



# 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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# Healing and the ripple effect

By NAME WITHHELD

**M**y older brother was going through a rough time and wasn't very happy with where he was in his life. He also wasn't very open to Christian Science, even though we both had gone to the Christian Science Sunday School when we were younger. During this time, my foot became very irritated, itching almost constantly. It was really hard to avoid scratching it, but I tried to ignore the irritation, hoping it would eventually go away.

To be honest, my mum and I were so focused on praying about the situation with my brother that it didn't really occur to me to pray about my foot. As we prayed, I was very grateful for what I've learned in Christian Science about the fact

that each of us is the child of God, and nothing can change that. You don't have to call yourself a Christian Scientist or even believe in the ideas in order to be God's child. That's just what we are. No matter the circumstance, the spiritual fact is that each of us is always loving and loved, safe, joyful, and peaceful, because that is the way God created His children, and what God made can't be reversed.

Through other healings we've had in our family, my mum and I knew that the best way to help my brother was to see him the same way God sees him. God is good, so God sees only good. We prayed for God to help us see this goodness in my brother, too. We knew that his one and only identity is spiritual and pure and that this identity could never be tak-

en away from him. This meant so much to me, because it reassured me that no matter what difficult things seemed to be going on, the underlying truth about the way God made him was still true.

We also made a list of spiritual qualities that we knew my brother expresses. We saw him as calm, patient, happy, and loved. Any day that he seemed anxious or angry, we made sure that we were still seeing him correctly. Sometimes it was

hard to look past all the negative stuff, especially with the way he was acting, but I held on to what I knew to be true about him and kept loving him.

Another idea my mum and I were praying with was that everyone is God's child, and not one person can

be left out of all the blessings that come with being His child. God loves and cares for everyone equally. All are included in God's family as His sons and daughters. We knew that God didn't love my brother less or give him less joy, satisfaction, or opportunity than anyone else. God's love isn't imparted unequally, with some getting more and some being excluded. This idea gave me a lot of peace, and I didn't worry as much.

After praying with these ideas for awhile, we noticed a change in my brother's attitude. He was happier and not as distressed. He became more determined to get up for work in the morning and wasn't as tired afterward. For awhile, he'd been very closed off and would often stay in his room, but he began to

*All are included in God's family as His sons and daughters. God's love isn't imparted unequally, with some getting more and some being excluded.*

be more open to talking about his day, or how my day was, and would be more engaged in the conversation. He also started staying home more frequently on the weekends and didn't focus as much on partying. Everyone in our family seemed happier, and I felt so grateful.

Not only was my brother improving, but also, to my surprise, the irritation on my foot had vanished as well. And it never came back. I was thinking about what happened, and I realized that our prayers to see everyone as God's perfect child

had clearly included me, too. Changing the way I was seeing my brother—and asking God to give me a more spiritual perspective—was like turning on a light in my thoughts that made any darkness, including the irritation, disappear.

This experience taught me that unselfishness and love are the keys to healing. It also taught me so much about how letting God transform our own thought can have a ripple effect that blesses more than just us. ●

Originally published in the July 9, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## 'What does God's voice sound like?'

By ANNETTE DUTENHOFFER

**Q:** *What does God's voice sound like?*

**A:** I had just left my house to see a friend about an hour away when it hit me: *Did I unplug the curling iron?* I thought, *Of course you did.* Then I thought, *Are you sure?* Then I felt like going back home to check. I thought, *Don't be ridiculous. Of course you did!* Then I turned the car around anyway and went back home to find my curling iron unplugged.

How much of all that racing mental dialogue was actually God speaking to me? None. How am I so sure? There are a couple of ways.

First, to know if you're actually hearing God's voice, you have to consider the nature of God. To me, there's nothing less Godlike than chaotic, worried, back-and-forth thinking. Why?

Because the Bible says, "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty" (Psalms 29:4). I like to think of this verse in light of a couple of Bible-based synonyms for God included in the study of Christian Science—Truth and Love.

The voice of Truth has to reflect the qualities of Truth, which is powerful, factual, and rock solid. Uncertainty, worry, or doubt—the complete opposites of Truth—could never be included in Truth's communication. Also, messages that don't empower us—"I don't know if I'm good enough to do that"—would never come from God's authoritative voice. Your ability to be all that you are—the spiritual representative of God—is a direct result of being the child of all-powerful Truth.

Because you're God's child, divine



Love speaks to you like the best Mom. Her voice directs you calmly, tenderly, and persistently. She provides you with all that you need to make the right decision. She shows you your natural ability to be obedient, because She loves you and has only the best for you.

So if what you're hearing is in line with the nature of Truth and Love, then it's definitely God's voice.

The other way I know that God is speaking to me is this: Even though the thoughts sound like my own thoughts, they're so empowering that I know they come from God.

When I was a senior in high school, I dated a guy who was very possessive. It was flattering at first. But as the relationship went on, it became clear that it wasn't right. I didn't feel like myself anymore, but I didn't know how to get out of the relationship.

One Friday morning, I awoke with that familiar feeling of dread; we were supposed to go out that evening. Then, a distinct voice came to me as this thought: *You can break up with him. Do it today.* It sounded like my own voice,

but the thought came with strength, immediacy, and the ability to obey it. Recognizing that it had to be God's voice, I followed through and freed myself from the relationship that very day.

Even though it was tempting to feel sorry for my boyfriend because he thought I had something to do with his happiness, Love's nature to bless all of Her children supported the message I had heard, and with Truth's help, I stood strong. This led both

of us to move on and develop more satisfying relationships.

To the degree that I have recognized that God's voice must express His nature and power, I have felt loved and capable. His voice has led me in new directions, strengthened me for difficult decisions, and, like a nodding friend, encouraged me to stick with it until whatever needs to be done is done.

The best thing about God's voice is that everyone can hear it. The voice of Truth and Love speaks universally and impartially. Is God's voice clear enough for you to hear? Absolutely! ●

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actually hearing  
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# Exactly the right idea

By JESSICA MUELLER

On a hot Saturday morning in June, my mom, my brother, and I packed a bunch of luggage into my car. My brother and I were heading that day to our favorite place on earth—a camp for Christian Scientists. Even though I had taken the big step from camper to counselor just a few years earlier, being at camp, in whatever role, was always the best part of my summer.

Three hours and a few dusty roads later, we arrived, and I was ecstatic. Our friends greeted us with wide smiles and tight hugs; we couldn't wait to get the session rolling. However, I would soon find out that not everyone was as excited about being at camp as I was.

That night, I was in a cabin with some of the youngest girls, who were staying over into the next session and would soon be moving to new cabins. I helped them get ready for bed, but as they began to settle down, one of the girls appeared upset. I tried to comfort her, but she resisted. She kept saying that she didn't feel at home and that she didn't want to be at camp anymore. I assured her that she would love her new cabin mates and have a blast. But after that, since I could tell she wanted to be alone, I gave her some space. Once each camper was in bed, I turned off the lights and headed to my bunk.

A few moments later, I heard sniffing and turned to see the girl standing near my bed. She had tears running down her face, and told me that not only was she homesick and missing her parents, but she was also afraid that none of her new cabin mates would like her. Since I felt like I hadn't said exactly the right thing earlier, this time I paused

and waited for an inspired thought to come to me. It's always been reassuring to me to understand that God, being infinite Mind and Love, knows each of our needs, and so the best way of helping others is to pause in prayer and let Him give us the right idea.

Soon, a thought came to me, and I knew it was from God because it didn't feel like something I'd thought up on my own. It also felt like just the right thing to say. I asked her, "Why do you love your parents?"

She stopped crying, paused, and responded, "Because they love me and take care of me."

"Do you really need to be with your parents to know that they love you?" I asked.

She perked up. "I guess not."

I said, "You love your parents because they love you unconditionally, right? And we know the same is true about God. We love Him because He loves us, and we can feel and express that love wherever we are." Then I shared the idea



ANNA UTWILLER—STAFF

that when she met her new cabin mates, she could treat them with the same pure love that she feels from her parents and from God. Loving and feeling loved erases all the fear and worry.

I could tell she understood, because she seemed a lot more peaceful. I gave her one last hug and asked her if she needed anything else. She was getting sleepy, so once she said she was OK, I

tucked her into bed and said good night.

In the morning, she was happy and ready to start the day. And she didn't have any problems with homesickness during the rest of the time she was there.

It was so meaningful to me to witness this healing and to see how the right thought from God could have such a powerful impact. ●

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## I didn't buy that app

By SULLIVAN GRANT

During a soccer game, I got cleated very hard in the thigh. My leg hurt, and I was having a hard time walking. My mom and I were praying together about it. I pray a lot about things going on in my life. For example, I've prayed about tests in school or problems with friends. I've learned in the Christian Science Sunday School that I can pray either alone or with help, and that I can expect healing.

One day, my mom and I were talking, and she said that my hurt leg wasn't really the truth about me. That instead of trusting the five physical senses, we can listen to God and everything He's telling us, including that we're spiritual and always safe. Only what God says is true, because God is Truth. I've heard this in Sunday School, too, but I wasn't really understanding what she was saying. It sure seemed like my leg was hurt.

Then my mom reminded me about an app my sister and I like to use. We take pictures of ourselves, and the app dis-

torts the photos so we look ridiculous. She pulled up one of the silly pictures on her phone and asked if the image was really me. It was, but it didn't look anything like me.

My mom said that sometimes our view of ourselves might seem distorted, like the photo altered by the app. We might think we're seeing ourselves differently than the way God sees us. But God sees us only as whole and perfect, and there's no room for any other view.

My mom said, "Sullivan, you didn't 'buy' that app." What she meant was that I didn't "buy," or accept, the app's suggestion, or false view of me. She asked if I or any of my friends would spend our own money on an app that made us think we were sick, dishonest, lonely, not smart, or unkind to others. Of course not. I suddenly understood that I could see myself only the way God sees me, not in a bad or distorted way. >



With that simple thought, I was instantly healed. I was up and walking around right away and back to my everyday things, including soccer. And my leg has been fine ever since.

The best part about this healing is that it's helped me with other problems since then. In another healing I had, my mom reminded me that not only would I not want to accept a distorted image

of myself, but also, an image like that couldn't be true. Actually, a distorted image couldn't even exist; there is nothing that has the power to change one of God's ideas. What God makes is permanently good. That helped me a lot.

I'm so grateful for these insights and healings and what they've taught me about God. ●

Originally published in the August 13, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Beating the graduation blues

By KARINA OLSEN

When I graduated from college, I felt like everything I had known was completely uprooted. The daily structure of school was over. I moved to a new city and started a new job, and many meaningful relationships in my life changed. I desperately wished that none of it had to happen. Even though I told myself it was the natural, inevitable progression of "growing up," it seemed impossible to feel as happy as I had felt just months earlier in college.

As a Christian Scientist, I knew that I could pray about anything challenging in my life, and that included feelings of unhappiness or discomfort. But while I had been reminding myself that I could trust God to be there through all these changes, that reminder didn't have the spiritual punch I needed.

During this time, I often went running on the beach. I loved the opportunity to appreciate my beautiful coastal surroundings, clear my thoughts, and think

about God. But one day while running, instead of feeling inspired, I was hopelessly missing the past. I pitied myself for having to go through such a big change, and wished intensely that everything could've just stayed the same.

When I reached the end of the beach, I turned to start running back and saw the prints of my sneakers in the soft sand. *That's cool*, I thought. *What if, as I run back, I put each step in my previous footprint?* It seemed like a fun little game.

To my surprise, I found that doing this was incredibly hard. Running while trying to place each step exactly where it had been on my initial run—well, I could barely do it! I ran awkwardly, my movement uneven and my freedom limited. My running was no longer liberating and joyful but halting and difficult.

That's when I realized: This was exactly what was happening in my life. Instead of embracing a new path, I was try-



ing to “run” each day in the “footsteps” of the past.

Having grown up in the Christian Science Sunday School, and being a regular reader of the weekly Bible Lesson from the *Christian Science Quarterly*, I was familiar with many passages from the Bible and from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. At this moment, a passage from the Gospel of Matthew popped into my thoughts. It’s the one where Jesus says, “Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved” (9:17).

No wonder everything felt challenging and uncomfortable! I was desperately trying to “put new wine into old bottles.” Instead, I had to be willing to make new footprints—create a fresh path and welcome unfamiliar experiences. I could see how—instead of limiting my happiness—embracing this fresh, more expansive view of my life would actually bring me more joy.

Making this connection between Jesus’ point and my own experience allowed me to let go of the constant longing for the past, because it reminded me of God’s eternal plan of good for each of us. I knew that God was unfolding new chapters in my life that would be full of prosperity, harmony, and happiness. That’s what He had done so far, hadn’t He? And I knew that since God is Principle—steadfast, reliable, unchanging—He wouldn’t suddenly stop now. There was nothing, including graduation, that

could ever cut me off from His goodness, since that divine goodness is as constant as God is. The only thing that was keeping me from reaping all the benefits of God’s eternal blessings and infinite love was my own unwillingness to accept all that God was showing me.

I quickly stopped my little game on the beach, laughing as I cherished this perfect spiritual insight. It was time to welcome the newness instead of resisting it. As I began to do this, I found greater purpose and satisfaction in my new job.

I was able to feel connected to old friends even at a distance, and I also began making new friends. The sadness I had been feeling completely melted away. And as always, the greatest blessing during this time was the spiritual growth that followed this higher understanding of God’s uninterrupted love for me. I no longer yearned for the past; more importantly, I knew that all the good of yesterday, today, and tomorrow was entirely preserved.

Since this healing, I’ve experienced even more change—another move, a new job, and more shifting in relationships. Yet, with each step forward, I’ve remembered how important it is to face newness unafraid and with joyful expectation—and that we can do this because of what we know about the continuity of God’s goodness. ●

***There was nothing, including graduation, that could ever cut me off from God’s goodness, since that divine goodness is as constant as God is.***

Originally published in the August 13, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# Stress-free paper writing

By LINDSEY BIGGS

**I**t was exam time. I had already written five papers and had two more to go. On Friday night I started one of the two remaining assignments. I was feeling a lot of pressure because I needed to finish this paper by Saturday afternoon in order to complete my last one on Monday. Also, I'd never written this particular type of paper before, and I didn't know where to start.

On the private Facebook group for our class, I posted that I was freaking out about this assignment. My classmates offered their own laments. Reading their complaints woke me up. I realized I needed to pray—not just for myself, but for everyone. As a Christian Scientist, I'd had many experiences in which feeling more of the presence and power of God had brought a shift in my perspective about something—relieving me of stress, or helping me or someone I was praying for in some other tangible way.

That week, there was a passage in the Christian Science Bible Lesson, found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*, that said, “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (II Corinthians 3:5). I looked up the passage in another Bible translation, and it used the term *competence* instead of *sufficiency*, which clued me in to the fact that I could look at the passage in terms of mental capacity or sufficiency: “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes

from God” (New International Version).

I felt comforted by the fact that my mental competence—my capacity to think clearly and to hear new ideas from God—actually comes from God and is therefore sufficient. God was going to be with me, and God, divine Mind, was leading me forward with right and good ideas. I also prayed for my class as a whole, knowing that each of us could be free from worry and stress because we reflect divine Mind and have the abil-

ity to overcome any limitation. That night I was able to complete half of my paper—much more than I had expected—because instead of struggling, I was conscious of the ideas flowing naturally from divine Mind.

The next day I had another opportunity to overcome doubt and fear. That morning, I was awakened earlier than I'd planned to

get up because of circumstances outside of my control. When I showed up at the library, I felt fatigued and was scared that because I hadn't gotten enough sleep, I wouldn't be able to think clearly enough to finish this paper.

I paused and prayed. Again the same passage came to me. I remembered the peace I'd felt and the harmony I'd experienced the previous night. This assured me that God is good and was still meeting all my needs.

I decided to get to work on just one part of the assignment. I finished that and felt inspired to move on to the next. This happened over and over until the assignment was complete. I was

*I felt comforted by the fact that my capacity to think clearly and to hear new ideas from God actually comes from God and is sufficient.*

surprised to realize that it seemed as though no time had passed, even though it had been four hours. It felt like it had been only a few moments since I'd wondered if I would make it through the day because I was so tired. And now my paper was done, and I felt refreshed and clearheaded.

I was amazed and impressed by this turnaround and felt so free from the limits of time, pressure, and fatigue. I also understood in a new way that our sufficiency really is of God. God is always supplying all the ideas, clarity, and mental competence we need to think clearly and to know whatever we need to know—regardless of how many hours of sleep we've had.

This experience has also been a good reminder to include others in my prayers. Hearing my fellow students voice their own concerns about the pressure they were feeling awakened me to the need

to deal with the situation prayerfully, instead of accepting it as inevitable or normal. And affirming my freedom from limitations became a prayer that naturally included everyone, since this God-given freedom is universal. What I learned about my capacity to rise above time and stress wasn't just true for me, but true for all of us. ●



ANNA LUTWILLER—STAFF

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## No need for a filling

By TYLER ROBERTS

I was at the dentist's office for a checkup. Not all of my visits have gone smoothly. I've had several cavities and fillings before, but this time I felt prepared. I had flossed and brushed my teeth twice daily since my last visit.

After my dentist examined me, though, she told me I had a cavity that needed to be filled. I was both dumbfounded and deflated. I thought I had done everything right.

When the dentist went to talk to my mom, I had some time to think. At that moment I realized that while everything I was doing to protect my teeth was well-intentioned, there was one thing I hadn't been doing: I hadn't been thinking spiritually. Maybe that sounds a little strange, but I've had lots of other healings by praying and getting a more spiritual view of myself or of a situation. But before now, it had never crossed my

mind to take this same approach with my teeth.

So when my dentist came back, I asked her if I could have some time to pray about my tooth rather than have her fill the cavity right then. She graciously agreed, and we set a date for the next month.

I immediately started praying. When I pray, I often ask God for the right way to think about something. This time, one thought that came to me strongly was something I'd learned in my Christian Science Sunday School class: that what we think of as our body—flesh and blood—is a mistaken belief about ourselves, because we are actually spiritual, created by God, Spirit. Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of Christian Science, wrote in the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, that what we call *flesh* is “an error of physical belief; a

supposition that life, substance, and intelligence are in matter; an illusion; a belief that matter has sensation” (p. 586).

After I thought about this passage from *Science and Health* and earnestly prayed to understand that I'm spiritual, not material, my thought about myself changed. I saw myself as the pure and perfect image of God, who is Love and Truth. So when I returned to the dentist's

*When I returned to the dentist's office, I had a clearer, more spiritual view of myself.*

office the next month, I had a clearer, more spiritual view of myself. When my dentist examined me, she was thrilled by what she saw—well, more like what she didn't see. The cavity was completely gone!

This was over two years ago, and I have not had another cavity since. I am so grateful for this healing, not just because my tooth was healed, but also because it helped me understand a little better that I really am spiritual. ●

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*As God is substance and man is the divine image and likeness, man should wish for, and in reality has, only the substance of good, the substance of Spirit, not matter.*

—Mary Baker Eddy  
*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 301

# Learning more about healing

By SAHIL BAJAJ

One day I came home from school with a headache and symptoms of a cold. But I wasn't worried, because I am a student in the Christian Science Sunday School. I knew I could pray and be healed. I have had many other healings. I started praying with an idea from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: "There is no pain in Truth, and no truth in pain; ..." (p. 113). Truth is another name for God, so I knew God didn't give me pain. After thinking about this for a little while, I went to sleep.

When I woke up, I still wasn't feeling well, so I called a Christian Science practitioner, and she agreed to pray for me. We talked about another idea from Mary Baker Eddy, this time from her *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, that has helped me many times: "If a cold could get into the body without the assent of mind, nature would take it out as gently, or let it remain as harmlessly, as it takes the frost out of the ground or puts it into the ice-cream to the satisfaction of all" (p. 240). From this passage, I understood that cold is acceptable for ice cream, but I didn't have to accept it for myself. I was inspired by this idea and slept peacefully that night.

The next morning I was feeling better, but the headache seemed to come and go. I tried getting ready for school, but ended up calling the practitioner again because I felt like a pendulum swinging back and forth between discomfort and health. This time, she pointed out a passage from *Science and Health* that says: "Man is never sick, for

Mind is not sick and matter cannot be. A false belief is both the tempter and the tempted, the sin and the sinner, the disease and its cause. It is well to be calm in sickness; to be hopeful is still better; but to understand that sickness is not real and that Truth can destroy its seeming reality, is best of all, for this understanding is the universal and perfect remedy" (pp. 393-394). I understood that I couldn't be tempted into believing that a disease can vanish and then reappear or that health can ever be taken away. Health comes from God, so it cannot vanish. It is constant. The next day I was totally healed.

A few mornings later, when I woke up, I felt some pain in my ear. The pain was increasing, so I called the practitioner again and told her about it. I am always wanting to understand how to pray better by learning about Christ Jesus and about prayer, so she suggested that I read the chapter titled "Prayer" in *Science and Health* and call her back when I had finished. She said I could tell her what I had learned about what prayer is and what prayer isn't. So I read the whole chapter, and understood that prayer is having total faith in and an understanding of God. Prayer is not just going through the motions of praying, but understanding and trusting God.

The next day at school something came out of my ear. And by the time I came home from school, all the pain was gone, and I was totally healed.

I thank God for everything I learned, and for these beautiful healings! ●

Originally published in the September 17, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



# How does a Christian Science healing happen?

By JENNY SAWYER

**Y**ou guys ask the best questions, because you're willing to ask the questions that don't have easy answers. Recently, one of you asked that question in the title, and what hit me was both how important it is and how much you wanted it answered.

So let's go for it. How does a healing happen, anyway?

It probably seems natural to look at healing as being about what's going on with our bodies or in some other aspect of our lives. Something hurts or is out of place, then we pray for healing. And we know we're healed when the hurt vanishes or whatever's out of place gets adjusted. Right? Believe it or not, that definition only scratches the surface of *healing*. That's why, to understand how healing happens, it's helpful to begin by getting clear on what Christian Science is.

Christian Science peels away all our preconceived notions about our lives and the world and shows us what's actually going on. And what's actually going on is 100 percent about God. Christian Science helps us understand more about the nature of God as good, as Love, as pure Spirit, as all-powerful and always present—and everything else we need to know flows from those bedrock spiritual facts.

Begin with a correct understanding of God, and reason out from there on anything you can think of—including your

health—and you'll get the real and true view of it. Don't be surprised if this view contradicts whatever's going on right before your eyes. Christian Science calls on us to rely on our spiritual perception—what we hear and perceive as we listen exclusively to God—rather than on the five physical senses. Here's how the Discoverer of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, puts it in her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: “We

must look deep into realism instead of accepting only the outward sense of things” (p. 129).

Healing, then, is really about a change in perception. As all that God, Spirit, is becomes more compelling to us than anything else, the fact that we're spiritual here and now comes more clearly into

view. We begin to understand what that means for our health, our identity, our purpose, and so on. We may also feel impelled to let go of limitations, or beliefs about ourselves that we'd never before thought to challenge—because this new view of God shows us just how flimsy and false they really are.

*That's* the healing: the willing acceptance of a new view. Notice that this is all going on ... where? In our thoughts. While we do see an adjustment in whatever situation was bugging us—like the flu going away, for example, or working out some relationship problem—the healing is really the spiritual shift in thought. It's our new or deeper convic-

*Prayer clears away the doubt and fear so we can see that everything God made is just as intact as it's always been.*

tion that God definitely is All, and that this includes us.

And that's important, because it points to the *how* of healing. As we pray about a problem, it's easy to think that we're making something happen, or causing God to do something for us. But that's not what prayer does. What prayer does is help us wake up to what's already true, what's already in place. It clears away the doubt and fear so we can see that everything God made is just as intact as it's always been. When you see this clearly, it's an "aha" moment—and an adjustment in your thoughts and life inevitably follows.

The other *how* of healing that's such a relief is that it's also 100 percent about God. Even though we might feel like

we're the ones working really hard to understand what's true, I've found that there's this inevitable moment when a switch happens. And in that moment, instead of trying so hard to know something about God, suddenly I find that I'm being bathed in what God is knowing. Instead of trying to tell God things, I hear God's tender reassurances that everything is OK, that I'm safe, that I'm forever held in His love.

To me, that's the ultimate *how* of healing: letting God speak to you and feeling His irresistible power transform your thoughts—so much so that there's no looking back. That's when you know, without a doubt, you're healed—and you *are* healed. ●

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## An open invitation

By JOHN BIGGS

I'd always loved church. I loved the fellowship. I loved supporting my community through our services and other activities. And I enjoyed feeling like I could be of service to the congregation by praying.

But then a different feeling hit me. Inconvenience. I had a new baby at home, and I was suddenly feeling quite burdened by the thought of going to church.

The deeper question I was struggling with came back to what Church really is. As a Christian Scientist, I was familiar with a spiritual definition of *Church* in the Glossary of *Science and Health with*

*Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, which begins, "The structure of Truth and Love; ..." (p. 583). I felt very confident that the word *structure* was not referencing the beams, walls, and floor of a church. Truth and Love refer to Spirit, God, so I could see how this divine structure must be spiritual—and must be found everywhere, since God is everywhere. Which meant I could live Church in a spiritual sense wherever I was, right? Yes, I could find Church in a building on Sunday morning, but I also caught glimpses of the presence of Church in the mountains during a hike, in the peace

of family snuggles with our new infant, and even in a checkout line at the grocery store. Why should I feel tied to what felt, frankly, like an inconvenient ritual?

In my prayers, I've grown accustomed to putting it all out there. I just ask God whatever I'm wondering about. The key for me, though, is to make sure I'm actually listening for the answer. So as I was praying about this question of whether I should keep going to church, I wanted to be sure I was honestly listening—not just pouring out my heart and then doing whatever I wanted.

Well, I got an answer, and the answer was surprising. I essentially asked God why going to church was any better than “living Church” wherever I ended up being. What came in response wasn't a chart comparing the benefits of one to the other. The answer was an invitation! The answers to my prayers don't always come as specific words, but this time I heard, “Why not come and see what I am doing? Why not come see what happens as you are all called together?”

Now, I love to accept invitations. Whether it's a game night, a hiking trip, or even something I wouldn't normally do, I try to make a habit of accepting invitations, because it often feels like a good way to honor and care for the person inviting me. Having my prayer answered with an invitation from God to “come and see” what was really going on at church turned all my questioning on its head! God *didn't* say that it wasn't val-



id to live Church on the trails or in the quiet at home. He just invited me to see what He is doing—what Love is doing!—for me and for others when we gather to hear Him.

“Come and see” is so much more welcoming than “do this or else.” It also

totally disregards the convenience of something; it simply gives you the opportunity to value the one giving the invitation and to go see and enjoy a new thing.

So when I got that message, I couldn't help but laugh and say, “Well, when You put it like that, sure! I'll come!” The following Sunday I was back at church, and ever since that week of prayer, I have loved to accept God's invitation to simply come and see. In the years that have followed, we've moved across the country and attended many different branch Churches of Christ, Scientist. Sure, sometimes I'm unable to be at church. But now that I consider my involvement with church as a response to an invitation rather than to a “check box” requirement, I just love to go and see what God is doing, how Love is moving hearts and minds—and to be a participant in that healing movement.

So why do I (still) love church? Because church offers an open invitation to all of us to see what God is doing and how good He is. Sure, we can see that divine activity everywhere. But it's a special joy to gather so intentionally in church, and to witness that divine activity together. ●

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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

# God spoke to me

By EMMANUEL TEKILA

**"Pray!"**

I was on a bus in Kinshasa on the way home from the Christian Science Sunday School when I heard this distinct message. The bus was full of people, but it wasn't a person that was telling to me to pray. There didn't even seem to be a need to pray. The mood was really enjoyable. We were driving along just like on any other bus ride, heading toward the top of a hill.

Because of all the noise from the other passengers on the bus, I found it hard to listen to the message. Yet, for a second time, and even a third, I heard the same voice telling me to pray. That's when I realized the message was coming from God. This was my first time hearing God in this way.

Astonished, I asked myself, "How should I start praying?"

I took a silent moment, and while I was doing that, I remembered the prayer that one of my former Sunday School teachers had taught me called the "Daily Prayer." It is from the *Manual of The Mother Church* written by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of Christian Science. It reads: "'Thy kingdom come;' let the reign of divine Truth, Life, and Love be established in me, and rule out of me all sin; and may Thy Word enrich the affections of all mankind, and govern them!" (p. 41). To me, the "Daily Prayer" shows the beauty of God's kingdom, in which everything is good and spiritual. Each of us is included and protected in this kingdom. As we understand more

about God's government, we feel tranquility, peace, and safety.

I was in the middle of this prayer when the person closest to me on the bus shook me and told me that people were jumping out of the bus because the brakes had failed. Despite the fear and chaos of the situation, I was able to tell

him that we were all safe and there was no need to worry. God is omnipresent and was right there at that moment.

I kept my thoughts on God and His kingdom, where all of us live safely. Meanwhile, the bus was go-

ing very fast, and the driver appeared to lose control of the wheel. But then something amazing happened. The driver was able to bring the bus to a stop against a culvert. Everyone—those who jumped out *and* those who stayed inside the bus—was safe.

From this experience, I learned to listen to God's messages—I understand better now how important it is for us to pay attention to the soft but powerful voice of God speaking to each of us. Whatever we might be facing, we can be sure of God's presence and care, and our ability to experience it. ●

*For a second time, and even a third, I heard the same voice telling me to pray.*

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# Overwhelmed? Prayer can help.

By KRISTIN MANKER

Senior year of college. It seemed like my whole academic career had been leading up to this moment, and I was feeling the pressure. I had chosen to shoulder a lot of responsibility for my final year, including being a staff member on our school's literary magazine and a board member for our yearly public affairs conference. I also had to think about my senior thesis—a project that would take the entire year.

I wanted to do a good job on everything, but a few weeks into the school year it became apparent that I couldn't do it all on my own. My thesis research wasn't coming together; my coursework was quickly piling up; and I felt pressure to do all of my extra-curricular work perfectly.

Whoa. OK, press the pause button. Something needed to change, and that began with the way I was thinking about all these projects and responsibilities. In the past, I'd found that getting a more God-based perspective always helped, so I turned to the weekly Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*, which is made up of passages from the Bible and from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. The subject that week was "Mind," and it seemed tailor-made for me. As I read, this passage from *Science and Health* jumped out at me: "The divine Mind is the Soul of man, and gives man dominion over all things. Man was not created from a material basis, nor bid-

den to obey material laws which Spirit never made; ..." (p. 307). Wow! I realized I didn't have my own personal mind that was desperately trying to tackle a growing to-do list. Instead, I am animated by infinite, ever-present Mind—God. Better yet, all the things I had been prioritizing—time, sleep, intellectual understanding, and so on—weren't the important factors, because God, who is infinite, governs every aspect of my life.

Feeling inspired by this wake-up call, I reached out to a Christian Science practitioner to talk about what I was discover-

ing and to ask her to pray more deeply about it with me. After I explained the issue to her, she surprised me by saying, "Kristin, the work is already done."

Huh? My schedule would say otherwise. But she explained that each and every idea of God is

complete and whole. So what looks to us like a movement from start to finish is actually just the unfoldment, or revealing, of the complete idea—like a seed growing into a plant, which buds and then flowers. The flower is there all along—it just has to be revealed. What a weight off of my shoulders!

With this new understanding, I could approach the rest of the school year with confidence. To my delight (and relief), everything began to fall into place. That's not to say I wasn't working hard, but my perspective was different. I approached each task by acknowledging that divine Mind was the one animat-

*Something needed to change, and that began with the way I was thinking about all these projects and responsibilities.*



ing and guiding the work; I was Mind's unburdened expression. I stopped feeling stressed and began to enjoy what I was doing. I was lighthearted!

First semester went well, but I began to feel anxious again when winter break ended and my thesis wasn't started. On top of that, both the conference and the publication of the literary magazine would take place near the end of the semester. It felt like I had my work cut out for me!

But as I entered my final semester, I remembered what the practitioner had shared with me: The work was already complete. I was the "vehicle," divine Mind's expression. I often turned to this idea when I felt overwhelmed or incapable. As I did, I found that inspiration for

my schoolwork came much more readily, and I completed projects much more quickly. The fear of impending failure evaporated, and all the elements of my spring semester fell into place naturally. My senior thesis came together, my extracurriculars were successful, and my classes were manageable. I finished the year with good grades and an award for my thesis.

Since then, I've continued to think about this lesson whenever I feel overwhelmed. Whatever I'm facing, it helps me to remember that I'm not the source of the ideas I need to move forward, or the "engine" behind the work; Mind is. The understanding of this fact removes stress and brings success. ●

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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

# No more mean girls

By MARJORIE KEHE

It all started at the beginning of the school year with a silly fight with two of my best friends. I assumed it would blow over. It didn't. Things only got worse, and these friends settled into a pattern of alternately being mean to me and ignoring me.

I recognized this routine only too well. The year before, one of these girls and I had treated another friend exactly the same way—for no good reason. One day we just decided that we didn't like her anymore, and so we mistreated her.

This had occurred toward the end of the school year. Over the summer, I came to feel deeply ashamed of my behavior. To my great relief, when I saw this girl again in September, I was able to tell her how sorry I was, and she graciously accepted my apology. Just a few days later, the fight with my other friends broke out, and I found myself on the receiving end of the same type of unkindness.

I began to dread going to school. I thought I deserved the mistreatment because of my actions the year before, so I felt too ashamed to talk to anyone about it.

My family had always turned to prayer during difficult situations, and I'd seen the results of this prayer many times throughout my life—in resolutions of unhappy situations, as well as other healings. So I decided I would try my best to pray my way to a resolution. Each day before school, I would study a section of the weekly Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*. And when I had free time, I read other Christian Sci-

ence literature and prayed with the ideas.

It was reassuring to learn more about God as Love and as completely good, and to understand better that each of us is created like Him—meaning we're all innately good, kind, and loving, not mean or selfish. As I saw this more clearly, some areas in my own life that needed healing became more obvious. I recognized that, in my eagerness to be accepted by a certain crowd of friends, I had unwittingly allowed gossip and unkind criticism to become part of my routine. I realized that feeling more of God's love—for both me and my

friends—meant letting go of behaviors that weren't in line with divine Love. So I began trying to abstain from wrong conversation. I didn't find this easy at first, but I was encouraged one day when I read this

*The ugly habits of gossip and criticism had begun to fade.*

statement in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: "If Truth is overcoming error in your daily walk and conversation, you can finally say, 'I have fought a good fight ... I have kept the faith'" (p. 21).

I knew that my "daily walk and conversation" were improving, because the ugly habits of gossip and criticism had begun to fade. I was also delighted to realize that during this time some warts that had appeared on my hands the year before had simply disappeared.

But as the school year drew to a close, the situation with my friends still hadn't improved, and I was tempted to feel discouraged. In addition, I had slipped behind in math class and was afraid of finishing with a bad grade. >



One Saturday afternoon I resolved to try to catch up, and sat down with my math book. But discouragement flooded over me, and thoughts bombarded me suggesting that I would never be able to make up with my friends or succeed in math class. I briefly wondered if I needed to give up and accept failure on both counts.

Instead, I returned to my earlier prayers and once again mentally asserted that because God is All, my friends and I could be only the beautiful and pure expressions of God. It took a few minutes of praying diligently this way, but finally my fear and concern faded, and I felt peaceful. I turned back to the math book and was able to make significant progress.

Very shortly after that, as suddenly as it had started, the unkindness stopped. Both girls, at different times, sincerely apologized. We all became friendly again. I even finished math class with a good grade.

But that wasn't all. The next year, as we moved on to high school, those two friends drifted into a different crowd. We stayed friendly, but they became a much smaller part of my daily life. That left me free to pursue a new friendship with a girl I had met in math class. (Yes, even math class turned out to be a blessing!) She was a lovely person who was eager to steer clear of "mean girl" activities, and also—unlike my other friends—preferred to not drink. We developed a very close friendship that lasted through high school and beyond.

While I was grateful for the resolution of my friendship difficulties, even more significant was my being able to recognize God's goodness in my friends and in myself—and to see that this naturally eliminated any "mean girl" tendencies. ●



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*As stars in their courses never contend,  
As blossoms their hues in harmony blend,  
As bird voices mingle in joyful refrain,  
So God's loving children in concord remain.*

—Irving C. Tomlinson, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 236, © CSBD

# God was with us every step of the way

By AINSLEY GORDON

This trip was not going as planned. My dad, two of my younger sisters, and I were on the Appalachian Trail for a week of backpacking. The problem? Even though we knew which trail to take, we no longer had a map. The maps we'd downloaded onto our phones didn't work since we were out of range. So we had no way of knowing if we were on track to make our daily mileage goals. Then, as we set out it started to rain.

My sisters and I began to worry about setting up camp. Instead of joining in, my dad stayed 100 percent positive. He told us, "It will be fun to see how God works this out. I'm sure that we will always be provided for." That might sound a little strange since we were alone in the wilderness. But as Christian Scientists, we've learned that God is Love and is everywhere, so we'll always be taken care of.

My dad's trust in God helped us switch to a more positive, spiritual perspective. Instead of being annoyed about the rain, we could see the beauty and calm that rain could bring, and recognize that God's presence was still with us.

Dad began to sing hymns from the *Christian Science Hymnal* that related to rain, and my sisters and I joined in. We sang Hymn 148, which goes like this:

In heavenly Love abiding,  
No change my heart shall fear;  
And safe is such confiding,  
For nothing changes here.  
The storm may roar without me,  
My heart may low be laid;  
But God is round about me,  
And can I be dismayed?

Wherever He may guide me,  
No want shall turn me back;  
My Shepherd is beside me,  
And nothing can I lack.  
His wisdom ever waketh,  
His sight is never dim;  
He knows the way He taketh,  
And I will walk with Him.

Green pastures are before me,  
Which yet I have not seen;  
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,  
Where darkest clouds have been.  
My hope I cannot measure,  
My path in life is free;  
My Father has my treasure,  
And He will walk with me.  
(Anna L. Waring)

This hymn related perfectly to our trip, and I felt confident that God's guidance, protection, and provision would be with us the whole way.

The rain continued for the rest of the afternoon, but I was no longer worried about it. As we walked, we also talked about how nature and the people we shared the trail with reflected qualities of God such as kindness, strength, beauty, and peace. Seeing these qualities all around me helped me feel so close to God, and I was calm and reassured, knowing that God was with us.

We soon came to the final mountain of the day, and when we reached the top, the rain stopped! The clouds parted, and we had the most fantastic view of the mountains that seemed to go on forever. I was so grateful for this, because it was proof to me that infinite God was present, showing us His beauty and power. >

We saw more proof of God's care after setting up camp. We were making dinner when we realized we had no utensils and were running low on water. There wasn't a nearby source of water to filter, and it was getting dark. We trusted the idea we had been praying with earlier in the day: that God never stops providing for us. When we asked the people next to us if we could borrow some utensils, they were more than happy to share, even saying we could keep them since it was their last day. We were so grateful. They didn't even know about our low water supply, but they also offered us some clean, filtered water they weren't using. We gladly said "Yes!" and "Thank you!" This spontaneous support

from strangers had the biggest impact on me, because it was totally unanticipated and completely met our needs. So I knew divine Love had to be behind it.

Throughout the rest of the trip, even though we dealt with more rain and obstacles, we still felt God's presence every step of the way. We were able to follow the trail easily, and found spots to camp each night, including one beautiful overlook toward the top of a mountain. We reached our destination after three days on the trail—more quickly than we had anticipated—and even on the harder days we found our "bright skies." I'm so grateful for this trip and the inspiration I found along the way. ●

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## How can I get the most out of my prayers?

By PIPER FOSTER WILDER

**Q.** *How can I get the most out of my prayers?*

**A.** I used to do a lot of weight lifting. When I lifted with my coach, Joe, he would always say, "Squeeze the muscle at the top." What Joe meant was, in order to get the most out of the work, pause and squeeze harder than ever before at the peak of the lift. The lesson I learned from this was to resist just going through the motions or counting repetitions without getting the full benefit

of whatever I'm doing. I've applied his coaching to the way I pray.

When I pray, I like to ask God what He knows about me or about the situation I'm dealing with. Once I hear God's response, I "squeeze" the insights God has given. Meaning, I deliberately value the spiritual facts that have come through prayer. I recognize and acknowledge God's messages as the foundation of healing in any situation.

By "squeezing at the top," I stay with the inspiration. I let my heart be



moved—I keep praying until I really feel God’s tender guidance or sense just how known and special I am to Him.

Once my heart moves, I know the healing is happening. And then I see the changes in my life—whether with a relationship, with my work, or even with my health.

During my weight-lifting era, I pulled a muscle in my shoulder.

Through my study of Christian Science, I’ve learned that prayer brings healing. So I prayed immediately, and then consistently for several days. Every time I prayed, I would hear and feel God’s clear message on the real essence of what my identity is, where my strength comes from, and how innocent I am. I soaked in this truth of my spiritual identity—my God-given wholeness and strength, which are always present and intact. I squeezed at the top prayerfully. The healing was complete within a week, without my particularly favoring the shoulder or altering my routine—and has been permanent.

But what about those times when we find ourselves simply going through the motions in prayer, with “arms flopping up and down,” so to speak? That’s when I stop. I mentally regroup. I remind myself that God’s messages are important—that they are tailor-made for me, and are worthy of my full atten-

tion. When I sit down to pray, I really show up. I’m vigilant to not just warm the bench. I check in with myself and ask what new ideas I’ve heard or what familiar ideas I’ve applied in a fresh way. To me, this is squeezing my spiritual “muscle” at the peak of my prayer.

It can be easy to go through life on autopilot. It’s easy to coast—whether in

school, at the gym, or in our spiritual growth. But when I look at my spiritual role models, Christ Jesus and Mary Baker Eddy—the Discoverer of Christian Science and author of a book called *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* that helps me to understand Jesus’ teachings—it’s clear that neither spent even a day coasting. They were fully engaged with their prayers, fully committed to a life of living and loving God. The results

were life-changing for the people they encountered and for the world.

Loving the spiritual facts we perceive and gleaning everything we can from these ideas is a great way to get the most out of our prayers. What’s important to remember is that God does the healing. We never muscle our way through! Your job is to consciously love the truth that God whispers into your heart. This makes room for this truth to transform your thoughts—and bring healing. ●

*When I sit down to pray, I really show up. I’m vigilant to not just warm the bench. I check in with myself and ask what new ideas I’ve heard or what familiar ideas I’ve applied in a fresh way.*

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# My Father's care

By KEVIN POWERS

It was my senior year of college, and I had just returned home for my winter break when, very abruptly, my dad passed on. He was one of the most kind, patient, and faithful men I've ever known. He was a great person and an amazing dad.

I felt so lost. What was I going to do without the man who had always been there to guide me through life? In May of that year, I would be graduating from college, and I had no idea what I was going to do afterward. I wanted to do something purposeful that involved helping others. My dad was the person with whom I most wanted to talk about jobs, but now he wasn't here.

During the spring of my senior year, I prayed a lot about both my dad's passing and employment after college. When I have had challenges in my life, I've always turned to God for answers and comfort, and I've always found both. I knew that God would take care of me this time, too, but at times things felt like an uphill battle. There were days when I felt very sad and lost.

I had been making some calls to explore career options, and one individual I spoke with was a Christian Scientist. He encouraged me to think about a line in the Lord's Prayer that says, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). To me, the "daily bread" in the Lord's Prayer is a promise that's based on the fact that God, whom the prayer refers to as "our Father," meets our need, whether it's food, purposeful employment, or anything else. As I prayed with this idea, my perspective shifted—from thinking that

it was up to me to find a job, to understanding that God was giving me everything I needed. Once I began acknowledging my divine Father as the source of my supply, the uncertainty faded away, and opportunities started to open up. A friend let me know about a residential assistant position at a high school in another state. I eventually applied and was accepted for the job.

I am so grateful that I was led to apply for the job. It was a very healing year for me, and the work that I did helped me a lot in moving forward after my dad's passing. I felt purposeful, and I found healing, because every day I was looking to bless and help others, just like my dad did in his life. I love the way Mary Baker Eddy describes this in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* where she writes, "Whatever holds human thought in line with unselfed love, receives directly the divine power" (p. 192). It was this unselfed love that healed me.

This experience taught me a lot about how turning to God with the humble desire to bless others actually opens us up to be blessed and healed. Now, when I miss my dad, I look for ways to help and bless others. I've been so grateful to be able to honor my dad every day through my work, and to feel more of my divine Father's care, which I know will always be there. ●

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# Praying about mental health

By DEBORAH HUEBSCH

As she looked out the window, my friend saw a path leading deep into the dark woods. It called out to her. It seemed to say, “Take this path; then you’ll see your friend again.” She had recently lost someone very dear to her, and this path into the woods was tempting because it seemed to offer a solution. If she died, too, she could be with her friend again.

“I saw that I could make a choice,” my friend told me. “I chose not to go down that path. I realized I wanted to live.” She made a point of not even looking out the window at the path, because she wanted to be steadfast in her commitment

to choosing life. About two weeks later, however, my friend happened to look out that window again, and she was surprised by what she saw. So many plants had sprung up that the path had almost completely disappeared. My friend went forward with her life, embracing new opportunities for friendship and spiritual growth.

This was a real experience, but our ability to choose whether we follow a path into darkness is also a helpful metaphor for dealing with mental health issues. Whatever the label for the issue—depression, anxiety, compulsive behaviors, or something else—you may have dealt with it yourself, or know someone who has. If we ourselves are beckoned to go down one of these paths, it might even feel as though we are powerless to resist.

I know I felt that way once. My fam-

ily has a history of bipolar disorder, and in my early twenties, I found myself going down that same path into mental illness. All I could think, over and over again, was, “I’m losing my mind.” I felt powerless to stop it.

However, I’d also just found out about Christian Science, and I’d learned from reading the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the*

*Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, that God is Mind. I’d also learned that since there is only one God, there can be only one Mind, the Mind we all reflect as God’s spiritual creation. This was a sanity saver, because it meant that I didn’t have

a little mind of my own that could go crazy. Gradually, instead of feeling consumed by thoughts that I felt I had no power over, I came to realize that I did have a choice—and the ability to make that choice. Every time I was tempted to think, “I’m losing my mind,” instead I prayed, “God is my Mind. God can’t lose His Mind, so neither can I.”

I found freedom in consciously acknowledging that Mind, God, was my Mind. It had to be, since there is only one Mind. As this spiritual fact became more real to me, the fear and the bipolar symptoms faded, and I found release from those tortured thoughts. I was healed. Never again have I been troubled with the fear that I was going crazy.

Sometimes it might seem like we live in a chaotic, scary world, or even inside a chaotic, scary mind. But this couldn’t be true, since Mind is All, and is gentle, or-

*Our ability to choose whether we follow a path into darkness is a helpful metaphor for dealing with mental health issues.*

dered, consistent. In fact, Mrs. Eddy explains in *Science and Health* that Mind's spiritual universe is comprised of infinite intelligence and infinite ideas: "All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all" (p. 468). This is where we all truly live. When we recognize this God-created, God-sustained reality, the signs of confusion and powerlessness fade, much like when a fog lifts and we see the landscape that was always there—just hidden from view. Then we see stability, health, and peace as the true and only reality.

Making the choice to take the path out of darkness might not seem easy, but it is doable. God is always there to support us. When we open our hearts and ask for God's help, the divine presence,

which is already with us, becomes tangible. We find we have what we need. It might be courage, or strength, or faith, but whatever it is, it will be there.

Each of us is equipped by God to make the right choice, and this will keep us safe. In the Bible it says, "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19, New International Version). Making the choice to recognize and embrace Mind's presence and allness will erase and replace the scary, challenging thoughts that would try to control us. This is refusing to take the path of darkness. And as we refuse that path, it will inevitably close—and we'll find freedom. ●

Originally published in the November 26, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## 'Now I trust God more than ever'

By MAGNUS MARTHALER

It was another clear, starry night in California, and I had just arrived home after a long walk on the beach with my dad. As I was taking my sweatshirt off, I realized that the necklace I'd been wearing was no longer around my neck. The necklace was a Christian Science military pendant on an old chain and had a lot of sentimental value and meaning.

I searched the house, trying not to feel worried. As I searched, I reminded myself of other situations where I'd had a need—and how whenever I'd trusted God, the right answer had always come.

Through my experiences in the Christian Science Sunday School and my own study of Christian Science, I have learned to trust in God as the all-knowing Mind. And I've come to recognize God's guidance because of how clear, reassuring, and direct it is—often pointing me in a direction that I wouldn't have thought of myself. This guidance can come as inspired ideas or as a God-impelled feeling to do something.

My dad went to pick my sister up from drama practice, and afterward, we felt moved to go back to the beach. During our earlier walk, we'd covered the

whole length of the beach—a mile—and I had no idea where on the beach I could have lost the necklace, or if I'd lost it there at all.

Honestly, the situation seemed pretty hopeless, but we continued to listen to God. When I listen to God, I like to imagine all my worried, fearful, or confused thoughts piled on a table, and I mentally push them all off the table. Then I get very still and peaceful inside, knowing that God is communicating directly with me. And when a thought comes to me that is pure and clear, I know that's God talking, and I keep that thought.

We decided to start walking, looking for the pendant. It is not much bigger than a quarter, and the beach was pitch dark. The only light we had was from our headlamps. We kept looking, but the tide had come up a little, and it was hard to see our footprints from where we'd walked before.

Eventually, I felt a change coming over my thoughts. I started to let go of the feeling that I needed this physical

object to be happy. It occurred to me that the necklace was just a symbol for something that would always belong to me. It symbolized my faith in God and my love for Christian Science, which I knew I would have no matter what. I actually felt a release from any fear or worry, or even a feeling of loss. I felt so convinced that because God is good, everything in my life that's good must be permanent, because it comes from God. Right in that moment, I happened to look down, and there in the center of where my headlamp was shining was my pendant on the chain. It was even glistening a little from the tide that had obviously washed over it but hadn't washed it away.

To me, the key pieces of this healing were the realization that I could never lose the good that the necklace represented, and the power and specificity of God's guidance. The Bible says, "God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light" (Psalms 118:27). This experience showed me how true that is. And now I trust God more than ever. ●

Originally published in the December 3, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path.*

—Psalm 119:105



# Finding my way

By HILARY HARPER-WILCOXEN

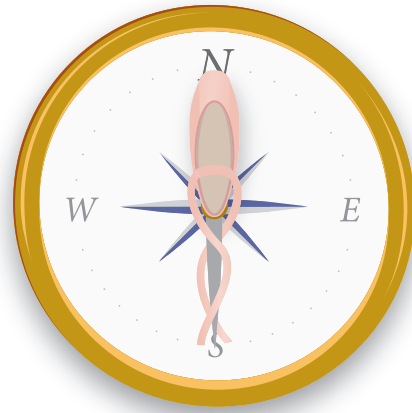
I thought I had my future all figured out. As a teenager, I'd planned a solo trip to Europe, expecting to audition for and be accepted into a major European ballet company. Any of them would do. I hadn't known how to set up an audition, so I'd just gone without any prior contact with the companies.

Arriving in my first city, where I didn't speak the language, I found a tiny room at an old hotel. The next morning I awoke very early to a major reality check. How was I going to find the ballet company? Would they let me take class? Would I be good enough?

It dawned on me that I probably couldn't make all this happen on my own, so I did what I'd always done in times of need: I reached out to God in prayer. I'd learned in the Christian Science Sunday School that God is my Father and Mother—a reliable and trustworthy guide in any situation.

My prayer was very simple: "Please help me. I don't know what I'm doing." The answer that came was, "Read the Lesson" (the Christian Science Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*). I'll never forget sitting on my tiny bed in that windowless, ugly room and reading healing passages from the Bible and from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy—multiple times. By the third reading I began to feel confident that God was indeed in this strange new place and that He was guiding me.

I left my room and went out to the tram stop in front of the hotel. As I stood there with all the commuters, I was quiet and expectant. I noticed a tall girl nearby reading a letter that looked like it was in



English. I went over and asked her if she spoke English. She smiled and said yes, she was American. It turned out that she was a member of the very ballet company I was trying to find, and she said she'd be happy to take me there and ask the director if I could take class. You can imagine my delight and awe at this clear evidence of God's presence and guidance. Everyone in the company treated me graciously, and I had a wonderful class. But they also explained that there were no jobs available at that time. I went on to audition for other companies in other cities—always with the same intuitive feeling of being led by God, step by step.

Although I had gone to Europe for the sole purpose of getting a job with a major ballet company, in the end, that didn't happen. What did happen was that my forced isolation and the difficulties I faced in auditioning pushed me closer and closer to the source of my very being—my Father-Mother God. I came to know God as my traveling companion, my best friend, and my reliable guide. I learned to lean on Him for everything and to trust Him more than I ever had. It was as if I had gone to Europe know-

ing God existed and loving that fact, and I left Europe having discovered that it was also the other way around: that God knew *I* existed and was loving me, consistently and in just the right ways.

While I didn't get what I thought I wanted on that trip, I did get what I needed. I had lessons to learn about humility and about putting all my trust in God—lessons that have stayed with me and continue to bless me. I think that my solitude, along with my lack of planning and my willingness to turn to God for guidance, acted as an invitation. It was an invitation to discover more about the true, spiritual source of my security, my joy, and my confidence—and to realize that I could never be separated from

that divine source, never be anything less than God's own beautiful expression.

Near the end of my trip, I was also able to share Christian Science with others who were in need of comfort and guidance. And when I returned home, I began getting professional jobs in ballet companies. In fact, I felt grateful I hadn't stayed in Europe, as coming home opened the door to so many other, unexpected blessings.

This was long before Google Maps. But I found that God was, in fact, my infallible source of direction that would always give me the "right intuition" and guide me "safely home" (see *Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896* by Mary Baker Eddy, p. 152). ●

Originally published in the December 10, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Christmas comfort

By LIZZIE WITNEY

Lying in bed was not the way I'd planned to spend the days leading up to Christmas. But while my family was downstairs enjoying the football game and preparing a meal together, I was alone in my bedroom, curled up under the blankets. Not only did I feel unwell, but I was also feeling sorry for myself, because the plans for this Christmas hadn't turned out the way I'd initially hoped they would.

I'd had healings of both physical problems and emotional issues when I'd prayed as taught in Christian Science. So while I was in bed, I was reading the weekly Christian Science Bible Lesson

(found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*), trying to learn more about God and His love for me and looking for inspiration to help me pray. The thing was, the Lesson wasn't inspiring me, because I was too caught up in thinking about how bad I felt.

After an hour or so my brother came up to see me. To be honest, I was hoping for his sympathy. Instead, he suggested that I could make the most of the day by going downstairs and being grateful for all the good I was seeing. I knew he was thinking of gratitude as sort of an active prayer—one that would allow me to appreciate God's goodness and en-

joy some of the family activities at the same time.

At first I was reluctant to do this, because my bed was pretty cozy and I wasn't sure I would even find anything to be grateful for. But after taking another glance at the Bible Lesson, I thought maybe I should have a go at my brother's suggestion. Before I went downstairs, I decided that I would pay attention to all the ways God was being expressed, even if they were really small. I knew from my study of Christian Science that since God is Love and is All, God is the source of all pure love. So anytime I saw someone do something loving or kind, I could recognize that love and kindness as originating in and reflecting God—evidence that God was there.

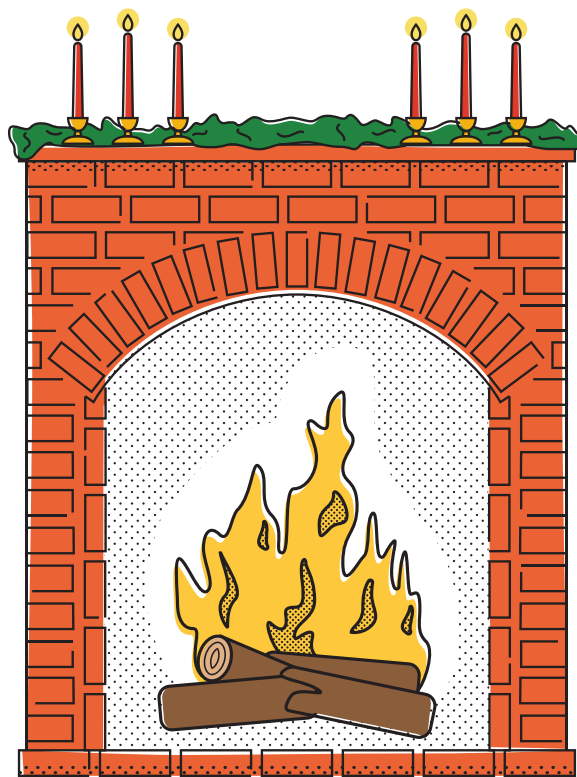
When I got downstairs, I noticed that my sister-in-law's mom was expressing a lot of mothering qualities. She was making sure everyone was comfortable while she was selflessly preparing a meal. I noticed the generosity from the other family members who were helping out with the dinner. I saw the love between my dad and brother as they had fun watching football. Even the Christmas decorations were a reminder of the presence of light and joy, and I thought of the meal as representing love and companionship.

Soon I really started to feel more tangibly that each of these qualities—the selfless love, the joy, the generosity—were all evidence of the presence of God. Because God is good and fills all space, there could be no room for pain or suffering in His presence.

*I wasn't sure I would even find anything to be grateful for.*

With this simple recognition, I felt better right away and was so grateful to be able to enjoy a wonderful Christmas week with my family. It also no longer mattered to me that the Christmas arrangements weren't what I'd initially hoped for. I realized that God and all the good He was providing were just as present now as they would have been if things had gone the way I'd hoped. I wasn't missing out on anything.

When I think of Christmas, I often think about the promise of Emmanuel—"God with us." This healing was a reminder that no matter where we are or what kind of holidays we're having, we can always experience the presence of God that does bring us comfort and joy. ●



Originally published in the December 24, 2018, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

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