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Your Best Defense By Elise L. Moore

My Mom had a gun hidden in the bedroom. She thought it was a secret, but my brother and I knew it was there. It looked like a toy gun with a white handle and long barrel. Or rather, toy guns look very realistic. But this one was heavier than a plastic toy. My uncle had given Mom the gun for protection. We lived in a walk-up apartment, and he was worried about her living alone with two small children, so he gave her the gun to make her feel safe. I never felt safe knowing the gun was in the apartment. Apparently neither did Mom. After a while, she gave it back.

I was only nine when she had the gun, but even then, I knew my safety, our family's safety, rested in the power of God, not with the bullet of a gun. This might sound like childlike faith. It was. But it wasn't childish. My conviction in the power of God was rooted in solid spiritual truth. My parents had read the Weekly Bible Lessons to me (composed of passages from the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy) for as long as I could remember.¹ Since I was eight I had been reading the Bible Lesson daily by myself. I'd also been praying to know more of the nature of God and His Christ. Although I might not have comprehended all the vocabulary I read, Christ spoke to me through the spiritual sense of the Word. Every Bible story was alive with God's presence, vibrant with His power. For me, turning to God for protection and guidance was more than faith. It was reasoned conviction.

The assurance I felt from my daily spiritual study could be paraphrased in these words from Psalms: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (4:8). Many believe that King David wrote this concerning the time when he fled Jerusalem to avoid being killed by his own son Absalom, who was leading a revolt against him. Though obviously well aware of danger, David's conviction in the goodness and power of God was absolute. He knew that God, good, had power over evil, and he voiced this confidence in his prayer.

One aspect of God's salvation or safety is practical wisdom. In King David's case, this sometimes meant fleeing his attackers. He was not afraid to run when impelled to do so by his heavenly Father. At other times through communion with God, David knew when to avoid a certain place. He humbly listened for God's direction and was kept safe from sudden attack. (See, for example, I Sam. 23:6-14; II Sam. 15:13-16; 17:15-22.)

I, too, was aware of potentially dangerous situations from time to time. In each case, turning to the one divine Mind resulted in guidance and safety. Not too long after Mom had given back the gun, I was attacked by the newspaper boy. In the darkness of the corridor, he began viciously strangling me for no reason and with no warning. As in most crises, there wasn't much time to think. But in those seconds, I immediately turned to God and prayed. I knew that God was there, that He was with me and would protect me. I also knew that God was with this boy,

¹ The Bible Lessons are outlined in the *Christian Science Quarterly*

governing him and speaking to his human consciousness. God was good, and good was powerful, so God's child was good and only wanted to do good. He let go. I had briefly lost consciousness, but revived. After threatening me, he left.

In the weeks that followed, I kept praying. The Bible Lessons continued to feed me with powerful spiritual truths, and I was unafraid. Although I was careful not to be alone with him again, there was no further threat or intimidation.

It often seems as though it is a person or people who attack randomly and without warning, yet it's not actually people we are battling. Rather, we are defending ourselves against blind and selfish thinking that would cause someone to justify doing evil. So our defense must be spiritual not physical. In Ephesians Paul identifies evil not as a person but as wrong thinking, calling it “the wiles of the devil.” He elaborates, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (6:11, 12). Then Paul goes on to describe some of the moral and spiritual qualities that effectively defend one against malicious thinking – such as truth, righteousness, peace, and faith. These qualities cultivated, increase our receptivity to the power of good and our ability to avoid or defuse evil.

The child of God's creating is not unloved, unwanted, or unaware of good. God envelops His creation in the atmosphere of divine Love. He endows each one of His children with purpose, talent, and ability far beyond what any of us realizes or expects. The “wiles of the devil” include the thoughts of limitation, lack, or self-depreciation, which would confuse, depress, and incite to violence. Our prayers can help silence these evil impulses so that the voice of Christ, Truth, is heard, and each one feels the love God has for him or her. Depressing thoughts of evil melt in the atmosphere of Love.

Mrs. Eddy, who established the Weekly Bible Lessons, was deeply aware of the inherent goodness of each individual's true nature as God's spiritual creation. She wrote in *Science and Health*, “God is natural good, and is represented only by the idea of goodness; while evil should be regarded as unnatural, because it is opposed to the nature of Spirit, God” (p. 119). Speaking of God's spiritual armor, she continues later in the same book, “Clad in the panoply of Love, human hatred cannot reach you” (571).

Looking back on my childhood, I realize that we were demonstrating the power, of spiritual truth, rather than of physical weapons, to defend us. By studying the Bible Lesson daily, we, were arming ourselves with wisdom and inspiration. This tool is available to every family. Isn't this a good time to recognize God as your true defense and to encourage children to assimilate truths from the Bible in learning how to pray effectively?