

What I learned about praying for hostages

By [Beverly Goldsmith](#), Christian Science [practitioner](#) and [teacher](#) in Brisbane, Australia.
Published on spirituality.com 12/20/04

The news of Margaret Hassan's kidnapping in Iraq, in October, 2004, distressed me greatly. I knew other hostages had previously been taken and some had subsequently been murdered, but I only felt sadness for these victims. Margaret was different. She had an Australian connection—and I'm Australian. As the director of CARE Australia in Iraq, Margaret had worked to help the disadvantaged and poor there for many years. I felt moved to try to help her.

That night I prayed. The next day, I decided to write down my prayers. Soon I was sharing these prayers on a discussion thread about Margaret's plight on spirituality.com. To my surprise, many other people also began to offer their thoughts and prayers for her.

As the weeks passed, the prayer-thread grew to become a family of 75, praying from the US, Australia, New Zealand, the UK, India and Germany. People also personally emailed me to offer encouragement and support. While it's now presumed that Margaret Hassan has been killed, there is still no conclusive evidence of her death. And many continue to pray.

I must be ready to pray right away.

This experience has taught me some important lessons about prayer. Top of my list is this: From now on, I won't wait for a situation to grow worse before I start praying. I must be ready to pray right away, whenever I hear news of evil acts, inhumanity or conflict.

Evil, left to itself, grows. But when it's challenged through systematic, powerful prayer, good results can and do follow.

I've seen the effects of such prayer in my suburban street. Like the time I prayed when a drug dealer moved in next door to me, and when a group of drunken youths started regularly disturbing the neighborhood. On both occasions, prayer led to actions that restored peace.

The next lesson I learned about praying for hostages was the value of joining with others in support of a common cause. Before I started the prayer thread, I felt isolated and alone in my prayers. But when I discovered there were many other caring people who also believed in the power of prayer and were willing to unite with me in my prayers, it changed me profoundly.

My prayers were strengthened.

My prayers were strengthened. I was inspired and heartened by the frequent postings and messages of support coming in. Many people who emailed me said they felt this too. By joining together as an online prayer community, we gained a sense of belonging to a global family, and that empowered our praying.

At a time when humanity and goodness often seems buried under hatred and barbarism, I've been encouraged by spiritually minded people rallying together. Prayer is a powerful force for good—I've learned that in my life. That's why I believe that those heartfelt prayers for hostages were beneficial.

Each prayer sends ripples of good into world thought.

In November, a female Polish hostage was freed and flown home, and three UN workers held in Afghanistan were released unharmed. So, what was prayer's role in these "good news" stories? I like to remember that when you drop a pebble into a pond, it doesn't just sink to the bottom with no effect. It sends out ripples. In the same way, I believe that each prayer sends ripples of good into world thought, to help uplift it and bring freedom and peace.

Mary Baker Eddy wrote in her book *Science and Health*: "The inaudible voice of Truth is, to the human mind, 'as when a lion roareth.' It is heard in the desert and in dark places of fear." This reminds me that the ripples of my prayers can reach those in trouble—wherever they are.

I'll no doubt learn more about the power of prayer in the weeks ahead. But the experience of praying for hostages like Margaret Hassan has moved me forward in praying for the world. I plan to continue. With divine Love's guidance, my prayers will help bring hope, peace and healing.



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

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.

Visit her [web site](#) for inspirational [healing articles](#), [Takeaway Tips](#), [Spiritual Q&A](#) and [E-Cards](#).

The effectiveness of prayer:

Science and Health: p.559:8-12, 224:29-31 (to 2nd .), 577:9