



An online Q&A chat with Beverly Goldsmith, a Christian Science practitioner and teacher, on spirituality.com, January 6, 2005

An event in the *Spirituality Live* Series

Event Introduction:

When tragedy strikes, feelings of shock and horror, grief and anger can overwhelm us. When this happens, is there a way to deal with it? How do we overcome shock and trauma? How do we exchange horror for hope? What steps can be taken to bring comfort and healing?

Spirituality.com host: *Hello everyone. We're blessed to have Beverly Goldsmith from Brisbane, Australia joining us today. Beverly, do you have some opening ideas to share?*

Beverly: When tragedy strikes, my heart goes out to survivors and to those helping to restore order. I've been asking myself: **1.** How do we overcome the horror of tragedy? **2.** How do we help survivors, aid agencies, recovery workers and those watching from afar? **3.** What can bring the world hope, comfort and healing?

Beverly Q.1. How do we overcome the horror of tragedy?

For me the answer begins with prayer. It's deeply distressing to see TV pictures of a mother sitting on beach, staring at the waves, waiting for her child to come back; of children who have not spoken a word since the tragedy; of men and women with totally blank looks in their eyes. To see the aftermath, let alone experience firsthand the shock and horror, can leave one feeling shattered and numb. But it's so important not to become mentally and emotionally immobilized by trauma. That's something I've learned in my own life.

I'll never forget the first time I stood alongside rows and rows of body bags lined up at the Da Nang airport during the Vietnam War. I'll never forget when a fellow entertainer was shot dead as she performed on stage. I was shocked. There was no one to give me trauma counseling. No one to help me cope with what I'd witnessed.

But I did have one resource right at hand—the comfort of divine Love. I knew that there was a powerful Presence, the Higher Power with me, supporting me. In over-coming trauma, I felt I needed courage and strength. So I prayed. I affirmed that courage and strength were within me. I didn't have to go out and get them. Divine Love had given me courage and strength. Also resiliency and buoyancy. It was hard, but I kept praying. I also prayed for my colleagues. Prayer helped us to go on and carry out our commitments. Prayer helped me to cope with trauma and to be healed of shock.

Prayer is helping me right now. I've been affirming that divine Love is with me. I won't be overcome by shock and horror. God made me calm and confident and He keeps me calm and confident. God has given me courage and strength. I'm God's child and He is helping me. I'm also reminding myself not to ruminate, reiterate or speculate on what I'm seeing. This has helped me in overcoming shock and trauma. Let me explain.

- I will not ruminate—that is, chew over all the bad things that I have seen on TV. I will affirm instead that divine Love is present to help and give hope to the survivors and everyone.
- I will not reiterate—not constantly repeat things like *isn't this so tragic?* I will affirm instead that divine Love is comforting and sustaining everyone.
- I will not speculate—that is, wonder why this happened, or blame divine Love, or think it's some kind of punishment. I will affirm instead that divine Love *loves* everyone and does not hurt or harm anyone.

Such prayer keeps us focused on the positive things that can be done to help survivors, rather than focusing on the tragedy.

Event Transcript of Q&A:

Beverly's comments came during a live spirituality.com Online Event on January 6, 2005.

She was responding to questions from the audience. Following is a transcript of the discussion.

1. Sa78: *What do you think is the most important aspect to be praying about?*

Beverly: There's so much right now. Prayer will help everything. We can pray about loving everyone and knowing that their needs will be met. Divine Love is with everyone, wherever they are. Our prayers can encompass everyone. We want people to feel divine Love's care wrapping around them like a blanket. We want them to feel safe and cared for. We can also pray about shock and horror. It's so important to be able to cope with trauma and move forward to healing.

2. Smm: *Can a strong understanding of God's love reach around the world and have positive powerful impact?*

Beverly: God's Love **does** reach around the world and yes it **does** have a powerful comforting and healing effect. We need to keep praying. It's what's needed right now.

3. Gaze: *How can prayer given by others thousands of miles away help the situation in Asia?*

Beverly: As a Christian Science healer I pray for people all over the world. I've seen how prayer comforts and brings healing. Distance is no obstacle. Prayer is a mental activity. A person doesn't have to be present with me to experience the love of God in healing. Divine Love is present with them.

Beverly Q. 2. *How do we help survivors, aid agencies, recovery workers, and those watching from afar?*

Sadly we all can't go and sweep up the debris, hold a child in our arms or wipe tears away, but you and I **can** give to the relief effort and we **can** pray. Many people around the world have posted thoughts and prayers on the prayer-thread on this site. I've been humbled and inspired by the beautiful prayers. They're like prayer-candles, holding up the warmth and light of God's love to help, comfort and heal. Does prayer help? Yes. When you drop a pebble into a pond, it doesn't sink out of sight and have no effect. Even a tiny pebble sends out ripples. Each prayer sends out ripples of good.

In my work as a Christian Science healer, I often pray for people on the other side of the globe. Each person feels the benefit of that prayer and is helped and healed. That to me is the ripple effect of prayer.

I'm praying for survivors: God's children can overcome grief and shock. God has made each person strong, like Himself. He's given them courage. His love is comforting them. They can feel safe in God's care. Divine Love is helping them move forward.

I'm praying for aid workers: God's children can't be affected by trauma. God has given them strength and courage. They can't harm themselves in helping others. Doing good blesses. God supports and sustains them.

I'm praying for everyone: Divine Love reveals what needs to be done. God's loving presence is comforting, supporting and guiding survivors, aid workers and those of us at home earnestly yearning for harmony and peace to be restored to this region.

Here are 7 things you and I can do to help survivors, aid agencies, recovery workers and those watching from afar.

1. Give to the aid effort.
2. Pray specifically for the survivors' daily needs to be met.
3. Affirm that divine Love is guiding, governing and directing the aid effort.
4. Pray for the safety of orphaned children.
5. Affirm that divine Love is comforting everyone.
6. Don't ruminate, reiterate or speculate over the disaster.
7. Keep praying—until order is restored.

4. Kara: *When I hear about the death toll, I quickly block it off. I think spiritual thoughts, but it's difficult. What do you do?*

Beverly: I've found my list of seven things very helpful in responding in a positive way to what I'm seeing. It's hard not to be swamped by the pictures of disaster. But we can't stay in that place of shock and horror. We have to lift our thinking up and affirm that divine Love is right there.

Currently one of the most vulnerable groups is the surviving children. I've been praying for them: Divine Love is caring for every child. Divine Love's children are safe in Love's care. The divine Father-Mother is near, to comfort and protect.

There are also concerns for children watching the graphic TV footage. I've been praying for the parents and their children: God is Father-Mother, and the divine Presence is felt. No one has to feel helpless. His children have comfort and hope.

5. Box: *How do you respond when people say this is an "act of God"?*

Beverly: When the head of a large Christian church in Australia was asked why this happened, he said this wasn't the time to ask. Survivors had to get back on their feet mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. He believed the need was to comfort the grieving and to help the survivors with our generosity, love and prayers. He's right. This is a big issue. It's challenged some people's faith in a divine Love.

I'm holding to my faith in a divine Love. God would never hurt or harm us. Divine Love is our Father-Mother. This divine Parent would never hurt or punish us in any way. Certainly this disaster is not a form of punishment. For me it has nothing to do with being, or not being, a Muslim, Hindu or Christian.

Beverly Q.3. *What can bring the world hope, comfort and healing?*

For me the answer to this question is, prayer. I believe with all my heart that prayer empowers and leads to action. I've been encouraged to keep praying and looking for ways to bring comfort and healing by the example of Mary Baker Eddy - a woman I admire so much.

When Mary Baker Eddy wondered how she could help those who were sick and despairing, she prayed. Practical ideas of ways to do this came to her. She took action. She started praying and healing others. She developed a system of spiritual healing that she named Christian Science. She made her system of universal ideas available to people around the world in her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. Mary Baker Eddy did everything within her power to bring healing to others. Not only did she pray, she gave generously to good causes and to relief efforts, such as for earthquake victims in Sicily and in San Francisco.

Mary Baker Eddy's ideas are today bringing me hope, comfort and healing. Her life has inspired me to help others. Though there was tragedy in her life, she never gave up, never stopped caring, never stopped helping others. This encourages me to help bring hope, comfort and healing.

Here are 5 things that you and I can do right now.

1. Maintain our faith in divine Love.
2. Stay strong.
3. Affirm that God is caring for everyone.
4. Remember divine Love doesn't cause disaster; it's not punishment for anything, any one, or any group.
5. Unite to help each other.

6. Mry: *How can we pray for those who have perished?*

Beverly: I've been affirming that their identity has not been lost or swept away by this disaster. I believe that life goes on. For me these dear, dear people and children are safe in divine Love's care still, and they always will be.

7. Westc: *Beverly, where have you been turning for inspiration?*

Beverly: I've been gaining inspiration several ways. My two greatest sources are the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy's book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. These books are full of comforting ideas to help me pray right now. Then there is the direct method - going to divine Love in prayer and listening for messages of comfort, hope and healing.

It's also been an inspiration to see the children in Sri Lanka smiling in the midst of tragedy. The ability of a child to be resilient in the face of adversity is just so special to see. I'm learning from their example.

Spirituality.com host: *Beverly, we're almost out of time, but leave us with a closing idea.*

Beverly: My closing thought is this: Keep praying. We can help bring comfort and healing. We can bring hope and peace. Thank you all for your prayers. I'm truly inspired by your being here today with me and contributing to this prayerful response. Join me next week, when I'll focus on how to find comfort when facing loss and grief.