



# CHRISTIAN SCIENCE Sentinel

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

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## A COLLECTION FOR TEENS

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SENTINEL**

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# Learning to lean on God

By *CORRINA KITCHEN*

Useless. That's the way I felt. I pride myself on being a fairly independent person, and here I was on a two-week canoeing and rafting trip with other young Christian Scientists in Maine, hardly able to walk.

I'd been loading canoes onto a trailer when I fell and twisted my ankle. Everyone was quick to assure me that I was completely safe in God, and I was so grateful for the immediate support of my classmates and the leaders of the trip. I knew everyone was praying, and I felt confident that I would quickly be OK.

That evening, I spent some time by myself praying, then decided to join the group. But deep down, I knew that rather than fully addressing the problem, I was kind of just telling myself that I wasn't going to let my ankle get in the way of having a good time. Even though I tried to act as I normally would, my ankle was really bothering me and I didn't feel I could fully participate.

That's when the feeling of uselessness set in. As I went to bed, it seemed as though I wasn't able to do anything without someone else's help. Even worse, I suddenly felt like I wasn't pulling my weight or contributing enough to our group. The idea that I was dead weight—someone that other people had to keep afloat—frustrated me to no end.

The next morning we got up and loaded our stuff. I still wasn't moving totally freely, so I was a little nervous when I found out that the plan for the day was to hike up a mountain. I love being outside and in the mountains; however, even though I told the leaders of the trip that I was fine with the hike, I wasn't exactly sure how I would manage.

I had been praying with the idea that I couldn't be swayed by anything the five physical senses were telling me. Only God, as divine Truth, could give me the true idea of myself—as whole and unhurt. And since Truth could never be swayed, neither could I. So, I gave my backpack to one of the trip leaders, and we began hiking.

I walked at the back of the group, and a couple of my friends stayed with me, chatting like we normally do, just not going at the same pace as usual. I was clinging to the spiritual fact that I could never be separated from God, and this strengthened me during the first part of the hike.

After a short break, we hit a much more difficult section of the trail. Not only was it much steeper, but there were also lots of fallen trees and other debris. My ankle was bothering me a little at this point, but mentally I felt I was making progress in trusting God, and I was also grateful that I was still keeping up with the group.

Soon it became too foggy to continue all the way to the top, so we decided to turn around. The trail was too narrow to rearrange the order we were hiking in, so I was now at the front of the group. Looking back on this experience, I know the healing had really begun to solidify at this point because it didn't even occur to me that I wouldn't be able to handle leading the group. I just turned around and started walking. I also began replacing the lingering suggestions of pain, or the temptation to say "ow," with the spiritual fact that matter has no sensation. Every time I stepped down, I replaced the thought of pain with the truth of my

painless, spiritual substance as the reflection of God. By doing this consistently, I found that the thoughts of helplessness and uselessness began to fade until they eventually stopped coming.

After a break for a snack, we began the final portion of our descent. I was at the front again—not because we couldn’t rearrange our hiking order, but because now I was perfectly able to keep the pace. My ankle was no longer pain-

ful, and by the next night I couldn’t even remember which one I’d hurt. I was completely healed.

Of all the ways I grew through this experience, the biggest would be overcoming the sense of helplessness and the mistaken belief that I can do anything on the basis of my own ability. I realized that God is the true source of our ability, and when we lean on Him, we can accomplish what seems like the impossible. ●



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

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## Safe at first base

By ALYSSA SAVOYE

**I**t was a warm, sunny afternoon and a perfect day for softball practice. About midway through practice, our coach split us up. Half of us would be in the field, and the other half would be runners. I was among the runners. I was very excited because one of my favorite things

to do is run the bases, especially when the fielders are trying to get you out.

It was finally my turn, and my coach laid down a bunt. I ran to first base as fast as I could, and I was safe. As I was waiting for the next hit, I began taking bigger leads than I usually do—meaning



that instead of standing on the base until the ball was hit, I scooted down the base path toward second base, to get a head start. Before practice, our coaches had told the runners to be a little “reckless” on the base path because we were playing an aggressive team later that week. So my leads were getting bigger and bigger.

On one of my leads, the catcher decided to throw the ball down to the first baseman to try to pick me off. I dove back to first, jamming my finger into the base in the process.

As soon as it happened, I felt excruciating pain in my finger and knew that something was wrong. My teammate on first told the assistant coach, who took me to the trainer. When she saw my finger, she told me that I should call my mom and go to the hospital immediately.

When my mom didn’t answer, I decided to call a Christian Science practitioner to pray for me. I was already praying for myself, knowing that as God’s child, I must always be perfect and safe, and that I am in God’s constant care. When I told the practitioner what had happened, she shared this passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*:

“Question.—What is man?

“Answer.—Man is not matter; he is not made up of brain, blood, bones, and other material elements. The Scriptures inform us that man is made in the image and likeness of God.”

The passage goes on to say, “Man is idea, the image, of Love; he is not physique.” And, “Man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death” (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 475). This reassured me that I’m not material, made up of parts that can be broken or hurt. I’m completely spiritual—the image of divine Love, God.

Then the practitioner asked me if it was possible to get injured while I was ex-

pressing God. It was a light bulb moment for me. Of course not! How could I possibly be hurt in the expression of strength, joy, and stamina, which are part of my Godlike identity? I thanked the practitioner, and she told me she would continue praying for me.

I tried my mom again. When she picked up, I asked her to come and get me. My mom wondered if I needed to go to the hospital. But I said that the pain and swelling had gone down significantly, and I would much rather continue praying instead.

Before bed that night I prayed with “the scientific statement of being” in *Science and Health* (p. 468), which helped me affirm the truth of what I am—spiritual, not material—and that I really am made in God’s image and likeness, so I could never be hurt.

The next morning, I woke up feeling great. I had forgotten all about my finger until my mom asked how it was feeling. I told her that I had honestly forgotten that the accident had even happened and that my finger was healed.

When I went to practice that day, my coach was shocked to see me. When I told her that my finger was fine, she didn’t believe me and sent me back to the trainer. The trainer checked my finger out and said that there was nothing wrong with my finger and that I was free to practice.

I was so grateful for this healing and to be back on the softball field. ●

Originally published in the January 8, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# Dropping the ‘party persona’

NAME WITHHELD

I am not the perfect Christian Science teenager. Maybe there’s no such thing. But all I know is that I’ve always needed an extra push to look deeper into what Christian Science really is.

I’ve been involved in a program for young Christian Scientists that has helped motivate me to be active in my practice of Christian Science, instead of just skating along on the surface—going to Sunday School but not really doing much with what I’ve learned. One of the key things I have gained from this program is integrity. When I’m participating in activities in the program, I feel like I can put aside the “persona” I sometimes fall into at home and simply be myself—the real me, expressing what God is. And I feel strengthened by others in the program, who actively support me in seeing myself spiritually and in being true to that identity.

In 2016, I was scheduled to go on a trip to Guatemala with my group. By the time our departure rolled around, the difference between “home me” and “program me” had grown. I had begun doing things that were hugely out of character.

When I look back on that time, I don’t even recognize myself. I was abusing substances, lying to my parents, and manipulating girls. I was out of control, hungry for the attention and the excitement that this way of life seemed to offer. At some point, I realized how far I’d strayed from what I really am, but my social life was skyrocketing, and that was incredibly addicting.

However, when I got to Guatemala, I

quickly remembered how awesome it felt to be kind and moral, and to be thinking about God. Over the two weeks of transformative service work, enlightening Christian Science discussions, and the feeling of unconditional love from my peers and leaders, I totally forgot about

my desire for all the things that had seemed so intoxicating.

After one deeply inspirational conversation with a few of my friends, I was set on returning home a different person. I felt comforted and

strengthened by this idea from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: “Truth makes a new creature, in whom old things pass away and ‘all things are become new.’ Passions, selfishness, false appetites, hatred, fear, all sensuality, yield to spirituality, and the superabundance of being is on the side of God, good” (p. 201). Instead of missing out, I could see how abandoning the things that were just about self-gratification and took me away from God would actually bring more good into my life.

I told myself I would leave all the bad behind me and go forward basking in the light of God. How much I would’ve actually been able to do that, I’ll never know. Because one night, toward the end of our stay, the trip leaders confronted me and asked if I had participated in the consumption of drugs and alcohol, which was against the rules of the program. I was scared of the consequences, so I lied and said I had only done it once. That night I didn’t sleep at all. I knew the

*All that I am  
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rules; I would most likely be kicked out of the program and be sent home early. I was more scared than I had ever been. And I felt trapped, because now I'd also lied, but I didn't know what to do.

I'm so grateful for God's care for me throughout this whole situation, because everyone seemed to get it that kicking me out of the program would not help the problem. I needed the program—and the spiritual support it provided—more than ever. The next morning my trip leaders told me that I would have to talk to my parents and begin updating them weekly. I was immensely grateful, but my true journey hadn't even begun yet. I'd still lied about the extent of my partying, and that lie was tearing me up inside. The love they were showing me only tripled the guilt.

When I got home from the trip, I told my parents everything—including the fact that I had lied to my trip leaders. The vulnerability was terrifying, but looking back, I can see how my willingness to do this was a huge part of the healing. Because it was so difficult, I can only describe my ability to finally speak the truth as coming straight from God. It was the power of divine Truth in action.

Rather than condemn me, my parents forgave me and supported me in seeing my real, God-given identity as completely separate from, and untouched by, all the bad behavior. I then called my trip leaders

and confessed the full truth. While this was difficult for me, I can't imagine how hard it was for them to hear that I had lied to them. Even still, they also continued to love me and to see me as I really am.

I had finally come clean, albeit at the loss of trust from the most important adults in my life. And there would be a long road to gaining that trust back. But all attraction for the party persona was gone, because now I desired something else. I desired to know myself as God knows me and to live and act in accord with that. The love I'd felt wiped away any inclination toward selfishness and immoral behavior, and I wanted to know more of the source of this love—divine Love—and how I could share it with others. The power of loving and living with integrity, in line with Truth, felt even more amazing than any of the "highs" I'd gotten during my previous lifestyle.

This all happened over a year ago, and I can gratefully say that I've earned back the trust I'd lost. I have lived more than an entire year free of partying, deceit, and manipulation, and I've been more motivated than ever to engage with Christian Science. The best part is that I no longer feel a pull toward anything but being my true self. As I continue to understand God better, all that I am becomes a little clearer each day—and I know now that that's all I want. ●

Originally published in the January 29, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# Out of the depths of depression

By DEAN COUGHTRY

In middle school, I began to suffer with symptoms of depression, though at the time I didn't know what was wrong. A gnawing sadness and loneliness characterized my thoughts. In high school, things got so bad that I tried to end my life—unsuccessfully, as you can guess.

As my interior misery grew, I began to drink with school friends on the weekends, the chief goal being to get drunk as quickly as possible. During my senior year, I even started cutting classes and spent my days sitting in the cafeteria.

I had grown up attending the Christian Science Sunday School, and though I respected and appreciated the men and women in our branch Church of Christ, Scientist, I nevertheless developed a conviction that God did not exist. Sunday School taught me that God was good and only good, but it felt as though the power of the universe had nothing better to do than crush me completely, without mercy. Still, God was all I had learned of as help in the world, and I didn't know of any other power that could rescue me from the tragedy of a ruined existence. So with whatever faith I did have, I was continually asking, begging, God to please help me.

At some point I felt impelled to read *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, and went through it cover to cover at least a dozen times. The book is permeated with a compelling, irresistible sense of hope on every page. And the effects I was feeling from reading it—pinpricks of light in the darkness—were explained by this passage: "Truth has a healing effect, even when not fully understood" (p. 152). I

also started reading articles in the Christian Science periodicals, along with the weekly Bible Lesson. I sent away for information about the early Christian Science workers, and they became the heroes I looked up to and admired above all else. I loved their straightforward lives of devotion to the Cause of Christian Science, and their ability to practice Christian healing.

One night, as I lay in bed marveling at the unusual quietness of the evening, I began to consider some of the things I'd recently read that were gaining traction in my thought. Two that stood out were this beautiful verse from the Psalms, "When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Psalms 61:2), and a line from *Science and Health*: "The three great verities of Spirit, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience,—Spirit possessing all power, filling all space, constituting all Science,—contradict forever the belief that matter can be actual" (pp. 109–110).

After I spent a few minutes pondering these ideas in the darkness, my thought suddenly became startlingly clear—"clear as crystal," as the book of Revelation says (22:1). It was as though, without realizing it, I had been held under water for a very long time, when all of a sudden I was unexpectedly released and shot to the surface. For two weeks after, all my waking moments were suffused with an awareness of the infinite reality of God's presence. I felt genuine, boundless joy for the first time in years.

This was my first glimpse of the reality of God and His goodness, and through God's continuing grace, it was not my last. All my troubles didn't van-



ish instantly, but from that moment on I have never doubted God's existence and power. And since then, I've devoted myself to discovering "more of the divine presence" that "is always at hand," as it says in *Science and Health* (p. 12).

Christian Science has become precious to me, and I've come to see it as the greatest benefit to humanity. The Bible has become a treasure, and I have learned to love the life and example of Christ Jesus and Mrs. Eddy's selfless contribution to mankind's salvation from every

claim of sin, sickness, and death. Where once I believed God couldn't possibly exist, now I can't imagine a life without the knowledge and awareness of God, of Truth and Love.

Christian Science raised me up above the drowning wave and set me on a course of usefulness and spiritual discovery. It healed me of the crippling depression and gave me a reason to live. I have learned that, when the need is great, the answer in Christian Science is always greater. ●

Originally published in the February 12, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Talk to my friends about Christian Science? Me?

By COURTLYN REEKSTIN

I didn't expect a trip to Central America to lead to a discussion about religion and spirituality. But that's what happened during my senior year of high school.

I was visiting Guatemala and staying with a host mother and several volunteers. Christian Science came up in one of our conversations, and these volunteers were asking me about it, as well as about spirituality in general.

One thing I've always tried to do when I get questions about Christian Science is to share ideas that I think the person asking the questions can relate to, or that he or she might find meaningful. For example, the idea that God is Love and only Love is something that's pretty amazing when you think about

what it really means. I shared that idea, and one of the volunteers, who considered herself spiritual but not religious, really seemed to connect with that. We also talked about healing through prayer, though one of the other volunteers was a little skeptical about that idea.

Well, just two nights after we had this talk, I got really sick. I was throwing up throughout the night and the following morning, which alarmed the girls and my homestay mom. They wanted to take me to the doctor, but I assured them they didn't have to worry—I was praying.

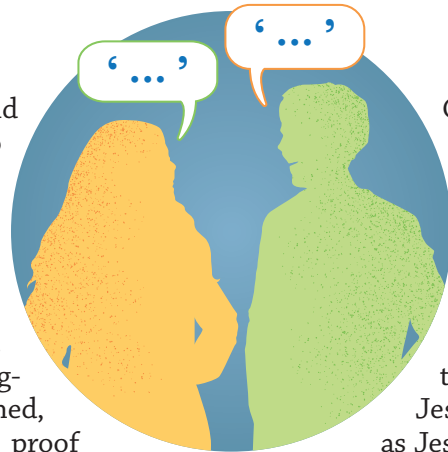
I ended up having a really quick healing. By that evening I was eating again, and the next day I was completely well. I thought it was so cool that the girls wit-

nessed such a quick and complete healing. To me, it actually felt like one of the best possible ways to “explain” Christian Science to people unfamiliar with it, because I got to live it. Whether or not they registered what had happened, they got to see healing proof of what I’d been talking about.

Not every conversation about Christian Science is necessarily going to lead to someone witnessing a healing, but to me this is a good reminder that the way we live our lives as Christian Scientists is a really effective way of “explaining” what Christian Science is. Loving others, choosing to see others the way God made them, and sharing our healings are all ways of helping people catch the spirit of what Christian Science is all about.

Another thing that’s helped me speak more freely about Christian Science has to do with the way I’m thinking about Christian Science even before I get in a conversation about it. If I’m loving Christian Science and all that Christian Science is about—knowing how wonderful it is, rather than feeling like it’s weird, or difficult to talk about—then when an opportunity comes up to talk about it, that love for Christian Science guides my conversation. I’ve seen how people respond receptively to my genuine love for and excitement about Christian Science.

In addition, one thing my Christian Science Sunday School teacher helped me understand about these conversations is that it always helps to find ideas that the other people can connect to and understand, such as the idea that



God is Love that I shared with my housemates in Guatemala. Or, if the person you’re talking to is also Christian, you could share that as Christian Scientists, we too follow the Bible and the teachings of Christ Jesus. We strive to heal as Jesus did, by looking to his teachings and example. In fact, Je-

sus expected us to be healers, because he said, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do” (John 14:12).

Going into the conversation with the idea that you don’t have to personally prove anything to anyone is also really helpful; the Truth you live will do the proving. I’ve found, also, that a desire to share simply because you love Christian Science and you know how much it’s helped you leads to their receptivity. And it’s so important to love the person you’re talking to enough to really hear what they’re asking and to let God speak through you. Love them enough to see them as your brother or sister—not divided by differing perspectives, but bound together by God’s unifying love. Lastly, I’ve found that the conversation usually goes most smoothly when I prayerfully remove any sense of judgment both before and during our talk.

While it can take some practice, each conversation is an opportunity to learn what to say and how to say it with love and grace. That way, whether you find yourself in the school cafeteria or in a foreign country, you’ll be prepared to talk about Christian Science with confidence and conviction. ●

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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

## Hair care

By DEBORAH HUEBSCH

I'd asked a friend to trim the split ends from my waist-length hair. She ended up cutting off four inches. I came unglued—yes, there were tears! When I became coherent again, I recognized that my strong reaction was because I identified myself with the length of my hair. Losing four inches was a threat to the “me” I thought I was.

Huge learning curve here. I began to see that my identity wasn't about my hair, how my jeans looked on me, my grades, the friends I hung out with. My true identity is as a child of God.

What does that mean? This slightly modified Bible passage helped me get clarity: You are the daughter of the King and are all glorious within and without (see Psalms 45:13). I saw that I was created by God and therefore was loved and worthy because of my spiritual identity. This became my “go to” fact every time I needed to remember what defined me: God—not my hair.

Gradually, my thought about my identity shifted and I was free. I even cut my hair short!●

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## The way I really am

By JOHN BIGGS

In sixth grade, I got excited about playing football, but didn't know how I could do it. For much of my childhood, I hadn't been able to participate in sports, because I was hampered by a physical problem. Though my parents had checked in with a doctor about it at one point, there wasn't a guaranteed medical solution. So our family opted to persist in prayer with the help of a Christian Science practitioner. I had grown accustomed to thinking of this as “my problem” and referred to it this way frequently.

So when the idea came to play foot-

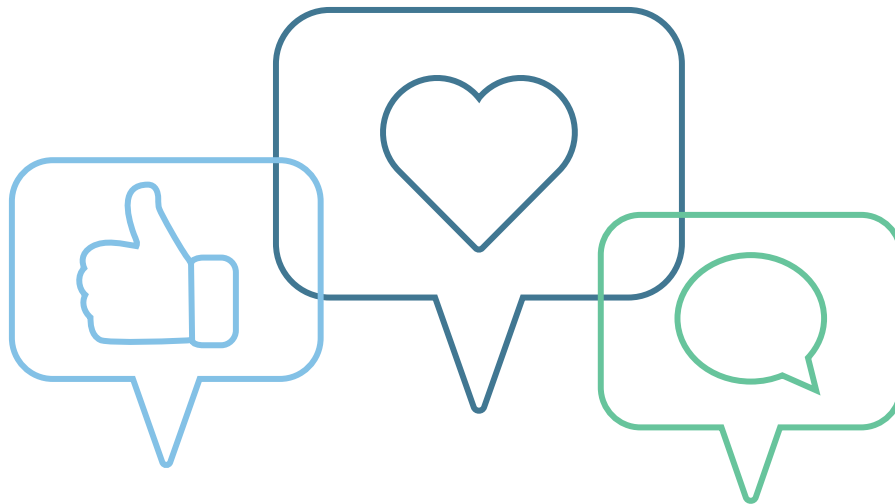
ball, I was surprised by a quiet thought that arrived on the heels of it: that if everything I was learning in the Christian Science Sunday School was true, why wouldn't I be able to participate? This didn't need to be some human process of effort, but rather could be the natural, graceful effect of Truth revealing the truth of my being as whole and free. With the support of my parents and teachers, I started doing sports for the first time. I also made a consistent effort to stop identifying this challenge as my personal problem but, instead, to more consistently identify myself as spirit-

ual—limitless. Within a year and a half, I never experienced this issue again.

Later, when I was a freshman wrestler, my coach noticed that I wasn't engaging normally in our exercises. Since I'd missed all those years of sports and recess, I'd never learned how to move athletically and didn't even know how to jump rope. He told me he'd heard about the healing I'd had, and encouraged me to consider that not only was I free from that problem, but I was also free from the label of being athletically delayed. That was a Friday, and on Monday, after praying about this fuller, spiritual sense of identity, I was able to jump rope flawlessly and even double jump. My athletic performance progressed normally from that point on.

In my study of Christian Science, I came across this wonderful statement by Mary Baker Eddy that struck me as a great description of what happened: "We must look where we would walk, and we must act as possessing all power from Him in whom we have our being" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 264). I had stopped identifying myself as a sick, delayed person, and instead I was walking with the conviction that the truth about me and my freedom really was true. I wasn't "faking it till I made it." I had come to understand that what God knew about me as perfect and unlimited was more valid than any other testimony about my identity. And this brought freedom. ●

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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF



## 'I am a what?'

By MOLLY JOHNSON

Over the summer, I worked as a counselor-in-training at a camp for Christian Scientists. During the first session, it seemed like there was a stomach bug going around—and I was one of the people who got it.

Besides not feeling well, I was very concerned I wouldn't be able to be with my campers on their three-day camping trip.

The Christian Science practitioner at camp was praying for me. One day, as we were sitting together talking, he said, "You are a duck."

My first thought was: I am a *what*?

He went on to tell me that this was an analogy, because ducks have an oil on their feathers that allows the feathers to repel water. He explained that in a similar way, my spiritual identity "re-

pels" anything ungodlike. The fact that I am spiritual means nothing can touch or harm me.

We also looked at the definition of oil in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: "Consecration; charity; gentleness; prayer; heavenly inspiration" (p. 592). I could see how qualities like charity and gentleness are part of my spiritual nature and are my defense against suggestions of illness.

With that recognition, I was soon completely well, and later that day I was able to rejoin my program and participate in the three-day hike with no problems. Since then, whenever I need to remember the way God made me, I always think with a smile: "I am a duck." ●

Originally published in the February 19, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Waking up to healing

By HANNAH GEIS

It was 4:30 in the morning when I woke up feeling like it was hard to breathe and with a painful, scratchy throat. My initial reaction was to dread the upcoming week, assuming that I was going to suffer through a cold.

I was tempted just to go back to sleep. After all, I thought, it was only a cold. I would be uncomfortable for a few days,

and then it would go away—just like every other cold I'd dealt with in the past.

But instead of dozing off, I remembered something I'd heard at a Christian Science lecture just a couple of weeks earlier. The lecturer had shared the idea that any challenge we face—regardless of what form it takes—is a "wake-up call," alerting us to the opportunity for

a change in thought. The real healing takes place as a result of this change in thought—as we get a clearer understanding of all God is and what that means about us as His children.

I thought of a line from Second Corinthians in the Bible where Paul states, “I take pleasure in infirmities” (12:10). I knew this didn’t mean that Paul enjoyed being sick, but that he saw challenges as opportunities to understand more of God’s power and love. So I realized that instead of feeling dread, I could look forward to this healing opportunity. This experience could help me grow as a Christian Scientist and feel closer to God.

I spent the next couple of minutes listening to God, asking what I needed to know. I soon had a gentle thought that, over the past couple of weeks, I had been harboring feelings of irritation and disgust. I had spent a lot of time feeling annoyed with some close friends I thought were being selfish. This revelation didn’t come with a feeling of condemnation. Instead, it was like a little nudge from God to exchange these “cold” thoughts and feelings for a more spiritual view of these friends.

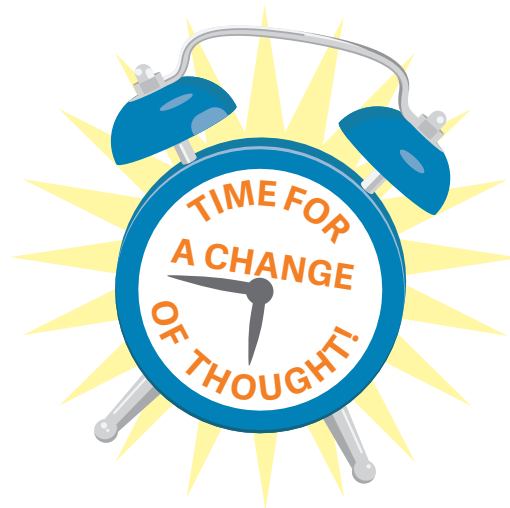
I immediately asked God to help me see them as He did—as expressing His goodness and grace, not selfishness. As I prayed this way, I recalled all of the times these friends had expressed love and selflessness, and I realized that these examples significantly outweighed any “evidence” of other behaviors.

I also recognized that the suggestion that anyone could be selfish and irritating was a completely mistaken view. As God’s children, reflecting only God, these individuals were good and pure, not annoying or self-absorbed. There was never a moment when either of them had been anything less than God’s

expression. I couldn’t have a distorted view of them that could cause me to see them incorrectly.

Once I had recognized this and deeply felt the love, compassion, and selflessness so effortlessly expressed by these friends, it was like the earlier view I’d had of them was entirely erased. Suddenly, I was overflowing with love and gratitude toward these individuals—and all the coldness, frustration, and irritation vanished.

I knew my thought had changed and that the healing had taken place. I fell back asleep right away, and when I woke up a few hours later, I realized that I wasn’t having any difficulty breathing and that my throat was completely pain-free. I was filled with gratitude for the divine messages that had come to me, allowing me to rise above my previous misconceptions about my friends and to recognize that everyone really does reflect God. What had seemed initially like just an annoying cold turned out to be an opportunity for real healing. ●



Originally published in the March 5, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# The right conclusion: God made me free

By GABE DILLEY

It was the end of the school day. I wasn't feeling very well. In fact, I was feeling downright awful, and I had to leave class early because my stomach was upset.

I thought that something I had eaten might have been bad, so as I walked back to my room in the school dorm, I texted my house pop for help. I knew I could rely on prayer for healing, and I thought my house pop might have some spiritual ideas to jump-start my prayers. He texted me back almost immediately and shared a couple of passages from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy that he thought were relevant to my situation.

I sat down on my bed and read one of the passages: "Rise in the strength of Spirit to resist all that is unlike good. God has made man capable of this, and nothing can vitiate the ability and power divinely bestowed on man" (p. 393). Right away I saw that thinking that the food I'd eaten was bad was the thing that was "unlike good." So instead of just giving in to the belief that the food could hurt me, I could resist that suggestion. Then I realized that in reality, I couldn't be sick, since God made me capable only of being good, like Him, and this goodness is what annuls the belief of evil. This idea meant a lot to me, and I prayed with it for about an hour until I fell asleep.

I woke up, still feeling like my stomach wasn't quite right, and saw that my

house pop had texted me again. I read this passage from *Science and Health* from my phone: "Stand porter at the door of thought. Admitting only such conclusions as you wish realized in bodily results, you will control yourself harmoniously" (p. 392).

This was exactly what I needed to read! I realized that, while I'd had the right idea when I'd been praying before, I was still letting in the conclusion that I was sick. Instead, I shifted my focus, gratefully recognizing that God had given

me the authority not to let that erroneous conclusion control my thoughts. Equipped with this gratitude, I felt better almost immediately.

I got up from my bed, and on my way to dinner my house pop asked if I was feeling better. I told him the story, and how the passages he'd sent me helped me understand that I had a God-given right to be completely free. Then I went up to dinner—healed. ●

*I realized that in reality, I couldn't be sick, since God made me capable only of being good, like Him.*

Originally published in the March 19, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# A new way of helping others

By KATHERINE PETICOLAS

“I don’t know,” I answered.

Most days I didn’t feel like I had a very inspired response to my dad’s daily question of, “How did you help someone today?” For the past year, my endless routine of school, soccer, home—repeat—had begun to make me feel like I was going through my day with no purpose, and this was reflected in my answers. But today, as I thought about my dad’s question, I realized that helping someone doesn’t always have to mean picking up trash or holding the door.

I remembered a story that a Christian Scientist who’d come to speak to our school had told about what she’d done when her house was in the middle of one of the biggest wildfires in California. She shared how she prayed for others over herself. She also said that, after the fire, she received calls from Churches of Christ, Scientist, around the world

whose members had prayed for her and her family, and how they’d been protected—and so had their house. This story stuck with me because, instead of praying for herself or her home, the speaker had prayed for others affected by the fires.

I’d always assumed that the only way I could help others was by doing tangible things like helping someone carry something that was too heavy to carry alone or picking something up that one of my classmates dropped in the hall. But as I reflected on what the speaker had shared with us, I realized that I could also help people as much, or even more, by including them in my prayers.

The first place where I put this change of thought into action was in Sunday School. In the past, when we’d prayed silently together during the opening portion of Sunday School, I’d al-



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF



ways struggled to figure out what to pray about, and I often felt like I didn't think about anything useful during that time.

Now, instead of being at a loss for something to pray about, I knew what to do. I started giving gratitude to God for my family and for the people in my school and in my church. Rather than praying about my own needs, I found myself thinking about my friends, family, and more, and letting God show me how I could love them better or see them more spiritually.

I also took this new approach into my soccer practices. That spring was my first high school soccer season, and it was proving to be difficult. I had already tried praying about how things could get better—how I could run faster or be more in shape. But now I started focusing on our whole team. During hard drills or

hot games, I prayed by giving gratitude for my teammates and acknowledging that our strength and ability were qualities from God, so they had to be enough. This got me out of a mind-set of praying from a standpoint of lack. I began being thankful for all the good from God that I knew I already had, since God's goodness is ever present. And instead of wishing to be a better player, I gave gratitude for all the ways I was expressing God.

Praying for others also had a powerful effect on me. I began to notice, and feel grateful for, the good in my life and to feel more of a sense of purpose. The feeling that I was stuck in the dull repetition of a routine vanished, and now I'm grateful every day for opportunities to help others in the most powerful way I know how: by putting prayer into action. ●

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*Come we daily then, dear Father,  
Open hearts and willing hands,  
Eager ears, expectant, joyful,  
Ready for Thy right commands.  
We would hear no other voices,  
We would heed no other call;  
Thou alone art good and gracious,  
Thou our Mind and Thou our All.*

—Elizabeth C. Adams  
*Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 58, © CSBD

# No 'smell of fire'

By KELSEY HANSER

I was playing capture the flag at camp when I fell and injured my knee. I couldn't walk. I was terrified; nothing like this had ever happened to me before. I had never needed to rely on Christian Science for something this "big" before.

My brother was very helpful and shared an article with me from *The Christian Science Journal* (March 1928). It was called "'Nor the smell of fire'" by Vera E. Barndollar, and reading it brought me some comfort. The article talks about the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the Bible and the way they emerged completely untouched, without even the smell of fire on them, after being thrown into the fiery furnace. The author makes the point that the "smell of fire" can be seen as the belief that something awful happened to us, and that an understanding of God's presence and power helps remove any lingering belief that we've been through something difficult or painful.

The article helped me realize that, by accepting this injury, I was accepting the suggestion that there was a singular moment when I was outside of God's protection. Knowing my oneness with God and that there never was a moment when I had been separated from God, meant I didn't have to try to heal the effects from an injury. In reality, there was no injury to heal, since nothing bad had occurred. There was no "smell of fire"!

As I prayed with this idea throughout the week, I steadily improved to the point where I could fully participate in

camp activities again. This was great—until I fell on my knee again, and it seemed like all the work I had done the week before was undone in an instant.

I got even more frustrated, since earlier that morning in Sunday School I'd been so excited about the amount of progress I had made. I was talking to my

younger sister about my disappointment, when she shared the story from the book of Genesis about Jacob wrestling with an angel. At dawn the angel declares, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." To which Jacob responds, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis 32:26).

As I thought about this story, I realized that I wanted to be done with this knee problem so badly that I hadn't stopped to consider the blessings all my prayers and "wrestling" had brought me. I could see that those blessings included the opportunity to dig deeper into what I'd been learning in Sunday School and to witness how effective the healing power of divine Love really is. My frustration evaporated, and I continued praying and feeling grateful for what I was understanding through my prayers.

Less than a week later, I was able to walk freely and enjoy all my normal activities, including a dance kickline that I'd been unsure if I would be able to participate in again. Things were looking up, and I left that camp to attend a sports camp for dance. I was very excited, especially since I'd been worried that this knee injury could interfere with my ability to dance. >

*Refusing to accept what the physical senses were telling me was the key to healing.*

Everything was going fine until one afternoon, while doing a turn, I fell onto the same knee. I felt a surge of extreme annoyance that all the prayerful work I'd been doing had, once again, been undone in an instant. I left dance rehearsal struggling to walk and struggling to know what to do. I went over all the ideas that had helped me before but felt uninspired and stuck in the problem.

I was flipping through the Bible, as well as *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* and other writings by Mary Baker Eddy, looking for anything that could help me, when I came across this question addressed in Mrs. Eddy's book *Unity of Good*: "Is anything real of which the physical senses are cognizant?" I started to read Mrs. Eddy's answer and was blown away by the first sentence: "Everything is as real as you make it, and no more so" (p. 8).

In an instant, I realized what my mistake was! I was accepting this knee injury as real because of what the five physical senses were telling me. They were saying that there had been an injury and that I had to experience its effects (the "smell of fire"). I saw that refusing to accept what the physical senses were telling me—because it wasn't based in God, and therefore must be untrue—was the key to healing.

When I finally said "no" to what my knee was telling me and accepted that I had always been safe in God's care, all the pain disappeared and didn't come back. In spite of having struggled with this problem three times, I'm now able to walk and dance freely and to know that I was completely untouched by any suggestion of an accident. ●

Originally published in the April 2, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## What does it mean to live in God's kingdom?

By TYLER WILLIAMS

About midway through a two-week service trip to Guatemala, my group took a weekend excursion to Santa Cruz la Laguna. Shortly after we returned, some of the students I was traveling with began to feel unwell. A day or two later, I also began to feel ill. I thought, "Oh, no. This is going to be awful," because some of my friends had described how they'd felt while they were sick,

and I didn't want that to happen to me.

After breakfast that day, I went to the Christian Science practitioner who had traveled with us and asked for her help in finding a place to begin with my prayers. The idea that she shared with me was that no matter where I am in the world, I am always in the kingdom of God, and there is no sickness in His kingdom. This means that I can never

be outside God's care or protection, or outside His loving all-presence—which excludes sickness—because God governs everything, everywhere. She also shared the idea that I am an expression of divine good, and as that expression, I can't also embody something bad, like illness. I prayed with these ideas throughout the day, and also read the weekly Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly* when I needed to feel inspired. I knew that keeping my thought close to God was a way of feeling more tangibly that I really was in God's kingdom.

Our service projects in Guatemala included assisting in the construction of dining and kitchen areas for a nursing facility in the morning, and teaching English at a local school in the afternoon. Unfortunately, on this particular day, I wasn't able to do much during the morning construction, although I could do small things to help. During lunch, I didn't order anything except a bottle of water. That afternoon, I was excused from working in the school so I could rest. I did rest, but I also continued to pray about being in the kingdom of heaven; I really wanted to understand what that idea meant for me in this situation.

While traveling back to our accommodations later that afternoon, I started to feel worse. I knew this was when I most needed to persist with my prayers, because I saw that the discomfort was a distraction from what I'd been understanding about God. So I stayed back in my room while the rest of my class went to dinner. Sticking with this idea about being in the kingdom really helped me

overcome the fear I'd been feeling, and when one of my roommates brought back some food after dinner, I was feeling well enough to eat something. By the time I fell asleep that night, I had made a lot of progress and was no longer impressed by what my body was doing, because I was remembering that I was embraced by God.

When I woke up the next day, I didn't notice any of the symptoms that had bothered me the day before. At breakfast, I was able to eat a full meal. Later that morning, I contributed to the construction work. And I went on to have an excellent afternoon of teaching, and to enjoy my time with my friends throughout the day. I was so grateful for everyone's support and for the new understanding of my identity as spiritual and governed by God that I gained from this healing.

Later, when I returned home, I was able to share this experience with my church at a Wednesday evening testimony meeting. This was the first time I'd shared a healing at a testimony meeting. ●

*Keeping my  
thought close to  
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Originally published in the April 16, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



# The right ideas when you need them

By LEYLA GHANEM

**"M**usic to my ears." It was a few weeks into the school year when this phrase suddenly popped into my head. And while I didn't know why, this cliché felt very profound to me. I immediately made a note of it on my phone, then quickly forgot about it.

Around the same time, I was taking a graphic novel class (composing a novel in comic strip form), and we'd begun writing a story that would become our own graphic novel. A few weeks later, the rough draft of my story had come together. All I needed was a title.

One day, as I was looking through the notes in my phone, I came upon the note I had written a few weeks before: "music to my ears." That was when it occurred to me that this could be the title for my graphic novel.

At first, I was skeptical. I'd recorded the idea weeks before, when I hadn't even been thinking about my project. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized how perfectly the title worked for my novel. Even when I tried to come up with another title, nothing came to mind. No other title was possible. This was it. But how could I have known the title when I didn't yet know how my project was going to turn out?

In the Christian Science Sunday School, I'd learned that another name for God is Mind, and that as God's children we are the expression of the one Mind.

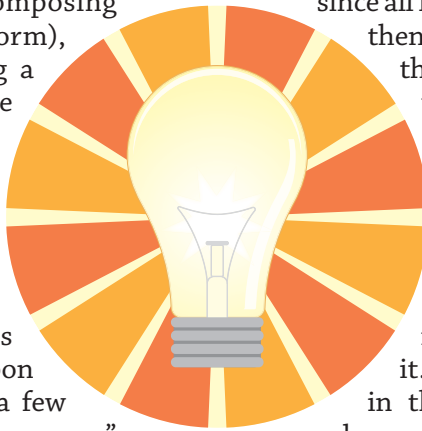
So where could this inspiration have come from? The answer, of course, is the one Mind. As Mary Baker Eddy explains in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, this Mind is "all-hearing and all-knowing," the Mind "to whom each need of man is always known and by whom it will be supplied" (p. 7). I could see how

since all ideas are included in Mind, then it wasn't a coincidence that those four words came to thought at the time they did.

In fact, as I think about it, I've experienced God's supply many times through the arrival of a useful and perfect idea right when I needed it. I've been walking to class, in the shower, about to fall asleep, and a perfect idea will come

to me answering a need in an assignment or project. I know that receptivity for these ideas could only originate in divine Mind, because they've never come as the result of my own mental straining or efforts. These ideas come as a clear flash of light—an inspiration rather than an exertion. And because we each reflect this Mind, it's natural for each of us to know whatever we need to know. Understanding this truth, that such "lightbulb" moments are never of our own creating, helps to relieve stress and free us from a sense of personal responsibility surrounding whatever assignments or projects we need to complete.

Sometimes it can feel like we have to search for the right idea or word, or



that we're straining to hear God's voice or working to receive His help. But when we realize that we already live in "the unsearchable realm of Mind" (*Science and Health*, p. 264), then our job is really more about opening our eyes to inspiration that is already in Mind. However, I have found that it's helpful to be disciplined in acknowledging that there is only one Mind. A clear sense that we don't have a personal mind of our own,

coupled with a calm trust in Mind's allness, helps lift us out of the dark moments when the way seems unclear, and brings the necessary ideas to light.

Discovering that God truly is supplying everything I need, even the little things, and that He will answer even before I ask, is truly "music to my ears." I have found so much joy in tuning in to His eternal song a little more each day. ●

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## All I needed for healing

By CHRIS MINARD

"Tackle football @1?" It was early one summer morning when I got a text message from my friends, asking if I wanted to play tackle football that afternoon. I was hesitant at first, because one of my knees had been bothering me, and it had stopped hurting only the day before. But I love playing football with my friends, so I said yes.

When I got to the field later that day, I got right into the game. I was having no problems, and we were having a blast.

Then, out of nowhere, my knee started hurting a lot; but I decided to play through it, hoping that if I ignored it, the pain would go away. I did this for a while, but then the pain started getting unbearable. So I subbed out, sat down away from the field, and tried to feel closer to God. From past experiences, I knew that feeling God's presence is a healing thing, because where the all-power of good is, there is no room for pain or any-

thing bad. I thought to myself that God would not make me injured or unhappy, because He makes only good things. So I could be and stay only good—the way God made me.

Then I called my mom, who is a Christian Science practitioner. She shared that I could play for the glory of God, and that He would not let anything harm me. That made me feel much better, and the fear about my knee totally vanished. After hanging up, I jumped right back into the game and didn't feel any pain in my knee at all. And at the end of the game, I was so grateful for the way a change in my thought, based on seeing things more spiritually, had allowed me to play with freedom.

On the bike ride home, I had to ride down a big hill with a pothole at the end of it. I ran over the pothole hard, and the same knee that had bothered me before hit the handlebars. A sharp pain went through it. I told myself not to panic,

because, honestly, it felt a lot worse than the first time. But instead of worrying about the pain, I reminded myself of the healing I had just had.

I let my friends go ahead of me and pulled over into a nearby parking lot. As I began praying again, I remembered part of a verse from Hymn 134 in the *Christian Science Hymnal*: “The thought of Thee is mightier far, / Than sin and pain and sorrow are” (Samuel Longfellow). This verse meant a lot to me, because the thought that God is bigger than the



pain, sorrow, and fear was very reassuring. And it calmed me down to realize that knowing God was enough. Know-

ing what God is—completely good and all powerful—was really all I needed for healing. My knee stopped hurting within minutes, and I biked home, feeling really grateful. It hasn’t hurt since.

I’m thankful to know that I am never separated from God’s care, and for this demonstration of how an understanding of God can heal any problem. ●

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## Prayer stops a sexual assault

By SHARON DEC

Right after college, I moved to another country. It was my first time in a busy metropolis and my first time taking public transportation during rush hour. On this particular day, the streetcar I was riding was so crowded that you literally couldn’t move in any direction or turn around.

A few minutes into my ride, I realized that I was being touched inappropriately. Because the train was so crowded, there was no way I could physically stop or escape the assault. I felt trapped and afraid.

I was new in my study of Christian Science, but I understood enough to know that even if I felt helpless, I could

still pray. So my very simple, heartfelt prayer was, “God, tell me what to do.”

The answer came immediately: “Love him.”

I was shocked and a little annoyed. “You’ve got to be kidding me,” I thought. “How can I love someone who’s doing this to me?”

“He can never touch the you God knows,” came the reply.

How does God know me, or you, or any of us? Someone once explained to me that one way of thinking about it might be, if God looked in a mirror, you would be what He would see. Wow! This doesn’t mean that any of us *is* God, but that everything God is, we express, be-

cause we reflect Him. As the Bible says: “As he is, so are we in this world” (I John 4:17). That means, if God isn’t afraid, then how could I be? And afraid of what? A bad man? Who could have made that bad man? Not God, who is completely good.

In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy makes this point about confronting and overcoming evil: “At all times and under all circumstances, overcome evil with good. Know thyself, and God will supply the wisdom and the occasion for a victory over evil” (p. 571). Note that she doesn’t say “victory over an evil person,” because evil is not a person. It has no name, face, or identity, because God didn’t make it. Instead, you might call it a case of mistaken identity—a lie that masquerades as a person, but could never be true about God’s image. A victimizer—or a victim—would certainly not be what God saw if He looked into a mirror.

The next sentence on that same page says, “Clad in the panoply of Love, human hatred cannot reach you.” If divine Love is ever present, then Love is never absent. If Love, our Father, is never absent, then how could I not feel totally safe in His care? And God’s love is so complete that, since I am safe from the effects of wrong action, the other per-

son must be freed from all wrong desire, shown the emptiness of that wrong desire, and reformed to be the man God created. Knowing how safe I was—how safe we all were—I suddenly felt peaceful, at one with my Father, and completely protected.

This all happened very quickly—perhaps in a matter of minutes. The next time I was aware of my surroundings, I realized that the inappropriate touching had stopped. There had been no train stops, and no opportunity for anyone to move, but the problem had ceased.

I got off that streetcar in awe of what had just happened—in awe of the quick realization of my freedom. And I never suffered any aftereffects; I truly felt unscathed by the whole episode.

The greatest blessing for me, though, was that through this experience, I gained a deeper sense of our real and only identity as wholly and completely spiritual and untouched by any suggestion of evil. This new understanding of our spiritual identity has been the basis of other healings I’ve had over the years, and has enabled me to help others as well. It has even given me the freedom to go into prisons and hold Christian Science services without fear or anxiety, knowing that everyone I meet is, in reality, harmless, innocent, and good. ●

Originally published in the April 30, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

*The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in  
safety by him; and the Lord shall cover  
him all the day long, and he shall dwell  
between his shoulders.*

—Deuteronomy 33:12



# Self-doubt: Exit stage right

By JULIET BECK

It was the week before auditions for my school's spring musical, and I was feeling nervous and discouraged. I kept comparing myself to everyone around me—and comparing my voice to the voices of more experienced singers. I felt bombarded with thoughts like, “You shouldn’t even try.” “Listen to how much better she sounds than you.” And, “You’re too timid to be able to do this.”

I was worried mostly about the singing portion of the audition, and had been trying to pray about it, as I’ve always done in challenging situations. One day, when my mom and I were praying together about the fear I was feeling, I read Hymn 216 from the *Christian Science Hymnal*. The second verse says:

O wait on Him with veneration,  
Be silent in humility;  
He leads you after His own counsel,  
His will is done and still shall be;  
All good for you His wisdom planned;  
O trust in God and understand.  
(Georg Neumark, adapt. © CSBD)

The part that stood out to me was the command to “be silent in humility.” I realized I needed to let go of any kind of ego that had me caught up in wanting a lead role. The purpose of singing, acting, dancing—anything we do—is to praise God, because He is the source of all that we are. The size of the role wasn’t really important, because no matter what I ended up doing onstage, I’d still be glorifying God and expressing joy. The

instruction in First Timothy to “be not highminded” (6:17) was a further confirmation of the need to put aside a desire for personal glory and to recognize that I am the expression of God.

As I continued to prepare for the audition, a conversation with a teacher in my school also helped me. She could tell that I was really nervous and doubting myself, and she reminded me that everyone hears this “tune”—in other words, that we’ve all felt the pull of self-doubt.

But, she explained, we can affirm and claim our birthright: As children of God, who is good, we reflect only His goodness, and we reflect it completely. What, then, is there to doubt?

I realized that the source of all this self-doubt was simply fear and the belief in lack—fear that I wouldn’t be good enough, and the belief that I didn’t have what I needed to succeed. Once I’d identified the root of these feelings, I could see their unreality clearly. I reasoned very simply this way: Since God is All, there can’t be fear or lack of any sort. Divine Love being All leaves no place for fear. And God, good, being All means that we must always have what we need.

Right before the audition, my mom texted me part of Hymn 207 by Mary Baker Eddy:

Beneath the shadow of His mighty wing;  
In that sweet secret of the  
narrow way,  
Seeking and finding, with the angels  
sing:



“Lo, I am with you always,”—watch  
and pray.

(Hymnal)

It was so comforting to be reminded that God was right there with me. I walked onstage knowing that I was there to glorify God, and that in His presence I couldn’t be afraid.

After the audition, I felt filled with joy. And I ended up getting a part that was perfect for me. Though it wasn’t a lead, the role included singing, acting, and dancing—all things I love and really wanted to do. An unexpected bonus

was that the director also offered me the opportunity to be assistant director—a role I had a little experience with and found to be a fun challenge.

Putting aside a sense of myself as an independent actor and letting God work through me has helped me in all aspects of my life. I find I’m capable of doing much more, because I know it isn’t me doing it all by myself. Moment by moment, God is “giving us strength according to our day” (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, p. 5), along with courage, joy—anything we could possibly need. ●

Originally published in the May 14, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Black and white? Or brothers?

NAME WITHHELD

It was my first week in college in the United States, and I didn’t understand what was going on with my roommate. At first I’d been friendly, but he wasn’t very responsive. So I backed off—thinking he needed his space. However, I soon noticed that, while he didn’t seem to want to talk to me, outside of our room he was friendly with others.

I had never been in a situation like this before—of being around someone, having to *live* with someone, who was pretending I didn’t exist. The atmosphere in our room was tense, and in our limited interactions he was always unfriendly and impolite.

One day, a guy across the hall told me he knew what was going on. My roommate had a reputation for being racist.

The problem wasn’t me but the color of my skin.

I had never faced anything like this before, and I didn’t know what to do. I was trying to pray, but I was also struggling with feelings of confusion and hurt.

When I woke up the next day, I wasn’t feeling very well. This heavy burden seemed to be pressing down on me to the point that I could barely get out of bed. I couldn’t even go to my classes.

I spoke with my mom and my host family about what was going on, and we prayed together. We worked from the standpoint that because God is One, man, which includes everyone, must also be one. Any suggestion of division or animosity could only be a mistaken view of man—powerless to act, influ-

ence, or divide God's innocent children.

I was also reading the book *Mary Baker Eddy: Christian Healer* (Yvonne Caché von Fettweis and Robert Townsend Warneck) and had been thinking about what Mary Baker Eddy truly meant when she referred to our affections for our fellow man. It dawned on me that this kind of pure love that heals includes no judgment—including my own judgment toward my roommate. Yes, I realized, I'd been judging him by labeling him as a racist. While I'd thought the problem was just the fact that he had been identifying *me* incorrectly, I could now see that I had also been misidentifying *him*. At some point that misidentification had turned into a feeling of hate. But now, divine Love was purifying my affections and enabling me to see him differently—to truly love him as my brother.

I felt better soon after that and returned to my classes. Over the next couple of weeks, my continued prayers also brought more light to my thoughts, and I began to see my roommate more clearly as a child of God. I could admit and even cherish the idea that we both have the same Father. Because we were both created by God, there was nothing he had that I didn't have, and vice versa. And having the same Father-Mother God meant that we live under the same divine laws of harmony. The labels I'd put on him began to fall away, and I was able to begin thinking about him without judgment.

At the end of the third week of school, it was his birthday. I was surprised when I walked into our room to find him there

with the cookies his mom had sent him, wanting to share them with me. To be honest, even though I'd been expecting healing as I'd prayed, I didn't expect this! He said he wanted this moment to be just for the two of us.

As we sat there eating cookies, he began to say things that showed even more clearly how divine Love had been working in both our hearts. He acknowledged that there were many people he hadn't treated right, including me, and that he'd been praying to overcome that; he said he was having prayerful help from a friend as well.

"I'm really sorry for anything unkind I've done," he told me. "I truly didn't want to hurt you."

After that, we actually became friends. It was amazing to see the change in him and the way he continued to grow that semester. I never felt any lingering resentment toward him. In fact, to this day we're friends. Whatever differences seemed so apparent before have faded in light of the truth of what we both are: children of the same God. Brothers. ●

**Whatever  
differences  
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of what we both  
are: children of  
the same God.**

Originally published in the May 14, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# When I thought I was going to drown, God was there

By CHLOE THIES

One Saturday morning during my high school sailing class, we sailed into San Francisco Bay. For weeks we'd been practicing our sailing skills while it was very calm—waiting around for any bit of wind. But today was different. There was a nice breeze, and for the first time we were allowed to sail all the way out into the bay. As the more experienced sailors, my friend and I had been sent ahead of the rest of the class.

As we entered the bay, the wind picked up, and the waves grew. We had been instructed to sail on a particular course, and while we were turning our boat to stay on this path, a large gust of wind capsized us. In a matter of seconds, my friend and I were underwater. Both of us were trapped under the sail, and my foot was caught in the ropes in the boat's cockpit.

I was inhaling gulps of water and thought I was going to drown. But right in that moment, I felt the presence of God guiding me. I knew it was God, because I felt a sense of calm that wouldn't have otherwise made sense, given how scary the situation seemed.

In the Christian Science Sunday School I attend, I've learned that God is always with me, and that His guidance comes to us through angel messages. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy describes *angels* as "God's thoughts passing to man; spiritual intuitions, pure and perfect; ..." (p. 581). These angel messages gave me direct and clear guidance on how to escape the situation. First, I pulled both of us out from under the sail, allowing us

to breathe. Then, I found a way to disentangle my foot from the ropes.

We righted our boat, but I was feeling pain in my ankle and lungs and was afraid of capsizing again. I took a moment to pray for help. The first thing that came to mind was the story of Jesus calming the sea in the middle of a storm (see Matthew 8:23–26). The Bible records what happened this way: "He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm." As I thought about this story, I realized that the real problem in our situation wasn't the physical wind and waves we were facing, but rather the "storm" of fear in my thought. Windy weather is exactly what you want for sailing, so I didn't need the wind to cease. I just needed to get rid of the fear so I could sail confidently; I knew I had all the skills necessary to do so. The thought of Christ Jesus calming the storm calmed me. I realized that the same power of God that was with Christ Jesus was with me—protecting and guiding me.

For me, one helpful way of understanding God and God's universe is through math analogies. For example,  $2+2=4$  is a fixed mathematical law. Similarly, it's a law that our real spiritual identity is God's image; as it says in the Bible, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). You don't have to make these rules true; they're true no matter what. And they never change. As time passes, two plus two will always equal four. This is also true for all of God's laws. In this

situation, I reasoned with the spiritual law that a spiritual idea of God always reflects God, so it can never be injured, waterlogged, or afraid. And as God's perfect spiritual idea, I couldn't be either. This recognition eliminated my fear, and the pain began to subside.

We were able to finish our course and sail back to the marina. Once we docked and explained what had happened, the yacht club officials were concerned and put my foot in a brace. However, when I got home and took a shower, I took the brace off so it wouldn't get wet. In the shower I continued to pray with the idea that I am the image and likeness of God. By the time I'd finished showering, I had forgotten all about the brace.

A few hours later, I was headed to a friend's house to celebrate her birthday.

At this point, my foot was still bothering me a little, but I wasn't fearful or concerned. I knew that God created me to fully express His joy, and that nothing could interfere with that. I felt comfort in knowing that, as God's spiritual reflection, we are completely unlimited. By the time I reached my friend's house, the pain in my ankle had vanished, and I knew I'd been healed.

This healing happened almost two years ago and has continued to help me. When other situations have tempted me to feel fearful—be it a hard test, learning how to drive, or relationship issues—I've thought about this healing, and it's reminded me that God is always here to protect me, guide me, and give me peace and joy. ●

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## On track with God

By DEAN COLAROSS

I have always loved running, and track was a highlight of my high school career. I competed in the sprints, including the 400 meters, the 200 meters, and both sprint relays. My junior year, I even qualified to run in the California Winter State Championships.

In the weeks leading up to the meet, I was dealing with a flood of fear and negative thoughts about my races. This seemed to be a mental pattern for me prior to any important competition. Though I would run well during practices, and complete all the physical train-

ing to be successful on meet day, I'd find myself bogged down by fear whenever I would think about my races.

I didn't want to be burdened by these thoughts, and I also knew that being fearful wasn't a good pre-race mindset. Frustrated, I took my concerns to my Christian Science Sunday School teacher, hoping to find a way to deal with these fears, rather than being bullied by them. At that point, it was obvious to me that the only way to change the way I was thinking about my races was to turn to God. All my life, I've found healing



and peace as I've prayed, listening to and trusting God. So it was logical to think that understanding something more about God could help me this time, too.

My teacher reminded me that fear is a suggestion that God's goodness isn't going to be there, or that we could somehow be separate from God and outside of His care. But this couldn't be true because God is ever present, so His goodness is always expressed everywhere, in every situation. This goodness includes all the qualities I needed to run a successful race. During our Sunday School class, I wrote down a list of these qualities, including courage, perseverance, strength, joy, freedom, and love for my teammates and the sport.

In the week leading up to the race, instead of letting myself be overwhelmed with fear or negativity, I consistently allowed those qualities to fill my thoughts—putting them into action during practices and keeping them at the forefront of my thought whenever I considered my upcoming races. As the week went on, the fear and anxiety that had seemed so oppressive started to fade away. I even began feeling peaceful when I would think about the competition. I realized that I wasn't running

for some kind of personal achievement; I was running to glorify God. I also prayed with the idea of letting go of human will and trusting God. To me this meant that I didn't need to worry about

my race, because I was letting go of fear, doubt, and personal responsibility and letting God fill me with freedom, and the expectation of good.

Saturday came, and before my race, I felt calm as I continued to focus on expressing spiritual qualities while I ran. The feeling of God's presence completely replaced any fear or worry. As the race began and I barreled

down the track, I felt peaceful, strong, and full of energy. I had a fantastic meet, posting an excellent performance in the sprint medley relay. I attribute my success that day to my complete change of thought about competition, and the fact that my thinking was God-centered, instead of me-centered, before and during my races.

The lessons I learned during that meet have continued to help me during my college track career—especially the understanding that we can always overcome fear through a better understanding of God. ●

*In the week leading up to the race, instead of letting myself be overwhelmed with fear or negativity, I consistently allowed the qualities of God to fill my thoughts.*

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# 'How come bad things happen even if we're praying a lot?'

By JUDY OLSON

**Q:** *How come bad things happen even if we're praying a lot?*

**A:** Don't we all ask some version of that question and have to come to grips with it? I did, anyway.

As a new, eager, earnest student of Christian Science, I loved what I was learning—in a nutshell: God, good, is All. Equipped with that understanding, I thought somehow that things would be so easy. My idea was to read my “nice little Lesson” (the weekly Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*), then go about my “nice little day” of smooth sailing. But bad stuff happened anyway. I knew that, at some point, I'd have to tackle that “bad things” question. Soon I did, when two things in the Bible Lesson bothered me.

First, in the Bible I read something Christ Jesus said to his disciples: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). I didn't like that “t” word (*tribulation*) one bit. And how could Jesus possibly see any “good cheer” in severe trouble?

Then, in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, I found this disconcerting passage: “Trials are proofs of God's care” (p. 66). I didn't like that “t” word either. And how could she possibly see trials as proofs of God's care?

I said out loud, “God, if You're here, and if You're Love”—then I paused, because I was pretty sure both of those were

true—“You'll make sure I don't have any trials.” Admittedly, not my most inspired prayer. And I guess I must've realized that it wasn't really prayer at all—just wishful thinking—because then I got quiet and *really* prayed.

After I spent some time pondering Jesus' and Mary Baker Eddy's teachings and the severe trials they overcame (every one of them!), here's what came to me:

Regarding Jesus: So he didn't promise a rose garden—never said, “Follow me and you'll never have to use these teachings.” But he did equip us well. His ad-

monition “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” now said to me, “And I've given you everything you need to do it, too.” After all, he also told his followers, “All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15). What a robust toolkit! What he taught and proved about God was enough. Still is.

Regarding Mrs. Eddy: In the midst of each of her many trials, never was her thought on the “how dark is my tunnel, how deep is my pit” side. Always, her every thought and prayer was on the “how great is God's love, right here with me” side. And she triumphed, proving God is an ever-present help and gives us everything we need.

Christianity, I was learning, isn't about wanting everything hunky-dory. It's about how to “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21). It's about cultivating our

*How could Jesus possibly see any “good cheer” in severe trouble?*

spiritual sense, which everyone has—and, as *Science and Health* explains, “Spiritual sense is a conscious, constant capacity to understand God” (p. 209). This spiritual sense shows us, unmistakably, the unreality of evil and the allness of good, God.

Since God, good, is All, then all the bad stuff is error, or a mistaken sense of things. It’s “that which seemeth to be and is not” (*Science and Health*, p. 472). Nothing claiming it is something. Whatever form it seems to take—sickness or sadness, hatred or hurtfulness, violence or vanity—error is nothing more than

an attempted denial of God’s goodness, hereness, nowness, and almightiness. But always right here, right now is Christ, the presence of God’s power and the power of His presence, which is ever-active, irresistible, and unstoppable. This Christ, or Truth, is God’s communication to us; it gives us a conviction of God’s omnipotence—and the courage and confidence to prove it.

No matter how many trials we face, and no matter how bad things seem, God’s love for you is so much greater. And He will show you that so you can prove it. I learn that more each day. ●

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## Trusting God— and finding the perfect fit

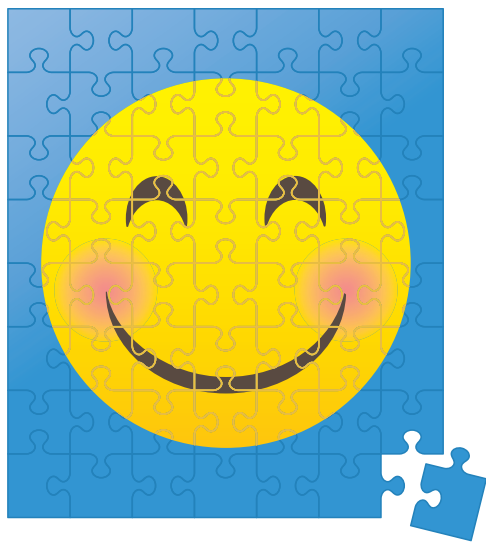
By *HALEY MARTIN*

**F**or my first three years of high school, I felt like a puzzle piece that didn’t fit. I didn’t feel right about where I was, or who I was, either. If my high school was the puzzle, I was the piece that not only didn’t fit—it didn’t even belong.

I learned differently than others did, and I needed an environment where the teachers cared about my education and wanted to work with me. And I also felt misunderstood and out of place. There was a heavy focus on materialism in my school that didn’t seem to leave a lot of room for spirituality. I couldn’t express myself without having my views challenged or dismissed, and that was hard, because turn-

ing to God in prayer is such a big part of my life.

During that whole three-year period, I was praying for an answer. I thought maybe things could change at my high school. But I also had this voice within me that was constantly nudging me to consider trying something new. This voice was one I’ve heard before when I’ve needed direction, and I’ve come to recognize it as God’s. I do trust God; yet, while it kept coming to me to try a boarding school, and I felt like I wanted to do it, I kept coming up with excuses about why I shouldn’t. I was afraid that if I left home, I would lose my friends and sever my close connection to my



family. And I had a lot more worries that made me doubt God's leading. So I always pushed those thoughts about a boarding school far into the back of my head and ignored them.

Then, while working at a camp the summer after my junior year, I noticed something. That feeling of being out of place that I so frequently experienced at home had been replaced with a clear sense of belonging. What really meant the most to me was that I finally felt like I was being seen for what I truly am. Through my new friends' eyes, I saw myself as strong, intelligent, pure, and capable of anything—because I express God. And I felt like I was seeing them more clearly—more spiritually—too.

Through my spiritual growth, I was also learning to trust God more. So on my day off, I finally listened to that divine guidance that I'd been hearing for years and filled out my application for boarding school.

It wasn't like I stopped feeling worried or confused about where I was supposed to be. But for the first time, I was at least willing to listen to what I felt

I was hearing from God and to trust enough to follow. And in those moments of confusion or worry, I turned to Mary Baker Eddy's writings to understand more about my relation to God. I loved this passage from *Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896*: "Let your light reflect Light. Have no ambition, affection, nor aim apart from holiness" (p. 154). This captured what I was feeling about wherever I ended up. I just wanted to be where I could express God to the fullest, and trusting that motive gave me a feeling of peace.

Putting all my trust in God and His guidance, I was able to get on an airplane and move almost two thousand miles away from home, and I am so unbelievably grateful that I did. From the moment I arrived at boarding school, I felt so loved and accepted, and I can see now how all those divine nudges I was scared to listen to for so long really were evidence of God's direction.

This experience taught me so much about listening to and following God. Sometimes it can feel scary to trust, but as one of my favorite hymns in the *Christian Science Hymnal* says, "It matters not what be thy lot, / So Love doth guide" (Mary Baker Eddy, No. 160). It's so reassuring to know that what's guiding us is divine Love, so the result has to be good. It was for me. Trusting God led me to the place where I've finally found my "fit." ●

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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

# Out of the woods

By CHARLEY HOFFMAN

**T**wenty campers. One small cabin. Four days in the woods.

I was spending two weeks of my summer in Colorado with 19 other teens. Part of my summer trip involved four days in the woods in a rustic cabin up in the mountains. Because the cabin is very small, we would all be sleeping and living in close quarters. It was an opportunity to grow closer as a group and to participate in team-building activities.

We arrived at one o'clock in the afternoon, and by six o'clock, two people were feeling sick. By the second day, almost the whole group wasn't feeling well, including our counselors. That left just a few of us to do the chores of 20 people and to take care of everyone. It seemed like something we'd eaten was to blame.

I was doing OK at first, but then I, too, eventually felt sick and started to give in to the discomfort. That's when I had a realization.

In the Christian Science Sunday School, I've learned that we are actually the expression of God, who is totally good. So my realization was that all the qualities we were expressing while we were up there in the woods—including joy, love, and generosity—were evidence of our spiritual nature as the manifestation of God. And where God's goodness is, there's no room for anything negative like sickness. The fact that God fills all

space negates the belief that evil of any kind could be present.

I lay in bed thinking about this idea, and the next day at breakfast, I shared my insight with the group. Everyone really clicked with the idea and agreed that it connected to their own prayers over the last day or two. We could feel

our thoughts shifting and the cloud of sickness lifting. It wasn't instantaneous, but things were starting to turn around.

My favorite part of this healing was that it included everyone. We all woke up to the fact that

God's goodness really is all there is. And by the next day, everyone was ready to participate in our service project for the trip: painting the cabin where we'd stayed. We all jumped into the work with enthusiasm and energy. And afterward, everyone was able to hike back down the mountain.

That night, we sat in a circle and gave gratitude for what we'd just experienced. Though the first couple of days had been difficult, we all agreed that learning to rely on each other—but most of all on God—had been a huge blessing. ●



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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF



# 'I don't know how to pray'

By DEBORAH HUEBSCH

**Q:** *I don't know how to pray.*

**A:** Fasten your seatbelts—prayer is the most wonderful adventure ever!

What prayer is: For me, prayer is drawing close to the creator of the universe. It means getting intimate with God. It is an ongoing exploration of infinite spiritual space and ideas.

The how-to: Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of Christian Science, devotes an entire chapter to the subject of prayer in her textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. There we read, "Desire is prayer; ..." (p. 1). Mrs. Eddy isn't talking about wanting things like boy-friends, cars, or good grades, but rather a heart's desire to feel close to God. Prayer is a yearning thing. An openness to the divine source of all good. Once we're in that place of genuine openness, there are many ways to continue with prayer. Here are a few.

The prayer of petition: The Lord's Prayer is a great example. In this prayer, Jesus instructs us to *ask*—to ask for grace, for our daily bread, for forgiveness, and to not be led into temptation.

Mrs. Eddy gives a wonderful spiritual translation of this prayer on pages 16 and 17 of *Science and Health*.

In addition to the Lord's Prayer, my daily prayer also includes asking God to guide me, to open my eyes to more of His goodness, to show me what it is like to be Her daughter, to teach me how to love Him and His creation more, and so on.

The prayer of affirmation and denial: This can also be called the prayer of "argument." It is affirming God's presence and power and denying the reality of any-

thing unlike God, good. It might sound something like this: "God is all good, filling all space. Therefore \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with whatever may be causing a problem) can't exist." This prayer is helpful when we're struggling with something we don't want in our lives—like fear or not feeling well, for example.

The prayer of gratitude: Sometimes just being grateful puts us in rapport with the Divine, or at least begins to. Gratitude tends to shift our attention away from whatever problems we're facing toward an awareness, and even a conviction, of the allness of God. Being grateful for little things as well as the big ones helps. Clouds, roses, music, seeing evidences of God's presence are among my favorites. We each have our own lists. We're not talking about lip service here, but honest, heartfelt thankfulness.

The prayer of listening: Listening means learning to be silent so we can have what Mrs. Eddy calls "audience with Spirit" (*Science and Health*, p. 15). We silence the world's chatter and open our hearts and thoughts to hear the ideas God, Mind, is imparting to us. It is the nature of Mind to unfold all good. Our job is to listen. As we do, we'll hear amazing things about the universe of Spirit and about ourselves as Spirit's infinite ideas.

The prayer of yielding: This is a wordless surrender, a "God, You take over" prayer. Yielding involves complete trust in God and a letting go of any sense of ourselves as separate from Him.

God answers our prayers. There are a million ways prayer is answered. One is feeling the presence of goodness—maybe even in spite of the circumstances. We feel lighter, happier, more confident of

good. Another is pure peace—an indescribable knowing that we are the loved of Love. Fear disappears from our thinking. Sometimes we actually hear God's words, maybe even out loud. Things in our daily life begin to shift—sometimes gradually, sometimes suddenly.

Recently an eighteen-year-old told me how her prayer was answered: with a simple feeling of conviction. "I have absolutely no doubt that healing happens," she said. This was after she had prayed about a bad cold only days before she had to perform a lead role in a school musical. The next day the cold was almost completely gone, and she went on to perform beautifully, and with complete freedom.

If we don't see results from our prayers right away, it's important to persist. And we can ask God in prayer for that persistence, too. God will always give us whatever we need and show us whatever we need to know—including new ways to pray if we feel uninspired or like we're in a rut.

Prayer isn't a one-way deal. It invites and welcomes God into our thoughts, and the results are change and healing. So we can expect our prayers to be effective. After all, prayer is all about God, the All-in-all. When we turn our thoughts expectantly Godward, the possibilities are infinite. That's an adventure worth going on! ●

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*True prayer is not asking God for love; it is learning to love, and to include all mankind in one affection. Prayer is the utilization of the love wherewith He loves us. Prayer begets an awakened desire to be and do good. It makes new and scientific discoveries of God, of His goodness and power. It shows us more clearly than we saw before, what we already have and are; and most of all, it shows us what God is.*

—Mary Baker Eddy, *No and Yes*, p. 39

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## A COLLECTION FOR TEENS

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