



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE Sentinel

"What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." — JESUS

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A COLLECTION FOR TEENS

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
SENTINEL**

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'I asked God what to do'

By HANNAH WARRICK

One night at camp I was asked to “babysit” a cabin of young campers while their counselor was in a meeting. About ten minutes after I thought everyone was asleep, I looked up from my book to see one girl standing beside my bed crying. She wanted her counselor. I asked if I could help her, but she was very persistent about wanting to talk to her counselor.

At first I didn’t know what to do, but I didn’t want to send her back to bed crying. Then I had the idea to have her share what she was grateful for, and the highlights of her day. She told me all about horseback riding, and I asked why she loved it so much. Immediately the tears were back. “Oh no,” I thought. “I’m not helping her at all.”

“I love horseback riding because it reminds me of my mom.” That was the problem: She missed her mom. I felt overwhelmed with doubt about whether I could help her because homesickness wasn’t something I’d struggled with.

By now she was crying even harder and saying how much she missed her mom. I asked God what to do, and the thought came to ask her what qualities she loved about her mom. “Kindness and love,” she said. I shared the idea that those qualities come from God, and since God is everywhere, love and kindness must be with her at camp, too. I pointed out that she could see those qualities in her counselor, her cabinmates, and all the other amazing girls at camp.

She was still crying, but now I felt

ready to hear God clearly. So instead of worrying about how to help, I kept listening in prayer. The idea came to tell her about what my dad used to say when he tucked me in each night. “I love you,” he’d tell me. Then he’d add, “But do you know who loves you more?” And I always responded, “God!”

When I was little, I didn’t think much about that, but in that moment I realized how powerful it was. I told her that the love she feels from her mom comes from God, because God is divine Love and we all reflect Love. I said I thought it would be very comforting when she realized how much God loves her, and how big God’s love for her actually is.

Then I tucked her in and sang hymns to her. She still seemed pretty upset, so I asked God again to help me comfort her. Immediately the thought came to tell her about a time when I felt God’s comfort and protection. I’d been on a hike and almost had an accident. It seemed like no one around me cared. But when I prayed with Mary Baker Eddy’s poem “Feed My Sheep” (see *Poems*, p. 14), I realized that God was loving me and protecting my every footstep, and I felt calm and cared for.

Eventually she fell asleep and woke up the next morning more joyful than I’d ever seen her. Later, she gave a testimony about her healing of homesickness and even stayed at camp for an extra week.

I’m so grateful for all I learned about how we can ask God for help and always hear an answer. ●



Reprinted from the July 3, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Q & A

Feeling lonely? You're not alone. Though we're more connected than ever (thanks, social media), many of us still feel isolated. Is there a spiritual solution to loneliness? TeenConnect's editor, Jenny Sawyer, asked Christian Science practitioner and teacher Curt Wahlberg.

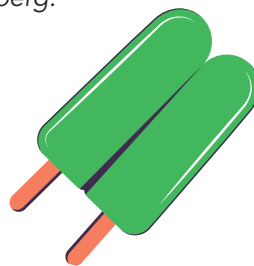
So why isn't the answer to loneliness to just find some people to be around?

The world certainly provides lots of people to be around and opportunities to connect. But for me, actually solving this problem of loneliness comes down to a deeper issue: satisfaction. What makes us feel complete? And to answer that question, we need to look at identity—what we are beyond our personality, and our likes and dislikes. I've found that to deal effectively with loneliness, I need to get a spiritual sense of my identity.

OK, but what does identity have to do with loneliness?

For so many of us, there's a strong feeling that to be satisfied, we need something outside ourselves to make us feel complete and worthy. If we just find this kind of friend, or this kind of relationship, then we'll be OK. So to pray about loneliness, first we've got to resist the pull to look for answers "out there," which unfortunately is a temporary solution at best.

The real solution involves taking a cue from Christ Jesus, who said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). That's a promise that whatever we've hoped to find "out there" is something that's already inherent in our identity. It's ours to share, and sharing it helps us make meaningful connections. We find it as we go on a journey to see ourselves differently—spiritually.



Seeing ourselves spiritually—what does that mean?

For me it starts with knowing God as the infinite source of our being, and that we're the expression of that source. That means two things. First, it means that we lack nothing. Our source is infinite! So our happiness, wholeness, satisfaction, even our humor, are God's gifts to us, and we can never be without them. They are aspects of our identity that we can express without limit and without fail.

Second, it means that we have something to contribute as God's creation. Something that is uniquely ours to give. As we understand more of our infinite source, we can actually rely on that source to draw more and more good out of us and help us see the light we *bring* to the room, the life we *bring* to the party. So instead of constantly looking for the party that will relieve our loneliness, we're getting more awareness of the God-derived life we can bring to it—and the happiness that comes from sharing that.

Dig deeper!

Find the second half of this interview online at sentinel.christianscience.com/teenconnect/loneliness

Reprinted from the July 3, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

The worst/best summer ever

By JENNY SAWYER

I couldn't stand anything that summer. The new city where my family had moved. Being away from my friends. And my job as a camp counselor for 16 six-year-old boys.

But there was one good thing about that summer. All through high school, if I'd needed something, I'd made it happen. Now I couldn't. I couldn't create enough patience to deal with my campers, or

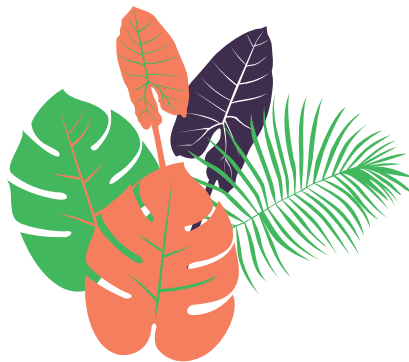
muster the joy to get through what felt like the worst summer ever. I had to get a new view of my life, with God as the "centre and circumference of being" (Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 204).

It wasn't easy. But as I reoriented my thoughts to make things less about me and more about God, I started to catch glimpses that God is the source of the patience I wanted to express toward my campers. He is divine Love, supplying all the love I needed to love them. When I shifted my perspective to a God-centric one, I actually found joy. Because even though my circumstances hadn't changed, I was feeling something wonderful: a closeness to, and reliance on, God.

In the summers that followed, I would have awesome jobs and internships. But when I look back on this particular summer, I'm grateful for it. The spiritual growth I experienced turned a terrible summer into one of the best I've had. ●



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A healing at soccer camp

By MATHEW OMONDI

One year at camp, I dislocated my knee. I'd been shooting the soccer ball into the goal when a fellow cabin-mate tried to block my shot. He missed the ball and cleated me right in the knee. Helplessly, I fell and watched the earth spin. When I tried to get up, I couldn't.

In a flash, all my counselors and fellow campers were surrounding me and showering me with love. They carried me to the cabin where there was a Christian Science practitioner, who helped me pray for healing. While I was there, I read this passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Always begin your treatment by allaying the fear of patients" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 411).

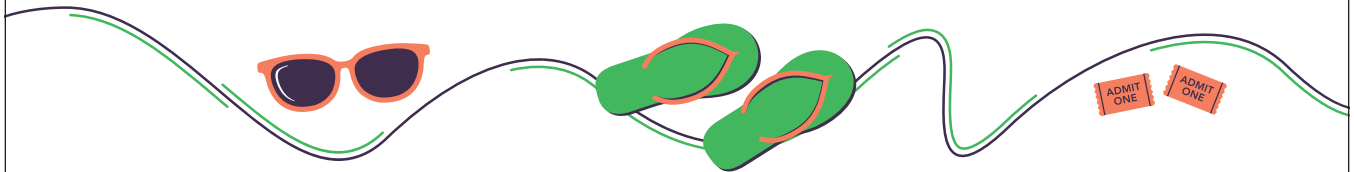
I realized that I was holding on to the fear of not being healed. So the first step I needed to take was to let go of fear. The

passage goes on to say: "Silently reassure them as to their exemption from disease and danger. Watch the result of this simple rule of Christian Science, and you will find that it alleviates the symptoms of every disease. If you succeed in wholly removing the fear, your patient is healed."

Instead of being afraid, I realized I could trust God's power, and His love for me, which eliminates fear. Where God's presence is, there's no room for fear.

Two days later, I was back with my camp group, freely participating in all the camp activities again. The shift in thought to trusting God removed the fear. When that happened, my knee was healed. From this experience I learned that when we successfully remove fear, spiritual healing takes place. ●

Reprinted from the July 3, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

After the breakup

By KIKI HOLMES

"What happens if you feel differently about me after camp?" I asked.

"That's impossible," he said. "That won't happen."

It was the end of my sophomore year in high school and everything was smooth sailing. I had the perfect boyfriend, good grades, and was doing well in sports. However, my boyfriend was about to go to camp for seven weeks, and I knew that we would be able to be in touch only through letters. I was a little worried things would change between us. I did feel somewhat better with his reassurance, and I tried to fill my summer with sports and activities to keep my mind off how much I missed him.

When we all got back to school, things seemed great ... until one night when something in our conversation was different. I asked him what was wrong, and he said he wasn't feeling the same way about me as he had before camp.

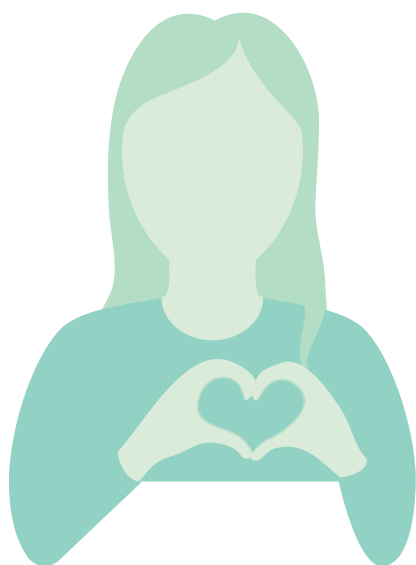
I was devastated. I was crying more than I'd ever cried before. I didn't understand why he was breaking up with me.

He asked for some space to think about the relationship, and I respected his wishes and let him be. I tried to pray every day, and my mom also picked out a helpful hymn from the *Christian Science Hymnal* each morning for me to look at. But I felt like nothing was helping. A couple of weeks later, we broke up for good.

For a while, it seemed like I was doing OK with things, thanks to the support of my friends. But then I started crying again every day because I didn't understand what had happened or how to move on. I just wanted it all to stop. All of the crying, all of the confusion. I decided it was a good time to go see the teacher of my Bible class at the school I attend for Christian Scientists. After class one day, I explained the whole story. When I finished, he asked, "Do you know Mary Baker Eddy's definition of *Gethsemane*?"

I looked at him with tears in my eyes and shook my head. He handed me a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, which he'd opened to page 586, and I read aloud: "GETHSEMANE. Patient woe; the human yielding to the divine; love meeting no response, but still remaining love." This definition brings a spiritual perspective to the garden of Gethsemane, where, on the night before the crucifixion, Jesus prayed—completely alone—after his disciples forsook him by falling asleep.

After I read the definition, my teacher said: "This is your Gethsemane. You may feel like you put your whole heart into this relationship and it is being torn down, but you can still continue to love." >



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Even though I knew my experience was nothing like what Jesus went through, my tears dried up as the spiritual meaning of Gethsemane sank in. I realized I didn't need to be in a relationship with my ex-boyfriend to love him. I could love him *spiritually* and see him that way—as the perfect child of God that he is. And I could see myself that way, too, and express that. I shouldn't be turning to hate and speaking poorly of him. This was an opportunity to love—no matter what.

Later that day, my teacher sent me a note with another thought from *Science and Health*: “Human affection is not poured forth vainly, even though it meet no return. Love enriches the nature, enlarging, purifying, and elevating it. The wintry blasts of earth may uproot the flowers of affection, and scatter them to the winds; but this severance of fleshly ties serves to unite thought more closely to God, for Love supports the struggling

heart until it ceases to sigh over the world and begins to unfold its wings for heaven” (p. 57).

The more I read that passage, the more I came to see that even when things appear to be breaking down, Love, meaning God, is always comforting me. I saw that I couldn't be hurt by the breakup, but my heart could actually be moved toward a feeling of “heaven,” or peace.

Over the next few weeks, I could feel that my thoughts were in a completely different place. I realized that the relationship did not have to end with me hating him; I reflected God's love and nothing could stop me from expressing it.

Recently, I took a trip to Israel with a group of classmates, including my ex-boyfriend. We visited the actual garden of Gethsemane one day, and that night, the two of us talked and cleared everything up. We are good friends now, and I'm so grateful for all this healing taught me about how to love. ●

Reprinted from the July 17, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Prayer on the sidelines

By LIAM PESCHKE

I've played soccer ever since I could kick a ball. So sitting on the sidelines was not exactly the start I'd expected for the fall soccer season of my sophomore year.

I was a new student at a boarding school, and I was excited to participate in all the opportunities, including playing on the junior varsity soccer team. I knew I needed to step up my game in order to have a good season. I put my all

into every practice, working hard and playing my best. It was also important to me to support my teammates in whatever ways I could.

One day during practice my foot and ankle suddenly began to hurt, and I couldn't run without a lot of pain. I was caught off guard since this seemed to come out of nowhere. I expected to get right back in the game, but that didn't

*I realized that the important thing was
what I was learning about God, rather
than the speediness of the healing.*

happen. A day turned into a week, and I still couldn't run. I found myself sitting on the sidelines, watching the team play and feeling so frustrated that I couldn't join them. I realized I needed to turn to God for help and practice Christian Science in a way I never had before.

I called my mom, who is a Christian Science practitioner, and asked her to pray with me. Since I had so much time during practices, I often texted her so we could share ideas. I remember dealing with two recurring questions: "Why is this happening to me?" and "When will it end?"

One of the ideas my mom shared with me was this quote from the Bible: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). This was an interesting idea, because I felt very impatient with this whole situation. I really wanted to be able to run free of any pain. And even though I knew God didn't create pain, and I trusted that healing was inevitable, it felt hard to turn my thought away from something that felt so real physically.

During this time, though, I gradually realized that the important thing was what I was learning about God, rather than focusing on the problem or the speediness of the healing. My mom challenged me to start my prayer with gratitude and with my perfection as a reflection of God, rather than with what I thought needed fixing. This was kind of a tough concept for me, but as I began to understand it, it really helped move my thought away from a focus on myself and

my body to more of a focus on God. Once I started praying this way, I felt more peaceful and less frustrated.

I also looked up definitions of the word *perfect*, and one I found is, "As good as can possibly be." This reminded me of lines from Hymn 51 in the *Christian Science Hymnal*:

God could not make imperfect man
His model infinite;
Unhallowed thought He could not plan,
Love's work and Love must fit.
(Mary Alice Dayton)

I loved the idea of God's model being infinite because it explains how the source of our perfection will never and can never change. This was definitely a key insight in my healing.

I can't recall exactly when my foot got better, but one day I was just back in the game and running hard again; there was no gradual process of getting better. The pain was gone, and I felt completely free. Being able to support my teammates on the field and making goals again had never felt so good.

Looking back, I'm so grateful that this experience gave me the opportunity to grow in my practice of Christian Science and learn more about how to "run with patience," even when things don't happen as quickly as we'd like. ●

Reprinted from the July 17, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Facing my parents' divorce

By KAILY JOHNSON

I'll never forget the first time I came home from camp. After my parents picked me up from the airport, we went to the park, where I found out my parents were getting a divorce. Feeling broadsided and shocked, I immediately blamed the divorce on my going to camp. After that, when my mom asked me each summer if I wanted to go back, I always said no because I was afraid that if I left, I would come home and be broadsided again.

Eventually, I did return to camp, and while I was there that first summer back, I couldn't believe I had avoided going back for so long, because my experience didn't include any sort of pain during or after, the way I had feared. The next year after that, I returned to camp without any fear or hesitation.

That year, I had a lot to learn. I was in a special program, and we had a blast. Everyone became a family. But even though I had overcome my fear of going back to camp, the experience still triggered that bad memory of returning home to upsetting news. I began crying out of nowhere and sobbed every time I thought about my father. Over the course of the two weeks, we participated in activities such as the ropes course, river rafting, and camping, and while I was having an amazing time, those bad memories were definitely holding me back.

One day we went mountain biking. It was my first time, and it was so exhilarating. The scenery was breathtakingly beautiful. The whole time, I was in awe of God's amazing creation and felt so grateful to be a part of it.

Toward the end of the ride, while I was biking down the steepest part of the mountain, I took a sharp turn on the winding trail and fell into a patch of cacti. Because I was wearing shorts, the side of one of my legs was covered in cactus needles. I managed to bike down the rest of the mountain and made it back to camp. I went to stay at the Christian Science nursing facility and called a Christian Science practitioner to pray for me. I wanted those cactus needles out of my leg, but nothing would make them budge.

After trying lots of different ways to get them out, I realized I needed to pray.

As I prayed, I began to see that those cactus needles were stuck just like those bad memories about my

dad seemed to be stuck in me. All of the random crying was coming up because I was ready to deal with the divorce and all the unresolved feelings.

What really helped me was the article "Taking Offense" included in Mary Baker Eddy's *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896* (pp. 223-224). One part that stood out to me was: "The mental arrow shot from another's bow is practically harmless, unless our own thought barbs it."

This passage helped me realize that I did not have to let my experience in the past affect the experiences that I was having in the present. That past experience was powerless.

Later that night, all the needles came out when one of the nurses had me soak my leg. I was grateful, but my leg was still in a lot of pain.

At 3:30 the next morning, our camp group woke up and set out to peak a nearby mountain. Hiking up the steep

Love never left me.

trails and climbing over rocks felt difficult with my leg, and I was on the verge of tears the whole way up. Once we got to the peak, I was in complete awe of the beautiful scenery, and to see God's work expressed all around me.

We had 45 minutes of alone time. Some people took naps; others ate. I, on the other hand, made a commitment to "un-barb the arrow."

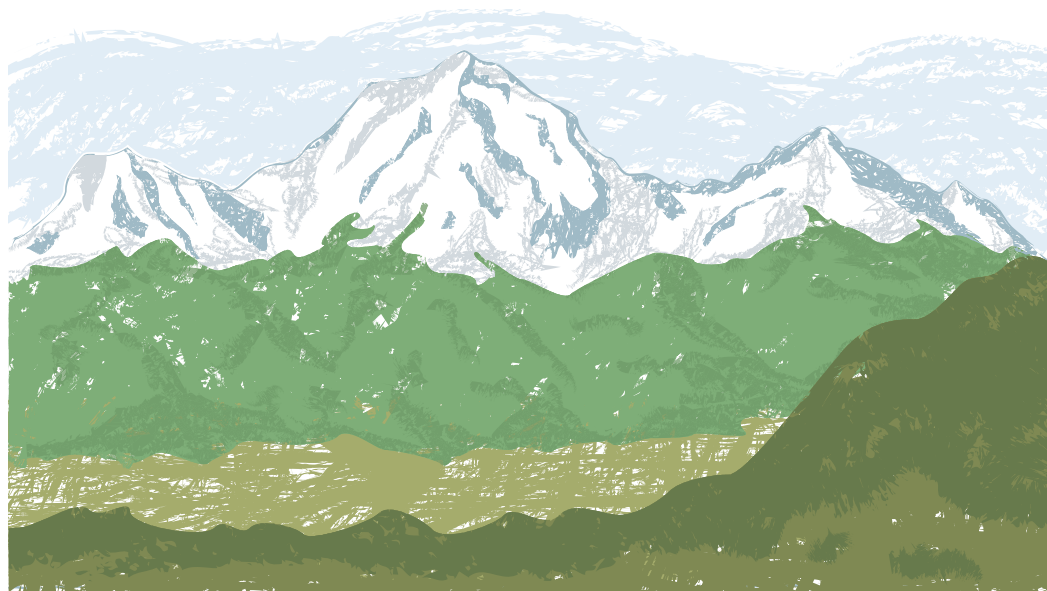
When we started down the mountain 45 minutes later, I consciously left the bad memories at the peak, and I felt all the hatred and sadness lift off my shoulders. The truth is that God's love has always been with me; I can't be separated from it. Love never left when my

dad left my family; it never left when I was at camp; and it never left when I was mountain biking. And since God, divine Love, is my true Father, no matter who comes and goes in my life, I will always be safe and provided for.

Coming down the mountain, I was skipping the whole way, singing Broadway show tunes. The pain was gone and my leg was completely healed. In knowing that God is truly in control, I didn't forget what had happened, but I was finally free from its effects. And I wasn't anxious about returning home.

This was such an impactful healing, and I'm so grateful for what I learned from it. ●

Reprinted from the August 7, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

'How is God even relevant to me right now?'

By LIZZIE WITNEY

Christian Science Sunday School, quick healings, even regular reading of the Christian Science Bible Lesson—these had been constants during my childhood and early teen years. But about halfway through high school, I couldn't shake a question that kept coming to me: How is God even relevant to me right now?

Even though I had so much evidence in my life that God was a very powerful presence, this question was persistent in tempting me to believe otherwise. I also struggled with thoughts that suggested that being a Christian Scientist meant being naive to the world, and that I was missing out on a lot of fun. The more I focused on these suggestions, the more God seemed to fade from my thoughts.

Social drinking became a regular part of my life, and initially I even convinced myself that a lifestyle based on partying and self-gratification was making me happy. The thing was, though, I never got any real satisfaction from it. In fact, I started to become depressed and introverted. I wouldn't speak to my friends at school, and all I could think were dark thoughts about myself and my relationships with others. I totally lost interest in Christian Science, and if I ever tried to pray, my prayers felt abstract, disconnected from God, and pointless, instead of feeling tangible and powerful as they had in the past.

A few years into this new lifestyle, even though I was apathetic-bordering-on-antagonistic toward Christian Science, I ended up attending a camp for Christian Scientists. One thing that stood out to me when I got to camp was

how happy everyone was. It actually creeped me out a little at first because I just couldn't comprehend how these people could be so genuinely happy. It wasn't a surface level having-a-good-time-with-friends happiness. It was a deep, satisfied-and-content-in-life happiness.

A couple of days into camp, I couldn't deal with it anymore. I could see that the joy these people were expressing wasn't dependent upon their circumstances or upon being around certain people. However, I also didn't want to believe this joy was coming from God; I hadn't felt God's presence or heard Him speak to me in years.

In my room, with tears streaming down my cheeks, I reached for my Bible. I sort of begged God to prove Himself to me in that moment. I told Him that if He was there, then when I opened the Bible, my eyes would land on a verse that would tell me He was there.

Honestly, I wasn't expecting anything. In some ways I think I was actually hoping to disprove the presence of God once and for all. Instead, I opened to this verse from Psalms: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears" (18:6). I was completely in awe that I had turned to such a relevant verse. I also knew it couldn't be coincidence, because as I read the verse, an overwhelming feeling of peace and pure love came over me—love that I hadn't felt in a long time, and that didn't come from just reading a verse in the Bible. In that moment, I knew without a doubt

that God was there and that He was going to help me out of the mess I was in.

After that, I wanted to do everything I could to find out more about God and my relationship to Him. I really wanted to rediscover what I had known to be true all those years ago. I read the chapter in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, called “Christian Science Practice,” and I applied to take class instruction—a 12-day course in spiritual healing and understanding God better, which I took the following summer.

This renewed understanding brought with it a more substantial happiness than I had known in years, and I was complete-

ly healed of the depression. My attempts to find happiness in drinking and other forms of self-gratification also started to drop away as I realized that true happiness comes from God. And not only was this happiness expressed in me all the time, but it was also way more satisfying than anything I’d tried to find elsewhere.

Science and Health says, “The maximum of good is the infinite God and His idea, the All-in-all” (p. 103). I’ve come to see that there is nothing that makes me happier than grasping a little more each day of the “maximum of good” through my study and practice of Christian Science—and there’s nothing that’s more relevant to my life or the world. ●

Reprinted from the August 21, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

A trip to remember

By TEGAN DRY

I had been looking forward to this trip for months. I was on a glorious flight to South Africa—one of my favorite places in the world—to see my extended family and do service work for a not-for-profit organization that takes high school students to South Africa to do sustainable community service. I couldn’t wait to buckle up and take off! I love long flights and always take advantage of the opportunity to watch movies, read, listen to music, and sleep.

Unfortunately, I landed in South Africa with cold symptoms and pretty bad jet lag. I almost felt selfish to be feeling

this unwell because instead of spending my first day enjoying the beautiful country with my grandma, all I could think about was how terrible I felt.

My initial thought was: “Go to bed. You just need to sleep it off.” So I did. Giving up a few precious hours I could have spent with the cousins I see only once a year, I slept. But when I woke up, I didn’t feel better at all. My grandma, a longtime Christian Scientist, Sunday School teacher, and Christian Science practitioner, came into my room to see how I was doing. I told her I didn’t want the way I was feeling to ruin my trip. ➤

My grandma reminded me of something I'd learned in the Christian Science Sunday School, and that we'd been studying in my Bible class in school: God gave me dominion and made me perfect, spiritual, in His own image. And He maintains me in my perfection (see Genesis 1:26, 27).

She went on to share that because God is omnipotent and omnipresent, there is no space in His kingdom for anything unlike Him: not a sore throat, headache, jet lag, or blocked ears! No way! I was in South Africa to do His work, to be good and selfless. Sickness couldn't interfere with the power of good.

Our conversation reminded me of something I had learned in Sunday School when I was little. My Sunday School teacher raised both of his hands and told me to think of his left hand as God and his right hand as me. Then he joined his hands together and challenged me to try to pull them apart. At seven years old, my attempt was pret-



ty pathetic, but the message was clear: I was one with God no matter what, and I could never be outside, or parted from, His omnipresence.

The ideas my grandma shared with me gave me the strength to claim and practice my God-given dominion. I was able to get out of bed, and from that moment forward, I felt God's support in being able to participate fully in the trip. Joyfully, I was able to spend time with my family, carry heavy bags of cement, dig holes under the hot African sun, help build a playground for a school, and celebrate by dancing and hugging the community's beautiful children.

In less than a day, all the cold symptoms and fatigue vanished, and I was completely healed. I am so grateful for the way feeling God's presence and my God-given dominion allowed me to have an incredible experience in South Africa and to do the service work with joy, energy, and love. ●

Reprinted from the September 4, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

HAVEY BALL—ILLUSTRATOR

Fearless test-taking

By DANA CADEY

In the second semester of my junior year of high school, my precalculus class began to get more rigorous, and I found myself struggling to keep up with the material. In response, I devoted more time to studying. I watched online tutorials and color-coded my notes so I could get a firmer grasp on the unit.

By the time the test came around, I felt proud of the extra work I had done and definitely prepared for the questions.

The test went just as I had expected, and my confidence rose with every problem I answered successfully. It wasn't until I'd gotten through about half of the questions that I checked the clock

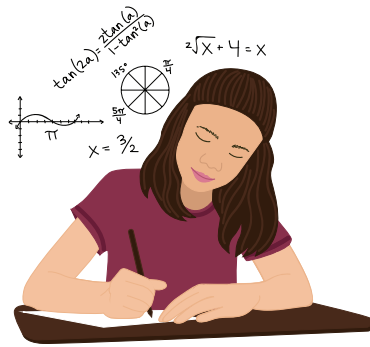
for the first time. I was shocked to see that I had only about five minutes left. I tried to stay calm and focused on the test, but time seemed to accelerate, and I was able to complete only a couple more questions.

As my math teacher slid the test out from under me, she remarked that I would have finished if I “had known the material.” Startled and hurt, I spent the remainder of the period trying to conceal my tears from my classmates. For the rest of the school week, I pretended that the test had never even happened and that I couldn’t care less if I got a bad grade on it.

However, when my teacher presented us with the option of a retest, I became conflicted. In order to take the retest, I had to complete a lot of extra homework, as well as devote some of my time after school to tutoring. Was the retest really worth it? After all, I had already decided that I didn’t care about my bad grade.

I realized that the only way I’d be able to move forward was to pray, because I really didn’t want to give in to apathy or resentment; I wanted to hear God’s direction. As I prayed, this passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* came to thought: “Each successive stage of experience unfolds new views of divine goodness and love” (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 66).

I knew that part of seeing and expressing God’s goodness involved doing whatever I needed to do to move forward in my academic career. The right, God-directed step was to show that I did, in fact, know the test material. In doing this, I would be reflecting the spiritual quality



of unlimited intelligence, which comes from God and which we all express.

After this insight, it was easy for me to do the extra homework and go to tutoring. I felt very prepared for the approaching retest, and the thoughts of bitterness toward my

math teacher began to fade away as well.

On the day of the retest, however, I was confronted with an unexpected bout of anxiety. The same fears about time started to creep back in, and I began to worry that once again, I might not finish the test. If that was the outcome of the retest, I thought, then certainly all of the preparation I had done would have been for nothing.

As I sat in the classroom, waiting for the retest to be handed out, I worked to calm my thoughts. As I prayed, an amazing idea occurred to me. I realized that the spiritual fact was that I existed in God’s perfect universe, which knows no construct such as time. So there was no fear, limitation, or impediment that could inhibit my expression of infinite Mind.

It wasn’t until I had finished the retest that I looked at the clock for the first time. I was shocked to see that I still had at least ten minutes left—something that’s never happened to me on a math test before! I knew that this was because I was conscious of existing in God’s infinitude, which knows no sense of time.

This experience opened my eyes to the way prayer really is effective in combating test anxiety. Afterward, I went on to handle other tests, such as Advanced Placement exams, with harmony and ease. I’m so grateful for Christian Science and for the strength it gives us to stand up to, and heal, our fears. ●

Reprinted from the September 18, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

The way I truly am

By SARA LANG

It was the day of the ropes course challenge at the camp for Christian Scientists I was attending. The last part of the course was up in the trees, so we all had to climb down when we were finished. I decided to jump the last few feet, as I thought it would be quicker. But when I did, I landed unevenly and twisted my ankle. At first, I got up and brushed it off. But a few minutes later, I could hardly walk because of the pain.

I was so disappointed. This was supposed to be a fun, productive summer, filled with activities like mountain biking and hiking. If my ankle was hurt, how could I participate? Some of my friends and a counselor could see I was distressed and came over to comfort me. They shared an idea with me from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "... there is no room for imperfection in perfection" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 424). One friend put it in her own words and said, "There is no room for imperfection because you are God's reflection!" This was eye-opening for me. If I am God's reflection, completely spiritual, then there is no possibility of anything but perfection. I am the true image and likeness of God, and what appeared to be an accident couldn't change that—ever. I kept praying with this idea, and in a few minutes I was able to walk with less pain.

I participated in the camp activities that night and had a great time, but my

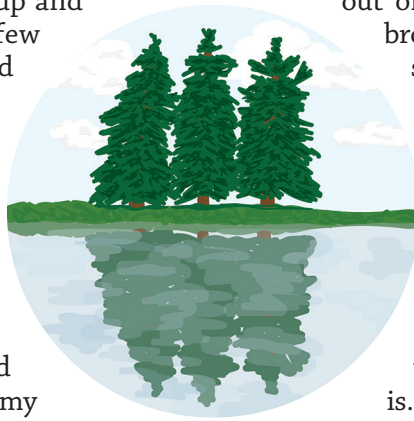
ankle was still bothering me. So I decided to ask the Christian Science practitioner at camp to pray with me. We discussed Genesis 1:31: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

I thought, "I've heard that verse a hundred times. What else can I get out of it?" But the practitioner brought out a whole new perspective. She emphasized the "behold" part of the verse, which in the dictionary means, "to see or observe (a thing or person, especially a remarkable or impressive one)." When you behold something spiritually, you are seeing it as it truly is. So to me that meant when

God saw His creation—including me—He saw it as perfect because that's the way it is!

After that, I was able to stand up and walk without much pain at all, and by the next morning, I was able to participate in a three-mile camp race. I was so happy to join my classmates and have a wonderful time the rest of the summer, without any more pain from that ankle.

This experience taught me how important it is to see what's spiritually true—not only about myself, but about any activity and anyone involved in it. I am so grateful for those who supported me through this experience, and most of all, for Christian Science, which has brought so much healing and happiness into my life. ●



Reprinted from the October 2, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Worry-free decision-making

By GRACIE PAUL

Last summer, when I arrived at summer camp, I had no idea where I would be going once camp ended. I couldn't figure out if I should return home or try a new school in a new state—one my parents had suggested.

During the first few days of camp, all I could think about was “I.” I thought about how “I want to keep playing year-round softball,” and how “I want to go home and attend school with my friends.” I had a specific outline for my life in mind, and I refused to consider anything besides that plan. I felt angry and confused and was awake every night worrying about where I should go.

One night, while I was talking to my counselor about needing to make a decision—and fast—she shared a passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* with me that says, “When we wait patiently on God and seek Truth righteously, He directs our path” (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 254). I realized that if I wanted to figure out a way forward, I had to stop thinking about myself so much and listen for right ideas from God.

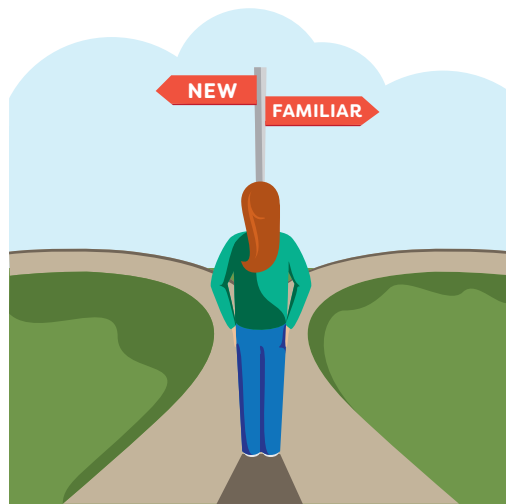
I've learned from my study of Christian Science that putting aside a sense of myself as separate from God, good, and knowing myself as God's spiritual reflection, doesn't just open the way for a good decision, but for the best, most intelligent decision, since God is “the great I AM; the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-acting, all-wise, all-loving, and eternal; ...” (*Science and Health*, p. 587). What could be more effective than trusting my life to the all-knowing and all-loving divine Mind?

In the meantime, I began to express gratitude for everyone I interacted with at camp. I've found that looking for the

good in others is one of the most effective ways of getting my thought off myself. As I began to look for, and feel grateful for, the qualities of God that each of us expresses, I stopped worrying and was less focused on where I was supposed to be after camp.

A couple of days later, though, I was still struggling with the decision, so my counselor shared an article with me called “God's Law of Adjustment” by Adam Dickey (*The Christian Science Journal*, January 1916). The article brought out the importance of really letting go of our own plans or view of things. Instead, it helped me see that we can pray, as Jesus did, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42), knowing that God, good, is completely trustworthy and taking care of us in every circumstance.

This made a huge impact on me, and I began to wholeheartedly put my trust in God. I threw out my own plans and remained open to whatever the right direction might be. Each day I prayed,



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

“Not my will, but Thine, be done,” keeping clear that it wasn’t my plan I truly wanted, but God’s plan.

A few days later, I was able to take time out of my busy camp schedule to fill out an application for the school my parents had suggested. I still had some doubts about whether it was the right place for me, but some of my friends from camp, who had been attending that school, started telling me about their experiences. With my new open-mindedness, I suddenly felt receptive to hearing wonderful things about the school that I’d never cared to listen to before. There was even a softball team with an outstanding coach!

My counselor reassured me that God’s unfoldment of right ideas always includes care for every detail. And sure enough, within a week of the camp session ending, I got a call with the news that I’d been accepted into the school, and going straight from camp to school proved to be very harmonious. I was almost surprised by how excited I felt to go and how peaceful I felt about the idea of trying something new.

This experience taught me so much about how trusting God leads to worry-free decision-making. I am so grateful for Christian Science and the way it’s helped me learn how to listen for God’s guidance. ●

Reprinted from the October 16, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

The tie that binds

By JENNY SAWYER

When you’ve been through something difficult, it can help to have a friend who gets where you’re coming from. That’s why one of my friends, who has struggled with an eating disorder, likes talking with fellow teens in the eating disorder community.

“I relate to them better than I do my other friends,” she told me. “Because they actually understand my pain, and I understand theirs.”

Helping and being helped. It’s a natural foundation for a friendship. But is pain really the tie that binds us together? And do we need to have experienced pain or trauma in order to effectively understand, support, and help others?

Most people would probably say “yes”—that at best, encouragement from someone who hasn’t experienced something difficult can feel well-meaning but empty, and at worst, completely infuriating.

But here’s something I’ve found interesting. In my own life, it hasn’t been the shared experience of pain that’s allowed me to feel comforted, to move forward, and to find healing. Those who’ve helped me the most have had the spiritual vision to see beyond the struggle. In other words, instead of seeing pain as part of my identity, they’ve had the grace to witness something profound: that as God’s daughter, I am ac-

tually untouched, purely spiritual, and therefore whole. Right now. This is true for everyone. And it's what heals scars and permanently releases us from pain.

Having the spiritual perception to see someone as whole and free, even in the face of what appears to be suffering, doesn't mean pretending that everything's fine when it's not. Christ Jesus' life, as well as Mary Baker Eddy's, definitely make that clear. Both Jesus and Mrs. Eddy were highly attuned to the needs of those around them and left behind amazing healing records—including freedom from all kinds of crippling physical and emotional issues. This was their way of "acknowledging" pain: They healed it. They related to those who were struggling by connecting, not on the basis of the struggle, but on the basis of their certainty of the power of divine Love.

Suffering wasn't unfamiliar to Jesus or to Mrs. Eddy. But while both faced their own trials, there was no way they could have experienced the entire spectrum of challenges that those they encountered were dealing with. What they

both had experienced was the reality of God. They had felt God's goodness in such a deep and unshakable way that they had a natural conviction that only this goodness could be true for everyone else, too. Their compassion led them to hear the cry for help, and their spirituality led them to lift the person above the cry—into healing.

Maybe that seems like a lot to ask in our own relationships. A lot for us to take on. But God has already given each of us the spiritual clarity to care for one another from the basis of how fully and divinely loved we all are, not from the basis of how much or what kind of pain we seem to have experienced. This takes our healing practice beyond the narrow boundaries of the trials we've been through and allows us to listen more perceptively, minister more tenderly, and more effectively help anyone who crosses our path. In fact, what starting with the true, spiritual nature of God's children actually does is to break us out of the dream of mortality. And that's when our ability to connect with others, and to heal, really takes off. ●

Reprinted from the October 16, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

*O longing hearts that wait on God
Through all the world so wide;
He knows the angels that you need,
And sends them to your side,
To comfort, guard and guide.*

—Violet Hay, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 9

Off the bench and onto the field

By HAWTHORN BRUMM

I was the type of kid who always wanted to be outside. You know, the one who always asks his mom, “Just five more minutes? Please?” And somehow, an hour later, I was still nowhere to be found. Whether I was playing sports, running around, or making snow forts, I wanted to be outside as much as possible. Although we moved around a lot, the constant in my life was being very active.

In 2010, we moved to Atlanta. It was a drastic change from the suburbs of South Dakota, but one thing they did have that I was excited about was a soccer league. As I improved my own game during fifth and sixth grade, I realized I had a lot of goalie talent and worked rigorously every day to become a better player.

During one particularly tough game with lots of shots on goal, I ended up hurting myself when I dove to block a ball and hit my knee on the side of the goal. I was helped off the field, but I could barely walk. So my coach suggested that I go to the hospital just to make sure everything was OK. At the hospital I was diagnosed with a disease that causes ongoing knee inflammation and was told I shouldn’t play sports or be active until I would supposedly “grow out of it” after high school. The doctors told me that if I tried to be active, it would cause my knees to flare up in pain.

What surprises me as I look back on the situation is that instead of challenging the diagnosis based on what I’d learned in Christian Science, I just took it as fact. And sure enough, from then on, whenever I attempted to run around or

do anything active, my knees would flare up in pain and I could hardly walk.

Three years later, when I became a student at a school for Christian Scientists, I was still struggling. I went to sports camp, but most days I would have to sit out because it hurt too much to participate. During one practice, though, when I

told my coach I needed to take a break, he actually challenged the suggestion that I had to keep suffering.

He pulled a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy out of his bag and shared the idea that this diagnosis could never be true about me be-

cause I was spiritual—and no material belief could ever touch or change a spiritual idea. He left me with his copy of *Science and Health* and went back to practice.

At that point, I was still pretty doubtful. I’d been living with this suggestion for the past three years, and I knew how challenging it was to be active. But I thought it couldn’t hurt to at least flip through *Science and Health*. I opened the book at random and saw this passage: “The great truth in the Science of being, that the real man was, is, and ever shall be perfect, is incontrovertible; for if man is the image, reflection, of God, he is neither inverted nor subverted, but upright and Godlike” (p. 200).

I kind of scratched my head a little bit when I read that. I mean, I was a Christian Scientist, right? And this stuff is true, right? And then it suddenly hit me: Wait a second! Then this suggestion could never be true about me at all because “man is the image, reflection, of God.” How could

How could I be both imperfect and perfect? There was no way I could be both.

I be both imperfect and perfect? There was no way I could be both. I was perfect, and only perfect, because as the reflection of God, I was 100 percent spiritual.

I flipped *Science and Health* open again and read one of my favorite passages: “Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need” (p. 494). It was then that I realized that no matter what I’d believed for the past three years, I could never have been diseased, and that the only place this so-called problem existed was in mortal mind—false suggestions that had been

masquerading as my thoughts, but never really were my thoughts, since divine Mind (the only real Mind) is my Mind. I understood that divine Love had always been there, meeting my needs in every possible way, including giving me the ability to be active.

Filled with the complete conviction that the pain and limitation could no longer define me, I got up off the bench and ran onto the field. I was healed! Today, I’m back to being the athlete I always was. Thank You, God. ●

Reprinted from the October 30, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Safe from the storm

By JOHN BIGGS

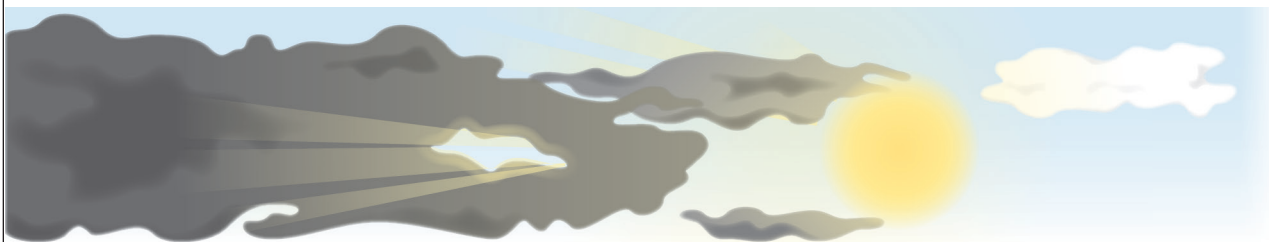
Q: Can we really stop bad weather with prayer?

A: Here’s my story. I was helping on my uncle’s ranch one summer. As with all ranches and farms, weather played a big role in both day-to-day operations as well as in the farm’s success. So there was always an awareness of the weather. One afternoon, I was working with some animals, and my grandpa pulled up in his truck to let me know that there was a huge storm approaching. From the looks of it, the storm included hail and a high probability of major crop destruction.

My grandpa was a Christian Scientist, as am I, and he asked me to pray for the ranch. I was tempted to feel in over my head. What was I against a massive

storm? But I had recently taken a 12-day course on spiritual healing called Christian Science Primary class instruction, and I remembered that I’d learned the importance of starting *and staying* with God in my prayers, instead of trying to balance fear with trust in God. I didn’t know how to “turn off” the fear I was feeling, though. So I just turned my thoughts to gratitude for the ranch, for the country, for my family, and for the rightness of diversity in God’s creation, which naturally includes a variety of only useful and harmless conditions governing all things.

This gratitude led me to prayer—to trust more clearly in the safety of our farm and the entire region. And not just safety from a storm, but safety from the viciousness or randomness of bad



weather, of being victimized by anything. This safety is an aspect of God's government over His creation, and He is the only power, the only government. I loved having this opportunity to pray, and I soon became aware of a gentle breeze. I looked up, and the dark clouds had almost completely dissipated. My grandpa came back a little later and let me know that all was well for our farm and all surrounding farms. The storm never materialized.

I don't share this story because I think I stopped the storm. I share it because the experience of having my thought transformed entirely—from fear and

a belief in the victimizing power of randomness, to gratitude and an increased awareness of God's protecting, loving power—is a clear example of the importance of starting in the right place when we pray. Rather than starting from the standpoint that the universe we live in is subject to randomness, terror, and catastrophe, what about if the premise of our prayers is that God governs, that Spirit is real and All? Well, then we are open to the immensity of God's love for us, and this love removes fear, inspires and strengthens our prayers, and brings a conviction of safety.

What about when a storm has already hit? Even then, we can base our prayers on a correct premise. The opinions of the world do seem to allow for terrible experiences. But when we courageously and

humbly turn to God, we realize that He can and does inform us of His presence, His love, as the only real power. And a greater awareness of that perfect love allows us to see how we can keep moving forward. How we can be helpful both practically and prayerfully, and how we can usher in a greater awareness of God's protecting presence for everyone.

Praying to "stop bad weather" sounds like a huge task when we think of it

*I was tempted to
feel in over my head.
What was I against
a massive storm?*

in those terms, perhaps because prayer seems small or insignificant in the face of a raging storm. But since prayer is an acknowledgment of God's law in operation, the more we acknowl-

edge God's law, are obedient to that law (keeping our thought true to it), the more we feel and experience the beneficial, protecting effects of that law. We actually experience that law of God in operation in our lives and feel more deeply all the effects of God's government, including safety, restoration, and peace.

Your prayers about evil or troubling events of any kind do make a difference. Because every shining light of trust in God lessens the darkness and follows Mary Baker Eddy's call to Christian Scientists to "lessen evil, disease, and death" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 450)—and this includes neutralizing the effects of bad weather, and even stopping predicted storms from materializing. ●

Reprinted from the November 13, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Don't push

By CASSIDY PROCTOR

"Are you OK?"

Taken aback, I looked up at my track coach. I had been enjoying our 100-meter sprint workout. But my coach said I looked tense, over-focused, and almost angry.

"I love running," I told him.

"Then just let yourself run," he encouraged me. "Don't push."

I let that sink in. I realized that I didn't need to put pressure on myself to run; I just needed to tap into the ability I already had and let myself go as fast as I could. Applying what my coach shared with me, I began to see progress in my running ability and was not as tense when I was sprinting.

I already translate a lot of what I learn from running into other aspects of my life. However, this particular concept of "letting" versus "pushing" really caught my attention, and I've thought a lot about what that means from a spiritual perspective.

One of the things it reminded me of is an explanation of God's law from the article "God's Law of Adjustment" (Adam Dickey, *The Christian Science Journal*, January 1916). The author wrote: "We are not responsible for the carrying out of this law [God's law]. In fact we can do nothing in any way to increase, stimulate, or intensify the action or operation of divine Mind, since it is constantly present, always operative, and never ceases to assert and declare itself when rightly appealed to." I often return to this idea of rightly appealing to God's law when something seems to need adjusting. As children of God we are not responsible for God's work, but we can pray to see through a personal

sense of ourselves and know that we reflect God. We can understand that what God is doing is effortlessly expressed through us as we stop pushing, trying, or asserting ourselves in some way, and let God shine.

Christ Jesus was such a good example of getting a personal sense of himself out of the way. He really understood his relationship to God, as His Son. He explained it when he said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19). Jesus lived to show us what is true for all of us as God's sons and daughters; we reflect God. There is no forcing a reflection. There is no struggling, pushing, or shoving. In the same way that you don't have to will your reflection to appear—it just does—so God does not need to will any of us to be His reflection; in our true being, we just *are* His reflection.

I've found a lot of freedom in putting this idea into practice. For example, I used to be incredibly shy and have a difficult time speaking up for myself—to the point where if I was in a restaurant, I didn't even want to ask a waiter for water or extra sauce for something I was eating. I didn't want to speak up in front of my peers or be in situations where I had to be the center of attention.

But now, I "let." As it says in the Bible: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Before I understood this idea of letting, I would have read that passage and said it was a nice idea but that it would take too much confidence to put it into practice. But now I read that passage

and know that my light is shining and always has been. I don't have to be afraid, because I am the shining of God's good light. This has been helpful in social situations. Not just so I can walk up to the waiter to ask for the extra sauce, or where the restroom is, although that is wonderful. But I can also strike up conversations at parties now. I can talk to my peers and even adults about important issues in our society.

This is a growing process for me. But I've made so much progress, and it's comforting to know that it's not my responsibility to push, or to force myself to be God's reflection. As Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). The better I understand that, the more I feel God guiding and governing me, and the more effortlessly I can be a transparency for all that He is. ●

Reprinted from the November 13, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

The path back

By CHARLENE CORIN BRUNNER

I was miles away from any help. I'd accepted an invitation to hike in the Altai Mountains of Russia with my daughter, three friends, and three guides with horses that were carrying our tents and bags.

We were in the middle of nowhere. We'd flown, driven, and then rafted to the trailhead. And now we had been hiking for several days to the base camp below the highest peak in Siberia. The problem? Painful blisters on my toes, which made walking brutal. My hiking boots were just not right—a fact that was painfully clear to me after a long downhill section—and they were the only ones I had. With no obvious way to get out of the situation—I couldn't ride any of the pack horses out of this distant, outback tundra, and that was the only mode of transportation there was—I was stuck.

Though I grew up going to a Christian Science Sunday School, and my grandmother was a Christian Science practitioner, prayer wasn't something that would have consciously crossed my mind at that point in my life. As I'd moved on to college, I'd found myself in a very anti-religion environment, where there was no dependence on God. So for forty years I'd been away from Christian Science and any thought of God or spirituality.

But there in that remote wilderness, some of the things I had learned as a child suddenly came flooding back. The first prayer that came to me was the twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; ... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (verses 1, 4). God was right there! How else could I have remembered every word of that pertinent psalm? >

Then came the Lord's Prayer and its spiritual interpretation by Mary Baker Eddy (see *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, pp. 16–17). With it also came the clear understanding that I wasn't alone or helpless. These ideas were my help. They were a power. I sang some of Mrs. Eddy's hymns. I remembered "the scientific statement of being" (see *Science and Health*, p. 468) and other key ideas from Mrs. Eddy's writings. I prayed with them for hours.

Finally, when we reached base camp, I sat back and just reveled in the view of the magnificent mountain that we had come to see, along with the new understanding of my unbreakable oneness with God. After all these years, God was still just as much the present, powerful divine Love I'd known during my childhood.

With this feeling of God's presence came a surprising solution to the problems I'd been having. My daughter offered me her boots, which were two sizes smaller than mine. It seemed unlikely, but they ended up fitting well and made walking possible. And my boots worked for her. We all successfully and happily completed the eight-day hike. But a more significant result for me was the

rekindled desire to know God better because of this experience.

My return to Christian Science after this wasn't exactly easy, but it was decisive. With four family members who are doctors, there were questions and skepticism about my sudden shift to a spiritually based way of thinking and living. But I knew that God was leading me forward through this "remote wilderness" with the same tenderness and power that I'd experienced in my own literal wilderness. And over time, these family members have seen clear proofs of the effects of my prayer and study of the Bible and *Science and Health*.

I've sometimes asked myself why I ever left such goodness behind in the first place. Ultimately, though, those reasons—and the time it took me to return—no longer matter in light of what I have now. Who could have guessed that the trek in the mountains of Siberia, and its trials, would start me on the path back to learning more of God's love and protection? Just when I thought I was the farthest I'd ever been from any help, I was actually the closest—to a new certainty of God's perfection, and each of us made in His likeness. ●

*After all these years,
God was still the
present, powerful
divine Love I'd known
during my childhood.*

Reprinted from the November 27, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Beauty treatment

By CAROLINE ABOUCHAR

I'd started to notice that a lot of my friends at school were unhappy with their bodies and very self-critical. Even young women whom I considered to be incredibly beautiful weren't seeing themselves that way, and that made me feel that there was no way I could possibly be beautiful, either. I began spending a lot of time looking at various forms of social media and comparing myself to the women in the pictures and ads I was seeing. My self-esteem plummeted, and I was feeling constantly unhappy with the way I looked.

No matter what I did—the clothes I wore, the makeup I put on—I struggled with the way my body looked. Whenever I looked in the mirror, I made lists of all the things I wanted to change.

Eventually, I became so fed up with these feelings that I decided to call a Christian Science practitioner for help. I knew I needed to get a different view of myself—a spiritual view, which would show me my worth and beauty as God's daughter.

One of the first things the practitioner shared with me was this passage from the Bible: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28, 29). This really comforted me, because it helped me remember that everything about me was designed by God, and if our Father-Mother created things as beautiful as the lilies, then I couldn't be any less beautiful.

I worked hard to stick with this idea, and I felt so loved and comforted as I thought about it throughout each day. When suggestions came to me that I wasn't attractive or couldn't be happy with the way I looked, I would instantly correct them with the truth: that every idea of God is beautiful. I would reverse any negative thoughts about myself or others, remembering that just like the lilies, we don't have to work to be beautiful. It is naturally what we are as the expression of God—divine Love and Soul.

Instead of focusing on someone's physical features, I began looking for the qualities of God that they expressed—qualities such as love, patience, and intelligence. I also thought a lot about the qualities of God that I could express each day, instead of focusing on the way I looked. Rather than measuring beauty on the basis of body shape or size, or other physical characteristics, I recognized beauty as an infinite quality of Soul, which we all reflect.

Eventually, the loving thought I'd been cultivating about myself and others became natural and consistent, and I recognized that my true beauty, and everyone's, really is a spiritual quality, so it must always be present. I see now that I have so much more to give to the world than a certain physical appearance. The qualities of God I express are more radiant and beautiful than any clothes I could wear or makeup I could put on. ●



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'My skin was smooth and clear'

By AMY RICHMOND

Q: *My skin looks really bad from acne and also acne scars. I want to be healed, but I also feel like the appearance is all I can think about. How can I focus on God instead?*

A: Oh, I know how you feel. It's hard not to be sucked into focusing on what's staring back at you in the mirror! But it's possible—and super beneficial—to shift your focus to God.

For me it wasn't acne, but a little bump I noticed under one of my eyes. At first I mostly ignored it, but then it got bigger and didn't seem so benign. I got scared. I'm going to be honest: I was kind of obsessed with it. I felt panicked when I saw it each morning as I put on my makeup, and I worried about it periodically throughout the day. But I found a way to turn the obsession into an advantage.

After praying about it, it occurred to me that every time I thought about the bump, I could turn my thoughts toward the spiritual truth about me instead. I might start out thinking about the problem, but I refused to stay there. I'd use that moment to listen to God and learn something new about my identity as pure and spiritual.

For instance, I'd asked a Christian Science practitioner to pray with me, and she'd shared some simple thoughts. One was, "Nothing can deface the beauty of your being." I spent some time thinking about that, knowing that real beauty—beauty that lasts—is spiritual.

Beauty isn't based on what my skin or face looks like.

I've come to realize that real beauty, spiritual beauty, is the good we do and embody. Every good, pure, and beautiful thought that we've ever had is proof of our unbreakable union with God. It's proof of our real and lasting beauty. We can cultivate this beauty and see more of it in our lives as we claim our spiritual identity as the satisfied, totally worthy expression of God, who is Soul.

At first I was concerned that people

I was seeing might ask about the growth, but they never did. And when that concern crossed my mind, I'd pray about that, too. I could feel a mental shift going on. I was focusing more on my spiritual identity and less on something I knew

wasn't really true about me. And I was trusting others to do the same.

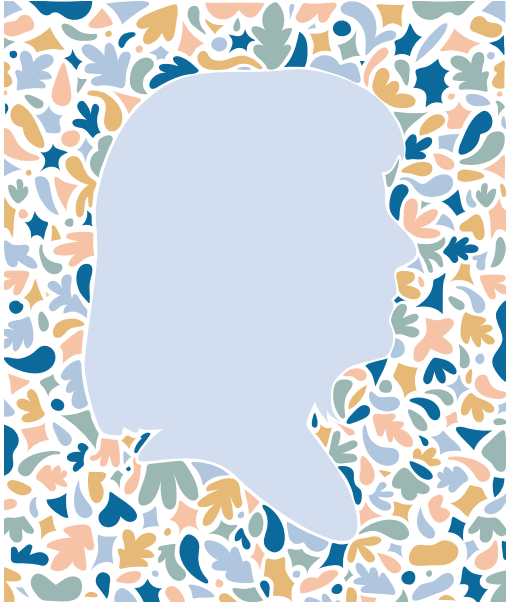
Around this time, I had a song stuck in my head. It was written by a Christian Scientist. One of the verses says, "I'm not made of things that vanish / I was made for Life immortal" (Tim Dixon, "Immortal"). That was my turning point. It reminded me that I wasn't made of an ugly growth; I was made of beautiful spiritual qualities. Those qualities, God's gifts, are lasting—and they're good. I lived with this thought, and before the week's end, my skin was smooth and clear.

The best part of any healing is that it has a ripple effect, and this can be helpful to remember if you start to feel doubt or discouragement. What we learn

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about the nature of God as we pray, and about our own nature, and everyone else's, as spiritual, is bigger than just our own experience. It makes us readier to help others.

For example, in the middle of my



healing, when I was checking in at a hotel, the gentleman who waited on me had a visible skin condition. Instead of feeling afraid, I looked at him with an amazing sense of spiritual love. I saw right through the problem while looking right at it. I just wasn't impressed by it, and I felt I caught a glimpse of his beautiful spiritual identity, right where this other thing claimed to be. I knew that what I was learning about God, and of man as God's expression, could only bless both of us.

I didn't see the man again, so I don't know what happened with him. But I do know that I'm learning to be more proactive in choosing the way I think about others. And you may be finding that blessing others is the inevitable outcome of your prayer, too. You can be sure that the effect of that growth, that mental shift toward God, is healing in your own life—and your ability to bring healing out into the world. ●

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Beauty is a thing of life, which dwells forever in the eternal Mind and reflects the charms of His goodness in expression, form, outline, and color. It is Love which paints the petal with myriad hues, glances in the warm sunbeam, arches the cloud with the bow of beauty, blazons the night with starry gems, and covers earth with loveliness.

—Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 247

LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Can Christian Science solve my problems?

By JENNY SAWYER

"Build muscle. Heal your injuries. *Get strong.*" Sounds pretty appealing, right? The people who own the gym across from my church thought so. Those are the words they put on their front window—the words I see every time I'm going to or from church.

It's gotten me thinking about what we as Christian Scientists have to offer. Every week on JSH-Online.com we publish testimonies from people all over the world. So healing is definitely one of the things we have to give the planet—and a significant thing. Because the healing we're talking about goes deep. Maybe you've experienced this for yourself. Christian Science healing isn't just about fixing a broken body or having a quick turnaround when you're sick.

The healing that results from the practice of Christian Science reaches to your very core, giving you a new, spiritualized, more beautiful understanding of the way God made you. And the effect of that is also a healing of the cold or sprained ankle or whatever it is you're dealing with. Healing through and through. There's nothing else on earth that can compete with that.

With this in mind, it can be tempting to think that Christian Science is here simply to solve our problems. Or to help us get a better life—just like that gym across the street from my church that promises to send people on their way

feeling both better and stronger. But I've been finding that putting Christian Science into a "fix-it" box minimizes its impact for us and our world.

So if Christian Science isn't something we use primarily to make our lives great, what is it? This may be a "duh" for many of you, but it helps me to remind myself that Christian Science is actually a radical explanation of the nature of the

universe: that the universe is entirely spiritual, that it's made up of spiritual ideas, and that it's governed by the laws of God, which are entirely good. It's the truth of being—ours and everyone else's—which is based

on the fact that what God made must be like Him: perfect and harmonious and pure. In light of God's allness and omnipotence, Christian Science also refutes any possibility of a reality, power, or activity of evil.

In plain English, what does all that mean? It means that the Christian Science explanation of existence is both complete and correct. It's the way to understand that God and the universe, being spiritual, don't have inconsistencies, contradictions, or mistakes—and that this is provable. It means that if you want to know what reality looks like, and to experience it, you've come to the right place.

Christian Science doesn't work within the finite framework of the limitations, problems, and rampant material-

*Christian Science
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out of that framework!*

ity we see around us. It busts us out of that framework! Think about any Christian Science healing you may have had. In some small way, hasn't the healing moment always been about the utter impossibility of whatever issue you're dealing with in the face of God's infinite power and love?

With that in mind, you can see how the bigger promise of Christian Science for the world is the same promise Christ Jesus articulated during his ministry: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). That means that here and now, we have the spiritual insight to see and experience something beyond the chaos, destruction, and division that seem to be everywhere. We can feel and know the presence of divine Love expressed in every corner of the universe. We can glimpse the supremacy of Spirit and the nothingness of this misperception we call "matter." We can perceive the oneness of God and His idea—which means that each of us is always safe, that our needs are met, and that we are inseparable from God and His tender care. Not at some later date. Today.

Imagine if we all walked around being conscious of this reality for every-

one, everywhere. Imagine if we didn't pull Christian Science off a shelf when we had a problem, but instead, we lived each moment with the understanding that God's laws—and *only* God's laws—are governing. What could this do for the world in terms of freeing us from things like inequality, poverty, and conflict?

The awesome possibility to contemplate is that we could see an end to those things, not because our prayers somehow "fixed" them, but because we would be perceiving the universe correctly—a universe in which each individual is innocent, safe, and provided for. Jesus was right: That would be what "heaven" looks like.

So can Christian Science solve our problems? Yes—ours and everyone else's. But more than that, our understanding of what Christian Science really is, along with our clear perception of the universe it reveals, has the power to lift all of us up. Not just out of our problems, but up out of the fundamental problem of mortality, which says that we're subject to problems in the first place. It's hard to capture this kind of potential on a storefront advertisement, but we can capture it in our hearts—and then watch the effects on our world. ●

Reprinted from the December 11, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Christmas after a divorce

By MARILYN WICKSTROM

It was a few weeks before the first Christmas after my parents' divorce. I was dreading the holiday. My dad was living with another woman and her six kids, and we were expected to visit him on Christmas. My mom would be alone.

As the holiday approached, I felt depressed and sad. Even though we had often lived in fear of my dad's anger when he'd been with us, he'd still provided our family with a feeling of security and completeness. Christmas morning had been special, with Dad sitting with us by the tree, handing out gifts. Now, the feelings of closeness and family were gone.

It wasn't that I hadn't ever thought about the true meaning of Christmas. But this Christmas, with the prospect of a painful and disappointing holiday ahead, I found myself turning to God more than I ever had before to understand what Christmas is really about.

I thought about the first Christmas. Beauty, peace, and joy filled the place where Jesus was born. Those qualities weren't dependent on the surroundings or the people present. They had nothing to do with anyone's personal expectations. They were evidence of the presence of divine Love embracing humanity—the oneness of the divine Father and His children, which Jesus came to show us.

As a deeper meaning of Christmas dawned on me, I began to realize that all that Christ Jesus taught and proved about God's love actually applied

to me. I couldn't be separated from God, and nothing that happened could ever take me away from His love. Christmas was a new beginning, a revelation of God's supreme goodness, spiritual and indestructible. I saw that this goodness was the permanent fact of my life and my family's life, and even the truth for this woman and her six children. It couldn't be taken away from any of us.

That was like a beacon for me. Instead of becoming absorbed in the problems that I was having with my family, or feeling depressed about how things had changed, I began to think about how this everlasting goodness from God includes



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

everyone. This idea shone like a light in my thoughts and helped dispel the dark feelings of sadness about the situation.

It also helped me to forgive my dad and accept this woman, who eventually became his wife. My heart softened, and I saw that she and her children weren't my enemies because they were taking my father's attention away from my siblings and me. I felt the embrace of divine Love—Love loving all of us—and knew that as God's children, each of us was included in an even greater love that could never be depleted and could never go away.

Thinking about this released me from my feeling of disappointment and my vi-

sions of what Christmas should look like. I felt the love of God and knew I could express this love no matter where I was, who I was with, or what was going on around me.

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Christmas was still a challenge that year. But looking back, I can also see how significant that holiday was. It made me dig deep inside my heart to find the real meaning of the day and to lean on God, instead of on my parents, for the joy of the season. The beautiful thing about that Christmas was that for the first time, I wasn't looking to anyone to make the holiday for me. Instead, I was offered the gift of discovering what I had to give: love. ●

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A COLLECTION FOR TEENS

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