

## Security when a safe place is hard to find

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Beverly & Robert Smartt, The Temple Two as Sugar & Spice

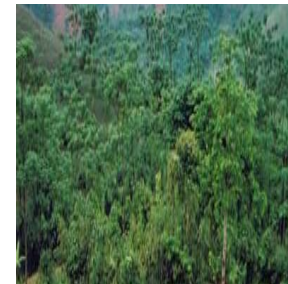
In 1969 my brother and I were singing for troops in Vietnam during the war. One day we were flying in a helicopter from our home base in Da Nang. The pilot decided to leave the coastline and turn inland.

Without warning, weather conditions rapidly deteriorated - the temperature dropped dramatically and we were engulfed by thick clouds. The helicopter's rotor blades began to ice over. Radio transmission wasn't possible. We didn't know where we were. Suddenly things looked very perilous.

We needed to descend to warmer air and attempt to get a reading on our exact location. But this would be extremely dangerous, as we were flying above dense jungle where hostile forces were known to be

located. I turned totally to God and prayed, knowing that God was divine Love, always with us, always keeping us safe. We were not going to die - we were in His care. There had to be an answer for us, a way to save our lives.

After some time, the pilot said, "I'm sorry we can't stay up here any longer. We need to drop down now." I kept praying. I knew that we would be in the right place at the right time. As we broke through the low, dense cloud, an amazing sight greeted us. With unexplainable accuracy, we were located *exactly* over a firebase, a small cleared area of jungle that was secured by US forces. We were able to hover, de-ice the blades, and receive directions. Then we went on to arrive safely at our destination.



Jungle South Vietnam

There have been many other times when my safety has been preserved because I have turned to God. I've consistently found myself in the right place at the right time. This hasn't been just good luck. It's the result of being aware that God's guiding and protecting power is with me all of the time. It's a kind of safety everyone can have.

A police officer once said to me that criminals take risks and do what you and I wouldn't. They do the unexpected. If people were vigilant and took preventive action, he told me, we would reduce crime. I took his words as a call to action. They ask us to be active, not passive. For me this means being alert spiritually and mentally.

I'm not apathetic or naive about personal safety. But in taking steps to do what is normal to help keep free of harm, and help keep a caring eye on my neighbourhood, I also pray for my well-being and that of my neighbours. Being spiritually active is what I have found breaks the feeling of helplessness. It empowers me. It gives me a feeling of control, and the controlling power it confers is always God's.

Because of Australia's geographic location, I'd always felt my country was safe and somehow removed from the rest of the world. Trouble in Africa, Asia, Europe, or America seemed a long way away from me. I felt sympathetic and sad for what was happening to others. But it didn't always motivate me to pray for the world.

Three things changed that. First, the revolution in communication technology - it brings news to us instantly and graphically. Second, globalization - its influences link countries together in a much broader way. And the third change agent is terrorism, striking at anyone, anywhere.

Sometimes violence is motivated by people's frustration over perceived injustice and oppression. Prayer can address terrorism's root causes and promote action that will lead to greater equality and peace for everyone.

In praying to help stop violent or copycat acts, I have been considering this statement: "Evil thoughts, lusts, and malicious purposes cannot go forth, like wandering pollen, finding unsuspected lodgement, if virtue and truth build a strong defence" (*Science and Health*, pp. 234-235).

Since evil is a thought before it becomes an action, I pray that people will not respond to violent thoughts and will refuse to act on them - that they will use their God-given moral strength to say no to doing violence. God has given everyone the ability to defend spiritually his or her mentality - to choose between right and wrong, and to refuse to be influenced by evil.

When you see and hear people's tragic stories, and then experience the fear of violence closer to home - such as the bombs in Bali did for us in Australia - you feel impelled to care and pray for peace, justice, healing. You start to think, "That could have been me, or a loved one." Life is precious, and whatever injures or destroys it is abhorrent. It's natural to ask, "What can I do to stop the violence?"

Experience tells me that prayer makes a difference. Think of the world as a giant tank with all our thoughts inside. Some thoughts are good, and some are not so good. To neutralize the bad, you add more loving, peaceful, and just thoughts. The more of these there are, the more they outweigh evil and violent elements.

To help this happen on a global scale, people all around the world can change the input - put into the mental environment as many compassionate, caring, wise, and just thoughts as they can muster. This demands a lot from each of us. But I plan to keep it up until I see more peace and justice for everyone, everywhere.

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