

# GROWING Together

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## TERRORISM: A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

### What is terrorism? Why are we so afraid?

Two towers thunder to the ground amid clouds of debris and choking dust...  
a bus loaded with school children explodes on a Middle Eastern street...  
a high school cafeteria turns into a killing field...

We are afraid, because all around our globe, random acts of violence are committed. Media has heightened our awareness of individuals, groups and countries that create fear by taking revenge on the innocent. Hate crimes and genocide are reported daily.

Terror has colossal power because it puts people off balance. It produces great insecurity. Breeding fear is quick and easy. In contrast, it takes time and care to negotiate and work toward common goals.

Terror is an immediate and deadly form of control. In truth, all of us are capable of producing terror in those who are smaller or weaker than we are. Parents can terrorize children in their efforts to control them. Sexual violence and elder abuse are common local acts of terror.

### ...the individual fear

On the most basic level, the threat of international terrorism makes us afraid for our own lives. Should someone, somewhere, decide to bomb us or use chemical weapons against us, there is little that one person can do in the face of a force so powerful. We feel helpless to stop an enemy who has a mission to kill.



### ...the community at risk

Individuals think differently at a community level. Sometimes a group translates its fear into an “us” and “them” mentality, labeling the “outsider” as “enemy.” When this happens, distance is created between “us” and “them.” Fear can now be expressed as violence. Terror is returned for terror. The cycle of violence is set into motion.

### ...a Christian perspective

“Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matt. 5:44). Here is an alternative to hostility that many Christians strive to take seriously.

Loving those who make us fearful means seeing them “up close and personal”, imagining their lives, their loves, their relationships and their needs. Jesus responded to violence by daring to risk calling the enemy, friend.

Jesus did not, however, spare himself from becoming the target of violence and terror. He took on the murderous rage of a few aggressors and bore the brunt of their hostility. How much we decide to take upon ourselves is a matter of personal choice. Jesus puts the challenge before us to consider.

Will we be the ones who stand in front of bulldozers on the West Bank as Palestinian houses are leveled to the ground? Will we intervene when we see a child being mistreated? Will we support local safe houses, shelters for victims of violence? Christians can always make a difference.

### If we cannot stop bombs from falling, what are our choices?

**We can face the truth about our vulnerability.** Governments and world leaders may choose to do harm - to us - or to others on our behalf. We can't do much to change the decisions made in the boardrooms of multinational corporations or the command centres of military strategists, but we can lean on God for courage to face what may come our way.

**We can decide not to be afraid,** remembering that we live in God's care. We can choose not to imagine everyone with “foreign” physical features as a potential terrorist. We can choose not to spend lavish amounts of money fortifying our homes beyond what is plain good sense.

**We can choose how we will live our lives** at home, in the workplace and throughout our communities. 2000 years ago, Jesus gave us an example of love. The families of the world need this from us NOW!



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