

## My proactive prayer about terrorism

By Beverly Goldsmith, [Christian Science practitioner and teacher](#) in Brisbane, Australia.

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Bali is a beautiful Indonesian island, just one hour's flying time from the Australian mainland. Described as "paradise" by tourists, it has long been a favourite vacation destination for young Australians.

On October 12 two powerful bombs exploded near nightclubs in Kuta, at the southern tip of Bali. About 200 people were killed, and many others were badly injured. The majority of the victims were Australians, but people of many other nationalities were among the casualties. Australian Army medical staff, federal police, and forensic experts rushed to Bali to evacuate the critically injured and to assist Indonesia with the investigation. This disaster has been called Australia's 9/11.

Since then, church services have been held all across Australia, and a national day of mourning observed. Amidst the shock and grief, questions are being asked. Was this attack retribution for Australia's support of the United States over Iraq? Is it possible to predict when and where terrorists will strike? What can Australians do to ensure our safety at home and abroad?

The Bible tells me to be vigilant about personal safety: "If the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through" (Luke 12:39). Extremists are devoting hours of thought and energy to harming others. I believe we shouldn't be naïve about evil intentions. We need to counter the threat of terrorism with all the force of love, and with the intelligence that's beyond human craftiness.

How do we do this? One way is by being "spiritually proactive." For me this means being conscious of divine Love's protecting power 24 hours a day, seven days a week, wherever I go, whatever I do. Such proactive prayer works.



In 1969 my brother and I spent four months in Vietnam during the war, singing for American and Australian troops. We lived with the threat of danger every day, and many times we were shot at and were in areas that were being bombed or shelled. Every day, almost every moment, I prayed for our well-being. I constantly thought about God as divine Love keeping us safe and well. I made a point of being aware of God's presence as we travelled around Vietnam by jeep, truck, transport plane, and helicopter gunship.

This "staying close" to God was not something I did out of fear. It was not a *reaction* to danger. I prayed *because* I firmly believed that God was with us and keeping us safe. This moment-by-moment proactive prayer took some doing at first. But I have no doubt that it was what kept us and the other members of the show safe.

On one occasion, three of us had planned to eat at a nearby restaurant in Saigon. We were about to go there, when we suddenly began to feel uneasy. We talked for a few moments about what we should do. There was a loud explosion, and we heard sirens and smelled smoke. That very restaurant had been destroyed. I firmly believe the feeling not to go had been a divine intuition, an "angel" message. Paying attention to it saved our lives. That incident made me reach even wider in my prayer - for *everyone's* safety.

Such occurrences are not just isolated incidents. Following the Bali bombings, many people told stories of deliverance. One woman inexplicably decided not to go to the tourist club that night. A young man arriving there refused to go in. Another on the dance floor suddenly told friends they all had to leave. By heeding the intuitions that came to them, these people saved not only themselves but also family members and friends.

We, too, can be vigilant. We can be safe wherever we are. No matter where we live or travel in the world, we can stay close to thoughts that God's protecting power and care are with us all the time. I'm fully convinced that, ultimately, proactive prayers will change the hearts of those who intend to do evil, while protecting and saving us from harm.

Beverly Goldsmith is a Christian Science [practitioner](#) and [teacher](#) in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Visit her [web site](#) for more inspirational, healing [articles](#), [Takeaway Tips](#), and [E-Cards](#).