

# SHINING THROUGH

## Random Acts of Violence

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**Scripture:** Acts 12:1–10, 12–19, 21–24; 1 Peter 1:3–4, 6–9; 5:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14; Hebrews 4:16

### Introduction

*[One of the objectionable, irrational, and easy to criticize things about our faith is that . . .]*

We turn to God when **bad** things happen, believing he could have **kept them from happening** in the first place.

*[At the same time, we've pretty much had no choice but to do this. Where else are you going to turn?]*

*[Or maybe you find yourself asking God to comfort someone else in the aftermath of a loss, one that God could have prevented but didn't. Are we crazy? Naïve? Some would argue yes. For you, this may be the reason you finally gave up on faith altogether. That's understandable.]*

*[In August, I participated via video in a memorial service for two teenage brothers who passed away on the same day in circumstances so horrific that if I were to tell you their story (which is not my story to tell), you may not be able to pay attention to anything else I say. Weeks after the incident in March, their parents reached out to me via email and told me the story. Honestly, I didn't even want to respond. I've since told them that. When I called, I found myself in a conversation with a mom fighting to maintain her sanity and faith. The entire family was struggling, including her husband and two daughters. I wasn't sure their faith would survive. I tried not to say anything patronizing. They already knew all the Bible verses.]*

*[In a later conversation, she said that the most helpful thing I said was that if their faith in God did not survive this it was understandable and that it may take years to recover their faith, assuming they recovered it at all. That's what I said, and I meant it.]*

*[In June, she texted to say they were planning a memorial service at one of our partner churches in August and asked if I would send a video. I was stunned that their faith had begun to recover. They had started rediscovering their faith, a better and deeper faith, a faith not propped up by everything is up and to the right. It's not propped up by thinking God will see to it that we get back to normal eventually. They will never get back to normal eventually. The faith they recovered was faith in God, not the promises or the blessings of God—just God. All the other stuff and all the other fluff had been torn away in a day.]*