th if you're old enough." And I believe God puts that little camera inside our brains, that little snapshot mechanism for a reason. We all remember where we were, if you're old enough, when JFK was assassinated or when Ronald Reagan was shot, when Space Shuttle Challenger blew up. And I think those moments are important or that little snapshot mechanism is important because from time to time in life, we need to stop and focus on that which is most important and exclude that which is least important. And from time to time, the Lord will bring a major life event into our lives that does that.

And you remember how everybody was getting along those days, right? Congress and the Senate and the President. It was one big happy family for a while. Obviously it doesn't last forever, but everybody went and hugged their family and it kind of hits the reset button in some ways, which I thought was very important for us. And I've never let my finger off that reset button. It's been a lot of years now.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, there were these American flags everywhere that said, "United we stand." It passed too quickly. There should have been more of a thought process saying, "Wait a minute, what did that mean and what are its implications for us?" And people wanted to seem to want to forget it as quickly as possible. Because it was so awesome and awful. But I'm reminded of all that when I see the films of the towers going down and the billowing smoke behind the people who were running out. What happened in the aftermath for you guys?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Well, I was pastoring a church at the time, so large family, the needs of the

church were in front of me. I mean, there were people in my church that were hurting like everybody else was, and they needed a pastor to minister to them. So I was very active in giving. The first time I told my 9/11 story was the Sunday after 9/11. I was telling it as an afterthought and as I'm telling it, everybody in my congregation is welling up with tears in their eyes. And at first I didn't really realize the magnitude of the story. I didn't really realize the connection it was making because I thought, "Well, I just didn't get a call. What's the big deal?" Right? But what it was making was a connection to the most important story ever told, which is this, somebody died in your place.

And the connection I try to make now and from the days after 9/11 forward is that, look at a modern day look at substitutionary atonement. What does it mean to have somebody else die in your place?

Dr. James Dobson: Let me stop you just long enough to say, to those who have been listening casually, tune in here because what you're about to say is the essence of the story.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: It is what it should mean for all of us. You shared it a little bit in my office, I just want to make sure that people get it. Say it again.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Sure. Tom McGinnis, the pilot who bumped me off the flight that day, he'd be the first guy to tell you that he did not die for Steve's sins. The silver lining on this little dark story is that Tom had a solid testimony of faith in Jesus Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Did he?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: His wife Cheryl traveled around for years sharing a story about forgiveness and a very powerful message, obviously with her platform being a widow and so forth. But Tom would be the first guy to tell you he didn't die for my sins. Tom and I were both qualified to sit in the same seat. And on any given day, Tom and I could have substituted for each other. But the real connection is this, I know what it's like personally to have somebody die in my place. Not once, but twice and once was enough. You see, Tom didn't die for my sins. The other who died in my place, the other who died in Tom's place, the other who died in your place, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He hung and bled and suffered on a cross to pay a price that He and He alone was uniquely qualified to pay. Since Tom and I could have swapped out for each other on any given day because we were both qualified to sit in that seat, only one's ever been qualified to hang on the cross. And that was Jesus. And he did it out of faithful obedience to God the Father, and He did it out of a deep and abiding love for you and I, the object of His passion. That's the greatest love story that's ever been told.

Dr. James Dobson: It is.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: And that resonates with audiences. It's been a lot of years since 9/11 happened, and like you said, some people want to put it in their rear-view mirror. I get more invites now all these years later to come and tell the story because the connection is made with the oldest most important love story ever told. And that's that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and yours. And what are you going to do about that?

Dr. James Dobson: Steve, you have a doctorate in theology from Gordon-Conwell, Seminary. I'm not a theologian, but I do know a little bit about the scripture. I would like you to explain what the word propitiation means?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: That fits here.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Right. It is. It means that somebody substituted for you. Jesus was a suitable substitute for me. It all has to do with God's justice. There's a lot of people today that'll say, "Why can't God just forget about it all? And just at the end of the day say, 'Well, everybody's forgiven. And regardless of what you've done.'" And that resonates in postmodern America. People want to have no consequences for their actions, but God is a just God and His judgment has to be satisfied and it has to be satisfied fully and completely. And there was only ever one that fully and completely satisfied God's judgment. And that was Jesus Christ. And that's the significance of the cross. The most major life event of all history was a death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And because of that, all of us have to do business with that fact. That somebody substituted for us.

And the only reason that you would reject that is out of pride. You say, "God, I can do it on my own." Or, "I'll figure it out on my own." Or, "I don't know. I don't have time to figure that out." You know what? And we put God at arm's length. That's a huge mistake. Each one of us has to deal with the fact that somebody died in our place. For me, I got reminded of that on September 11th, 2001, in an earthly event that took place in a cockpit. But the immediate connection for me was that Christ died for me on the cross. And I've been passionate about that ever since, to go out and tell as many people my God story through my set of circumstances.

Dr. James Dobson: That takes me back a long ways, because one of the early broadcasts that I did when I first had a radio program was on this subject. Because early in my adult years, I used to wonder why? Since God makes up all His own rules, He could have designed any plan he wanted to, to forgive us. And He could have said, "I'm going to look the other way." Why would He have put His own son through that? Why would He have required the death of His only begotten son, as it worked out? And I finally got a handle on it. I don't remember who helped me with it, but the Lord is a God of justice. He's not only a God of love, He's a God of justice. And when sin came into the world, He couldn't just look the other way. It would be a contradiction of that part of His nature.

So He looked across the entire span of human experience, because He can see the beginning and the end from the beginning, and He couldn't find one person who was qualified to take that sin and to bear that burden and to die in the place of those who had become sinful. And we all do. And there was only one. And that was His own son. That helped me. I don't know. I'm not a theologian. And you can put more meat on those bones, but explain more from your perspective.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Well, I get to that point... Every time I share my 9/11 story, I get to that very point that you're at. And I say, "How in the world could you continue to reject Jesus Christ?" Almost like a, I describe it as a someday saint. You're going to get around to it someday, whatever it is that God wants you to do with your life. We just are the king and queen of the procrastinators. We put God at arm's length. But in light of that type of love, the fact that God loved us so much, back to John 3:16, "He gave His only begotten son that whosoever shall believe in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." That's the most beautiful simplistic message ever. How can you put that at arm's length? And I think some people do because... And I hear them say this, "Steve, if you knew the stuff that I've done in my life or if you knew the things I'm currently into, there's no way God could love me."

People will say that, and they mean it sincerely. "God could never love me." I try to put that in perspective for people, if I can, right on the spot. And here's what it is, God's omniscient. He knows everything, from the beginning right now till the end. God knows every sin you've ever committed. He knows every sin you're currently committing and every sin you'll ever commit. And He knew all that ahead of time and He still sent His son to die for you. That's how much He loves you. So with that in mind, how can you keep that at arm's length. At the end of the day, I think it's because we just get proud.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. How can we reject so great of salvation?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Right? It has to be embraced. I came to that point when I was 17 years old. I said, "You know what? I can't fight with God anymore. I've got to embrace that and receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior."

Dr. James Dobson: Were you raised in a Christian home?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: No. No. I was the first person in my family [inaudible 00:16:40].

Dr. James Dobson: How did you get a hold of that so early?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: I went to a Young Life camp with the Young Life Ministry. I went up to Saranac Lake, New York. A guy by the name of Scott Hamilton invested in me. He's a couple years older than me. He and I are still good friends to this day. He shared the gospel with me and wouldn't let go. I was a tough kid and I didn't want hear it. And Scott kept following up with me. And finally I wrestled with God and Scott

enough that I realized I couldn't prove God wrong and that God had a plan for my life. And on August 13th, 1978, I surrendered my heart to Jesus.

Dr. James Dobson: Megan, tell us about your faith journey.

Megan Scheibner: Well, I wasn't raised in a Christian home either. And actually I went to Young Life as a high school student and heard the gospel and one night heard, "Either you accepted Christ or you didn't." It was one or the other. And I thought didn't sounded bad, so I said the words, but nothing changed in my life. And I went off to college, went to the beach to work every summer, which is not a safe place for a young woman. And I was engaged in lots of things I shouldn't have been, but telling people that they should get saved and be a Christian like me. And there was a dear Christian girl that worked with me at the same pizza restaurant. And one night she told me, she said, "You need to be quiet and never mention Jesus again because you are an embarrassment to Him."

She gave me a track called, This Is Your Life. And I threw it out. So she gave me another one, and it was all summer. The track kept showing up. And when I got back to college that fall, and I opened my suitcase, there it was again, and I finally read it, and that night gave my life to the Lord and was dead serious about it from that time on. I think that was something that drew Steve and I together because we were pretty much an odd couple. But we were both really, really serious about our walk with the Lord and both first generation Christians who didn't know how to do it and wanted to learn how. And so we needed to know our Bibles.

Dr. James Dobson: What a testimony to the work done by Young Life and the thousands, tens of thousands of young people who have found Christ in much the same way you did. Now, you didn't know each other at that point, right?

Megan Scheibner: No. I pretty quickly got involved as a Young Life leader. Steve already was a young Life Leader. And the night that I met him, I told everyone that would listen that I had met the man I was going to marry. And he told everyone that Megan Pierce was a nice girl, but he certainly was never going to date her. And eight kids, 30 years later. I think you see-

Dr. James Dobson: You rethought that?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: I've been eating crow ever since. But you know what, if there's crow to eat, I'm glad that was the one I had to eat.

Dr. James Dobson: And you have been walking with Him ever since?

Megan Scheibner: Oh yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Are your children walking... That's not a fair question to ask a mother, but your kids walking with the Lord?

Megan Scheibner: They are. They all have their own walk with the Lord. And some of them look different than ours. It's funny, some of them are probably more conservative than me. Some of them are not as conservative as me, but they have their own walk of the Lord. And in both our families, the majority of our siblings and parents came to know the Lord. For our parents, before they passed away.

Dr. James Dobson: If I had your eight kids here in this studio and I said, "Tell us your thoughts about what almost happened to your dad and the tragedy that was averted." What would they say?

Megan Scheibner: Well, they'd say they're thankful. They've seen how life changed. And so a lot of times people will say to us, "How do you get enough time with your children? And you're so busy and obviously you must not be parenting." So a couple years ago I asked the kids, I said, "I want you to write down three things that you're thankful for for your dad. And they each wrote about 10. And so on Father's Day, I had this enormous list of things they're thankful for about their dad and his passion has poured into them. And we see it with our oldest son who's passionate about making films that bring honor and glory to Christ. And with his sisters who just have these incredible outreaches that they've come up with on their own. They're like us, but they have their own way of reaching out to people. We have a daughter who just got back from spending a month in Kenya. They just understand that they have an obligation as our kids.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we're coming to the end of our time here today. What a pleasure it's been to have these two days to talk to you all. To our listeners, I say that we have had the privilege of introducing many people to our friends out there, the listeners to this broadcast and others that they would not otherwise have met perhaps. And it's a pleasure to do that. I have not known you all very long. We met a year ago, but have not really had a chance to sit down and talk. And I have a great love for you both because of your love for Christ and for you to take the time to come here and tell your story. I know it's been meaningful to many people and I can't believe how fast the time went. But any last thing, Steve, you want to say?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: No, we've just admired your ministry over the years and you've ministered to us through the radio and through your books and so forth, and it's an inspiration. I remember your speech last year and that was inspirational to me. And what I would want to say to you and your listeners is this, I think God's raising up another generation of people that are as passionate as Dr. Dobson is, and the fight will continue and will go on.

Dr. James Dobson: You're optimistic about the future?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: I am. I'm hopeful about the future. I really am, and I'm basing that on first-hand observation.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of the book and the content we've been talking about is, In My Seat, a Pilot Story from September 10 and 11. And it's not written by Dr. Scheibner, it is written by Megan, you. And it is available in the bookstores, Amazon.



Dr. Steve Scheibner: It's available through Amazon and there's e-book versions and it's available everywhere.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're speaking a lot.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: I am. Yes. And you don't mind being asked?

Dr. James Dobson: Nope. I love the opportunity to share the gospel. I share the, In My Seat film and then the rest of the story as Paul Harvey used to say afterwards. And it's a wonderful event and we usually always couple together a parenting or a marriage and parenting conference at the same time.

Give us your website so people can get in touch with you.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Right. Our website is at [CharacterHealth.com](http://CharacterHealth.com). It's health, like H-E-A-L-T-H [CharacterHealth.com](http://CharacterHealth.com). And folks can get resources for parenting, marriage, youth-character development. It's really a neat website to visit [CharacterHealth.com](http://CharacterHealth.com).

Dr. James Dobson: I hope you get inundated.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: I hope I do too.

Megan Scheibner: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Stay in touch with us, will you?

Dr. Steve Scheibner: I sure will.

Dr. James Dobson: And God be with both of you. He has His hands on you, quite obviously, and blessings to you.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Amen.

Megan Scheibner: Thank you.

Dr. Steve Scheibner: Thank you Dr. Dobson.

Roger Marsh: It's really amazing how God can move in our lives, isn't it? We pray that you have been challenged by the powerful testimony of Dr. Steve Scheibner and his wife Megan over the past couple of days here on Family Talk. And if you'd like to share this program with a friend or a family member, you can do so easily on the Family Talk app or visit today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/FamilyTalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/FamilyTalk). If you've been receiving value and information from Family Talk over the years or maybe even just this week, please prayerfully consider how you can support us financially here at the Dr. James Dobson Institute. There are so many different facets of our ministry, including this radio broadcast and the podcast here that you listen to each and every day. And it's thanks to generous listeners just like

you, that we can continue producing content that keeps biblical values in the Public Square.

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Announcer:

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