

## Prayer instead of violence

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Violent behavior, school fights, night club brawls, and road rage. Such anti-social conduct often makes the TV news in my area. Consequently, one is left thinking that society has turned nasty. What's happened to niceness, decency, patience, respect, and self-control? What can be done about violence?



First, I find it useful to resist feelings of dismay, and keep in mind that the perpetrators grabbing the day's headlines are only a small minority acting improperly. Thousands of decent people, keeping the peace and acting in a law-abiding manner, never make the evening news. Even so, it doesn't mean that violence should be ignored. All violence is unacceptable and needs to be addressed.

*One way of doing this is to be spiritually proactive--  
to stop and pray  
whenever acts of aggression are reported.*

This prayer can start by affirming the truth about God's men and women. In their purest nature, each individual is God's respectful, gracious, peace-loving likeness. So it's divinely natural for everyone to show restraint even when provoked. It's actually normal for high schoolers to refrain from initiating hostility or retaliating with angry outbursts. It's usual for drivers to remain peace-abiding behind the wheel. It's typical for people at nightclubs to exercise control over their thoughts and actions, and refuse to be swept along with a misbehaving crowd.

To act indecently toward another, to bully and brawl, is definitely not natural behavior. It's the result of being influenced wrongly. Violence is a state of mind, not just a hostile act. For violence to take root, it first has to be allowed into thought. To prevent hostile actions then, aggressive thoughts must be halted at the door of our thinking.

Mary Baker Eddy's book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* explains: **"Evil thoughts, lusts, and malicious purposes cannot go forth, like wandering pollen, from one human mind to another, finding unsuspected lodgment, if virtue and truth build a strong defence"** (pp. 234-235).



This tells me that brutish behavior in the community is preventable. It's possible for each of us to stand guard fearlessly against evil influences. How? By affirming that we already have a strong, spiritually mental, defence. God gave it to His men and women. As divine Principle, God made us responsive and obedient to His law.

In practice, this means you and I and everyone really are able to say no to violence. Being created in God's good image, each of us is good and able to do good. Each individual has moral strength. Thus in truth, God's people have within them a divine power that enables them to oppose evil impulses and stand up for what is right. The Bible has examples of this.

For example, it is what Daniel did on one memorable occasion. In his mature years he was asked to reject his sense of right - his religious beliefs, in favor of what others wanted him to do. Believing their course of action to be wrong, he refused to accede to their demands. As punishment he was put into a lions' den with the expectation that they would kill him.



That night he prayed to God. The next morning he was taken out safe and sound. Asked how he had remained unharmed he replied, **“My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me”** (Dan. 6:22).

The Bible shows Daniel to have remained morally strong, incorruptible, throughout this experience. He didn't capitulate in the face of another's evil decree nor the subsequent danger. He stood up for goodness and personal integrity.

As a result of his strong stand for right, his actions have been immortalized in the words and music of a rousing hymn by Philip P. Bliss:

**“Dare to be a Daniel,  
Dare to stand alone!  
Dare to have a purpose firm!  
Dare to make it known.”**

This much-loved and long-remembered song encouraged me as a young woman to reject unacceptable and inappropriate behavior on several occasions. One time it inspired me to confidently stand alone when others wanted me to put aside established moral values of decency and join with them in taunting young men of another race. As a consequence I was able to step back, say no, and allow intelligence, grace, and consideration for others, to come forward.

***Such action is possible today.  
Let's pray for a violence-free society.***

Let's consent to peaceful co-existence and wholeheartedly believe it can happen. Right now each son and daughter of God is armed with God's truth of integrity and respectability. Everyone can say no to violent behavior. As each person exercises control over their thoughts and actions, we will progressively live together in harmony.



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[Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures](#) by Mary Baker Eddy, is her textbook on Christian Science healing practice and her class textbook in teaching Christian Science healing.

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