



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE Sentinel

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

JULY-DECEMBER 2019 jsh-online.com



A COLLECTION FOR TEENS

**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
SENTINEL**

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Which thoughts are you listening to?

By BRYCE BECK

I wouldn't say I was excited for my school's annual Outward Bound trip. But with one year of high school and one Outward Bound trip under my belt, I did feel mentally and physically prepared for all of the challenges I knew lay ahead. And yet, here I was, two days before we even left, already facing my first obstacle.

It was the Thursday before our rafting trip in Idaho. I came home from school and immediately started feeling awful. Headache, warm body—these feelings were all too familiar. I knew exactly what was coming. And along with the symptoms of illness came a stream of lazy thoughts that slipped through the cracks and almost convinced me that I was better off just giving in to feeling sick rather than trying to fight it.

This is a perfect excuse not to go.

Last year's trip wasn't even fun.

It'll be nice to have a week off from school.

Even though I was facing this internal battle, I knew I could do something right away. I've learned in the Christian Science Sunday School that God gives us health and

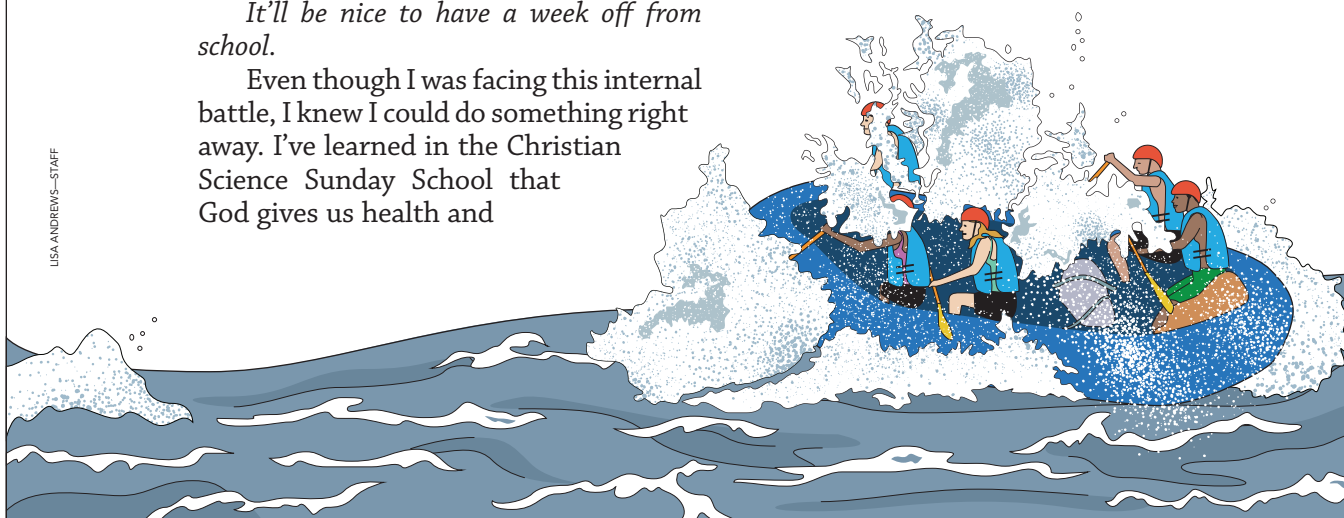
God gives us the power to challenge and overcome anything that isn't good—including sickness.

the power to challenge and overcome anything that isn't good—including sickness. I also remembered something Mary Baker Eddy wrote in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* that explains how to do that: "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). I realized I needed to watch which thoughts I was letting in and only allow in the good ones—the ones God gives us.

My mom called a Christian Science practitioner to pray for me.

While I was trying to expect a healing, it was really a struggle that day. Laziness and schoolwork got the best of me, and I went to bed that night in a bad state. The next day, I felt even worse and missed school.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

As the day went on, fear and worry about the trip started to set in, but I almost felt too lazy to care.

I started to have a wrestling match in my head. It was like in the movies when there's a devil on your right shoulder and an angel on the left: One set of thoughts was trying to get me to give in and give up, while the other wanted me to push through and take a risk by going. I realized that I didn't want to listen to either, because one would take me down the path of laziness, while the other felt like the path of human will. What I really needed to do was listen to God so I could be healed. I realized that good thoughts from God were calm and comforting, not tumultuous.

My mom read to me from *Science and Health*: "God is infinite, the only Life, substance, Spirit, or Soul, the only intelligence of the universe, including

man" (p. 330). Thinking about how all-powerful God is helped a lot, and by the time I was ready for bed, I was feeling much better. My mom, who was praying with me, reassured me that I could trust God.

I had to get up before three a.m. so I could get to school on time to leave, and when I woke up early the next morning, I was feeling even better. The battle in my thinking had stopped, and I was more peaceful as I listened to the thoughts from God that reminded me He was taking care of me.

I had fun with my friends on the bus and plane rides. Any evidence of sickness completely disappeared, and I was ready to have a worry-free trip tackling the rapids.

This healing taught me that I can always listen to and trust God, no matter the situation. ●

Originally published in the July 1, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Shut the door on pain

By CAMILLE CLARKE

It was a perfect spring day. The air was cool and fresh, but the bright sun was warm. As I walked to the bus stop, though, something wasn't quite right: I noticed pain and soreness in my legs.

My first thought about the pain might sound a little surprising: It was that the pain couldn't be true, couldn't be part of me. That might sound like denying a problem, but I wasn't kidding myself. I knew I didn't have to be in pain, because in the Christian

Science Sunday School I've learned that I am God's child, perfect, spiritual, and totally cared for, and that means I am always safe—free from pain.

I knew I could keep praying with these ideas and find healing, but every time I tried to pray, I would get interrupted by my friends or normal school activities. I decided to deal specifically with the issue later, but as I went through my day of math, Spanish, science, and art, I tried to hold firmly to the fact that God

could not make this pain, as He is only good. Since the pain didn't come from God, who is all-power, it couldn't have any power.

That afternoon I got on the bus, and during the ten-minute ride home, I started praying for myself very specifically. One idea that helped me was from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (p. 494). I needed to be able to concentrate in school without being distracted by something like pain and to walk freely.

I got off the bus and started walking up the street. As I neared my house, I thought about something we'd talked about in Sunday School—that God knows our needs and supplies them even before we ask. I also thought about the idea of opening the "door" of my thoughts only



I knew I didn't have to be in pain.

to good thoughts, not to evil. I realized that since God had already given me everything I could ever need, the only thing that could be knocking to intrude on that good would be the opposite of good, or evil, and there was zero need for me to open that door.

At this point, I had reached my house and was standing at my front door. I decided to apply my prayers to what I was about to do next. I dismissed the pain, which I knew was not part of me, opened the door, walked in, and shut the door behind me—shutting the door both literally and figuratively. I was free from pain at that moment and have been fine ever since.

I learned from this healing that giving prayer my full focus helps me "shut the door" on a problem much more quickly. ●

Originally published in the July 15, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Where are you looking for your worth?

By KAILY JOHNSON

I was a soon-to-be high school graduate, and with all the talk of past accomplishments and future plans, it was hard not to compare myself to others. All four years of high school, I was very involved. I took many challenging Advanced Placement classes, did lots of electives, and

spent endless hours on extracurricular activities. But in spite of all that, I wasn't being recognized in the same way that many of my peers were.

For example, for each achievement, a graduating senior would receive a form of regalia to wear on graduation day. I au-

tomatically felt less-than, because I was comparing myself to my friends, who had a handful of medallions and cords to wear on their robes. While I'd done over four hundred hours of community service, and had been awarded The Congressional Award, my accomplishments were mainly through an outside program and weren't recognized by my school.

Similarly, I wanted to further my education past high school. However, unlike most of my friends, who were going to prestigious universities, I didn't feel quite ready to go right to a four-year school. I'd decided I would go to a community college, and later, transfer to a university. Though I knew this was the right decision for me, I couldn't help but feel insecure—like I was the odd one out.

It wasn't easy to admit that I was struggling, because it was embarrassing to acknowledge that I felt vulnerable about something as superficial as my wardrobe for graduation or not going to a name-brand school. But for me, it was the first step toward healing. Being honest with myself allowed me to see the feelings for what they were and then deal with them as I've learned to do in the Christian Science Sunday School.

I thought about why I'd done the things I'd done in high school. It was never with the intent of stacking my résumé or to get certain rewards or honors. I was just passionate about those activities, so I did them. I was passionate about helping my community and wanted to help as much as I could—that's how I ended up with all those community service hours. I realized that there was real love behind my actions, so I could see how they were God-motivated, since God is Love. And

My worth comes from God.

I saw that this was what mattered—being led by God to do good, and expressing God—not whether or not I ever got recognized for it on graduation day.

I also prayed about the insecurities I was feeling about my college decision.

I kept coming back to these verses from Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (3:5, 6). I'd seen so many times in the past that I really could trust God, because God is good—universal, infinite good. Whenever I've stepped back, stopped weighing the pros and cons of a decision, and set aside my own desires to completely trust God, the outcome has always been good. And it's also always been better than anything I could have planned or made happen for myself. Thinking about my college decision this way helped me realize that I could feel peaceful about it and trust that I wouldn't be missing out on anything.

I came to understand that my worth is not defined by external things like the college I attend or the regalia I wore at graduation. My worth comes from God. Once I looked at my worth in terms of the qualities of God I express—honesty, love, gratitude, strength—I realized that I really can't lack anything or be less-than. I am whole, because that's the way God made me.

One year out from this experience, I can say that while I still keep learning lessons about comparisons, I feel more secure in my worth and wouldn't change my path for anything. I can see now how God-directed—and completely good—it really is. ●

Originally published in the July 22 & 29, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Overnight healing of an injured shoulder

By WESLEY DALE

I'd been looking forward to the lacrosse college showcase for weeks. Coaches from many colleges would be there, evaluating our skill sets and teaching us the intricacies of the game. I was excited to learn from these coaches and, potentially, to be recruited.

The night before the showcase, I was outside with friends. While playing hide and seek in the dark, I tripped and fell on my shoulder. When I stood up, I realized my shoulder was dislocated. I couldn't move it, and it hurt a lot. At first, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to play in my tournament the next day. Also, I worried that my parents would be angry with me for being irresponsible.

But then I remembered what my Christian Science Sunday School teacher had told me about fear—that we can challenge it on the basis of God's goodness and all-power. Even though fear can feel powerful and even overwhelming, it is actually powerless, since God has all the power. My teacher had stressed the fact that healing begins with allaying fear (see Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 411). I've found that knowing God helps me get rid of fear and pray more calmly. With this in mind, I began to address the fear by reassuring myself that there was no way I could be out of God's care at any time, since God is everywhere and always caring for me.

I called my dad, and we discussed what steps I should take to work through the healing of my shoulder. We agreed that my healing should begin and end with prayer, but we were also aware of



the option that Mrs. Eddy noted in *Science and Health* of choosing to have bones set (see p. 401). We decided to go to the emergency room to have my shoulder put back in place, but with the full expectation that we would be relying on prayer for healing before, during, and after this procedure.

The doctor who adjusted my shoulder recommended that I keep my arm in a sling for a few weeks and take painkillers regularly for the next few days. Since I wanted to rely on Christian Science to experience healing, I knew I needed to make a decision: take the painkillers or rely on prayer. It wouldn't make sense to do both—the two methods approach healing from two completely different standpoints. Prayer in Christian Science involves reasoning from a spiritual basis, identifying ourselves as spiritual.

As soon as I got home, I removed the sling and opened up *Science and Health*. I had experienced healing through prayer before, but usually with the close help

USA ANDREWS—STAFF

of my parents and/or a Christian Science practitioner. This was the first time I decided to rely completely on my own prayer, and I can attribute my confidence in this prayer to all that I've learned in the last few years of Sunday School.

While hopping between passages in *Science and Health*, I found something particularly helpful in the chapter "Christian Science Practice": "In Science, no breakage nor dislocation can really occur. You say that accidents, injuries, and disease kill man, but this is not true. The life of man is Mind. The material body manifests only what mortal mind believes, whether it be a broken bone, disease, or sin" (p. 402).

This idea was directly applicable to my situation, and I was comforted by the fact that the divine Mind, God, is the only power in my experience at all times. For the rest of the evening I held on to this idea, along with other good thoughts from God, while actively denying any suggestion that pain or fear was real. I asserted that my thoughts can

come only from God and that I am spiritual and uninjured; I didn't have to give in to the false, material picture of myself as injured. I felt surprisingly calm. Understanding that passage from *Science and Health* and deliberately affirming the truth of it in my own experience destroyed the fear.

The next morning, I woke up feeling great, able to move my shoulder freely and normally. The healing was complete, and I played in the tournament that weekend without any discomfort or limitations. With the same truths in mind as the night before, I spent the day joyfully glorifying God and knowing that I express His goodness. That weekend and the whole season the following spring, I never had any trouble with my shoulder.

This experience has given me more confidence to rely on Christian Science in every area of my life. It has given me my bearings in understanding how to heal and helped me make Christian Science practical for myself. ●

Originally published in the July 22 & 29, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Lifting the burden

By EMMA FRANKLIN

I don't think I can do this any longer.

A group of classmates and I were on a canoeing trip in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. Whenever we approached a section of water that wasn't safe for us to canoe, we had to stop, get out, and then portage our canoes—meaning we each had to carry a 75-pound canoe up-

side down on our shoulders for distances of up to 2,500 feet.

This wasn't easy, and I quickly discovered that it was painful to walk on a narrow, muddy, rocky path with a canoe balanced above my head. I was afraid that if I took a wrong step, I would fall and be crushed by the canoe.

The first day, I let fear get the best of me. I cried while portaging and quickly gave up. After that, I tried a few more times, but it didn't seem to be getting any easier. With every step I took, all I could think was, *I don't think I can do this any longer.*

On the second day of our canoe trip, I had the opportunity to give portaging another shot. While I was still scared and uncomfortable, I pushed myself to carry the canoe farther down the path because my canoeing partner had already done her fair share of the work. That's when I asked for help from a few friends, because I was still struggling.

I also realized I could lean on another kind of help. Even though the portaging was physically demanding, I realized that what I needed was actually a mental change—a change in perspective about the task—because being scared and grumpy wasn't helping. I knew this change of thought would come as I stopped dwelling on my discomfort and started turning my attention to God, who is Love.

Everyone on the trip was a Christian Scientist, so at my request we started singing Hymn 139 from the *Christian Science Hymnal* as I continued to portage. We sang:

I walk with Love along the way,
And O, it is a holy day;
No more I suffer cruel fear,
I feel God's presence with me here;
The joy that none can take away
Is mine; I walk with Love today.

(Minny M. H. Ayers, adapt.

© CSBD)

As we sang, we replaced the word *walk* with *portage*. It was amazing. As I thought about portaging with Love, with God right there, I actually felt the power of divine Love lifting the burden off of me. I no longer felt alone or afraid of this challenging task or like I had to

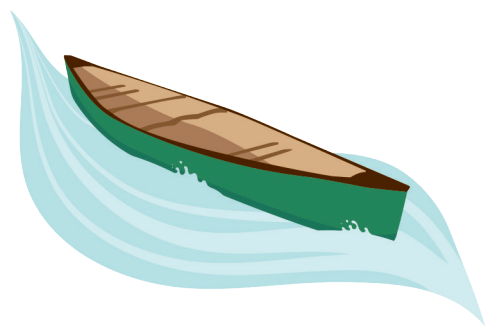
just struggle through it. Instead, in praising and thanking God, I really did feel "God's presence with me here." Although the physical circumstances hadn't changed, the strain, stress, and struggle had vanished, and the

portaging didn't feel as hard anymore.

While portaging often gets more tiring and painful the longer you do it, in this case, it actually got easier once I turned my thoughts toward God. I happily carried my canoe whenever necessary for the rest of the way. And the remainder of the trip was amazing; I felt God's care and love with every step.

One of the best parts of this experience was learning that I can feel God's love in any situation—no matter what the situation is or how far away from home I am. We do have a divine Father-Mother who is with us wherever we go, and I'm grateful for the way this trip helped me see that a little more clearly. ●

*The strain and
struggle vanished,
and the portaging
didn't feel as hard
anymore.*



ANNA UTWILLER—STAFF

Originally published in the August 12, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Traveling alone? or with God?

By JACEY WILLIAMS

What's my flight number?

I was on my way home from a service trip to Ecuador, feeling inspired by all the amazing opportunities I'd had and all the growth I'd experienced. On the last day of the trip, our whole group got on a flight back to Florida, where we would then go our separate ways. Once we arrived in Florida, we got off the plane, said our goodbyes, and a small group of my friends and I headed to the terminal where we would get on our flights back home. I was checking in at a kiosk in the new terminal when it suddenly hit me:

I couldn't remember my flight number.

I asked one of the nearby airline employees if she could help me out.

"No."

A bit taken aback, I returned to the kiosk and tried again. I came to the same point in the series of prompts where I had to plug in my flight number. I was starting to panic a little. It was four in the morning where my parents were, and I didn't think they would pick up the phone even if I called. The two adult chaperones who had been on the trip were somewhere else in the airport, and I knew they didn't have my flight number anyway.

Suddenly, part of Hymn 350 from the *Christian Science Hymnal* came to mind: "All will be well" (Mary Peters). I started repeating this in my head like a prayer, knowing that nothing can be lost or forgotten in God's kingdom, which is right here, because God is Mind and

includes every good and useful idea. I'd learned this in the Christian Science Sunday School when I was little, and had seen the truth of it in many experiences in the past. I also prayed with the idea that harmony, which is actually a law of God governing all of us all the time, was at work at that very moment.

Immediately I felt calm, my thoughts stopped whirring with fear and panic,

*A tangible feeling
of peace and love
washed over me.*

and the number 537 came to mind. A tangible feeling of peace and love washed over me, and I typed the number into the kiosk. In a couple of seconds my flight information

came up, I confirmed my flight, and all *was* well! I felt so grateful to have experienced God's love and care in such a tangible way.

Thanks to experiences like this one, I have grown so much closer to God, and I have started turning to God more quickly when I am struggling. I know that God really is here for me, no matter how big—or little—my need. ●

Originally published in the August 12, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Facing down fear

By JAIDEN VANDEVENTER

For as long as I can remember, I'd had a fear of heights. When I was little, I'd want to climb a tree or scramble up the rocks on our family's property, but this fear of being up high would hold me back.

Finally, I decided that I'd had enough, so I went on a Girl Scout trip that was focused on climbing and rappelling. I thought that forcing myself to face my fear head-on would help me overcome it faster, but it didn't; it just made things harder.

On the trip, I had to climb big rock walls and go beyond my comfort zone into my danger zone. On one ascent, I happened to look down at the ground from where I was, and my heart started pounding. I tried to talk to my troop leader about it, but all she said was that I would just have to deal with it. She didn't offer any help. This made me want to give up, and for a while after this experience, I did.

The next summer, I decided to go to a camp for Christian Scientists and join a wilderness program to try again to work through this fear. On the second day, my group and I were climbing a tall fireplace inside a lodge. It was almost my turn, and the fear was hitting me—overwhelming me. I decided to climb the fireplace anyway and try to push through. But when I got about ten feet off the ground, I started to flip out.

This time, though, I got support from my counselor, who shared some spiritual ideas to help me. From attending Christian Science Sunday School, I knew that these ideas were powerful and could

help me have a complete healing of the fear.

One of the ideas the counselor shared was that I was climbing “the heights of Mind” (Violet Hay, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 136, © CSBD). *Mind* is another name for God, and this reassured me that I could never be out of God's care, or be anywhere where God wasn't keeping me completely safe.

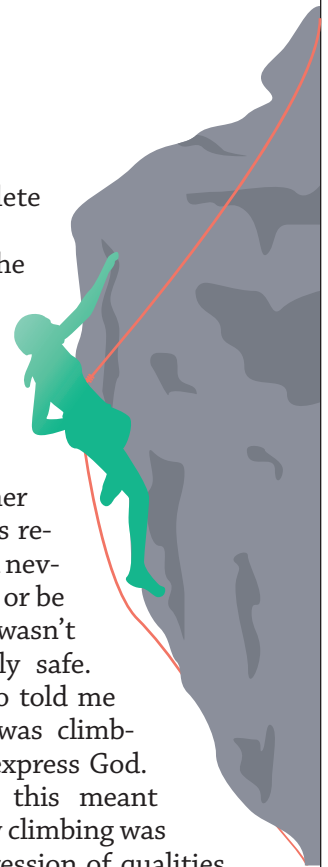
She also told me that I was climbing to express God. To me this meant that my climbing was an expression of qualities of God like strength, safety, and joy—not fear.

I kept praying with these ideas, and later that week we went to Arkansas to climb real rock walls and cliffs. We began by climbing a smaller wall to prepare ourselves for the bigger ones. I felt doubtful that I could climb it, and I almost let the fear overwhelm me. But then I remembered what my counselor had said—that I was there to express God. That changed my focus, and I was able to climb to the top of the cliff and see the beautiful view.

In that moment at the top, I felt completely free from the fear, and I knew that I was going to continue to be free—that I had the power from God to not let the fear ever get to me again.

As I came back down, I was thinking about what my spiritual breakthrough

I had the power from God to not let the fear ever get to me again.



had been, and I realized that I had stopped accepting the fear as my own. Instead of seeing it as part of my thoughts or identity, I recognized that it was a negative thought coming at me, and that because it wasn't from God, it was powerless. Only God, good, has power, so only good thoughts have any power. And those are the only thoughts I was going to lis-

ten to. When I was back on the ground, I told my counselor my realization and said I wanted to do more climbing.

I was healed that day, and the fear has not come back. From this experience, I learned how to face other fears in other experiences and overcome them, too. ●

Originally published in the August 26, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

How can I feel close to God?

By DEBORAH HUEBSCH

Q: *I feel like God is so far away. How can I understand and know God so I can feel close to Him, Her?*

A: I, too, longed to feel a closer, warmer sense of God's presence. Sure, I knew and loved the many names for God that I'd learned from studying Christian Science: Life, Truth, Love, Mind, Soul, Spirit, Principle. But I craved something more. I was missing an up-close-and-personal feeling about God. I wanted something less airy-fairy and more tangible than just believing in God.

Then a friend shared with me that God was her best friend. She felt very tangibly that He was with her all the time—in the car, at the grocery store. She was describing exactly what I was looking for.

So I started praying. Every day for

a couple of weeks I asked God—no, actually, I begged God—to show me what this wonderful, all-loving God-presence was. I wanted more than an intellectual knowledge of the Divine; my *heart* was yearning to know God.

I wanted more than an intellectual knowledge of the Divine; my heart was yearning to know God.

Well, guess what? My prayers were answered in an amazing and unexpected way. One day, I was praying for someone who lived a thousand miles away. I was wishing I could be geographically closer to this person, because I was concerned about him, when all of a sudden I heard God talking to me. Out loud. This is what I heard: "He (my friend) is My child. I will take good care of him." God's love and care were so tangibly clear to me in that moment that I found that tears were streaming down my face.

This moment was a game changer in my life. I "got" God in an experiential

way—completely different from what I'd known before. All that I already knew about God was important, but now I felt God in a way that profoundly moved me.

There are a few important things about experiencing God. Maybe most crucial is the desire to know God. I mean to really yearn in our innermost being to feel the divine presence. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "Desire is prayer;..." (p. 1). My experience taught me that the heart's true desire to experience God, to know God deeply, is answered—and in a way that's so individual and wonderful for each one of us.

Since that moment, I have made a habit of asking God to show me more of what He, She is. My prayers go something like this: "Show me what it means for You to be my Father, my Mother. What it means to be Your child. Teach me more about Your glory. Show me You." And so on.

In fact, when I drive into town each day (six miles of country landscape), I ask God to "strut Your stuff!" Then I look for evidence of God's beauty, gran-

deur, and glory. Each day there is something that gives wings to my thoughts. Maybe a wildflower, a soaring hawk, or even some deer. These point to the magnificence of God and His creation. So my second important point is to be alert to, and expect to experience, God in your life—not just in the big moments, but in the small ones, too. Since God is omnipresent, we can count on the fact that He is here—everywhere—ready to be seen and felt.

Number three is to be grateful for every speck of God seen and experienced. Gratitude is a "feel" rather than a "think." It is a heart thing that actually opens us up more to the presence of divine goodness. It also lifts our thoughts from absorption in the negative aspects of everyday life and infuses us with God-inspired joy.

While I haven't actually heard God speak out loud to me since that amazing moment, I have consistently felt the nearness and dearness of God's love and care. It's an exquisitely beautiful thing. And this feeling of closeness to God is possible for each of us. It's right here, right now, waiting for you! Go for it! ●

Originally published in the August 26, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Getting along—with God's help

NAME WITHHELD

I thought I knew what I was in for. Over school break, I visited my aunt, uncle, and cousins in a small town. I'd only stayed with them once before, and that time, I'd really enjoyed it. But that was

five years earlier, and I had changed a lot from the carefree little kid I was then. I was now a much more aware teenager.

The first week did not go well, and I felt like I didn't fit in at all. My relatives

are not Christian Scientists, and they dealt with problems very differently than I did. This made me feel out of place. But what was even worse was that I was working with my aunt in the kitchen of a restaurant, and she spent a lot of time gossiping, which I tried to drown out by singing to myself in my head. By the end of the first week, I was fuming because I was going to be stuck with them for seven more days. I felt frustrated, disappointed, and like the whole situation was awkward.

I didn't know what to do. I felt like I couldn't talk to any of my friends about it, and I didn't want to be immature and complain to my parents. After some debate, I decided to turn to Christian Science for help. In the past, I'd relied on Christian Science when I'd had other problems, and I had always found answers and healing as I'd prayed the way I had learned in Sunday School.

That Sunday afternoon, I sat in my room and prayed to see my family in a more loving way. I knew that my aunt, uncle, and cousins are God's children, just as I am. He created all of us in His image, which meant that none of us are capable of expressing anything unlike God, such as ugly qualities. We each express only good qualities—like kindness, patience, understanding, and love—because God is good. After I prayed, I felt closer to God and more peaceful.

The next day, as I continued to pray with these ideas, I noticed two things. First, I realized that the way I was thinking about my relatives had changed. I felt more loving toward them and more appreciative of the things that are good about them. I also noticed a change in their behavior. They were less judgmental and more respectful toward me and each other. Things were looking up! I ate din-

ner that night feeling much happier, and like God was right there. I also continued to keep my thoughts on this spiritual perspective rather than being critical the way I had been.

The second week, I began developing a relationship with my cousins. With my younger cousin, who is six years old, I watched movies and played with her toys. I also helped my older cousin with homework. It occurred to me that I could help out more around the house, so I did—which my aunt and uncle noticed and appreciated, and their attitude toward me seemed to change. Working with my aunt became easier, too. I found that I could interject something more positive if I didn't agree with something she was saying, and she would actually listen.

I could hardly believe it, but by the end of the week, even though I was looking forward to going back to school, I was sad to leave my cousins! I had really connected with them. The whole family drove me back to school, and I had to say goodbye. I felt genuinely grateful as I thanked my aunt and uncle for being so hospitable and hugged my two cousins, saying that they could call or text whenever they needed anything. They all seemed so different from the people I'd been regretting visiting at the end of my first week, and I knew that was because of prayer.

I am so thankful for this experience. Not only did it teach me how important it is to get our information about others from God, but it also gave me an opportunity to seek God's help on my own—and to find that it really was there. ●

Originally published in the September 9, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

King of the barnyard

By *SISSY SUGARMAN*

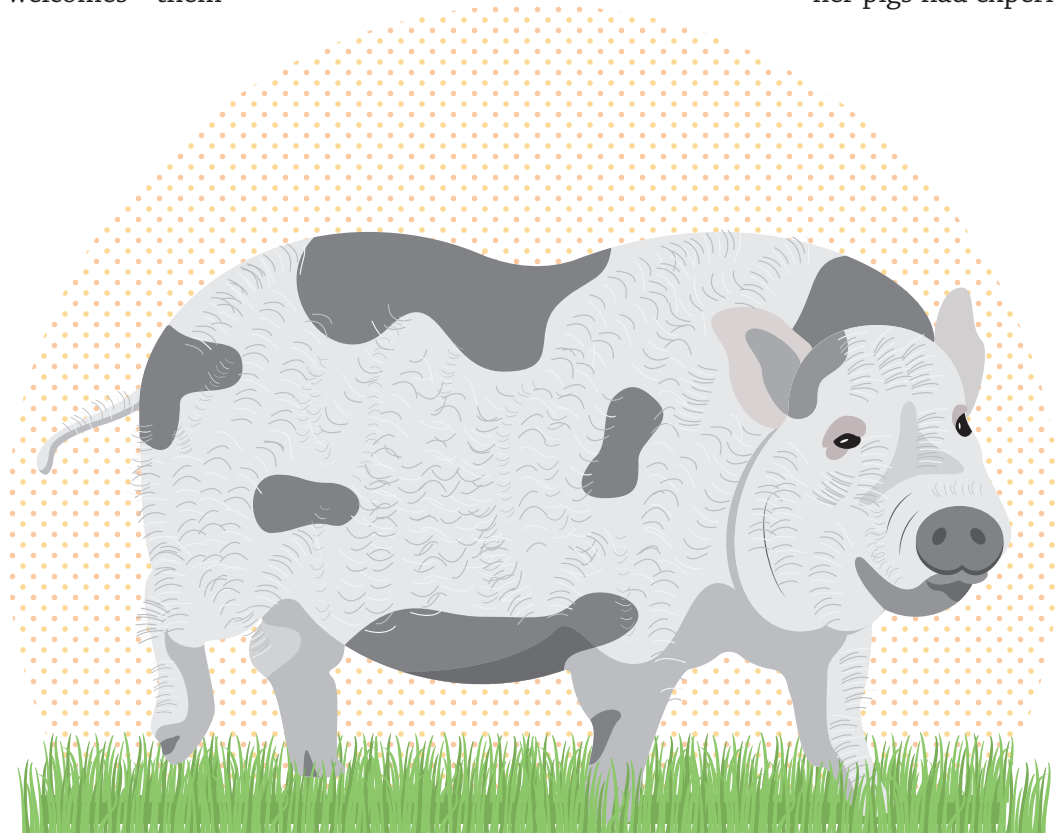
All I wanted for Christmas when I was seven was a pot-bellied pig. My grandma surprised me with a tiny, spotted piglet. I named him Otis. Ten and a half years later, this once-tiny pig is now an astounding one hundred and thirty pounds and resides in the barnyard.

Unlike the other farm critters, Otis prefers to live in his own yard right outside the main pasture on my family's farm. He likes to let the other animals know how smart he is, and when he isn't showing off, sleeping, eating, or looking for something to eat, Otis has an important job on the farm. When guests come for farm visits, he welcomes them—

and even lets the kids paint his toenails.

About two years ago, Otis's health declined, his appetite decreased, and he dropped a lot of weight. We started to feed him sweeter, softer food, which encouraged him to eat and seemed to help for a while. But then, while I was out of town on a college visit, he took a turn for the worse. My concerned mom talked with our livestock veterinarian, who told her that old pigs sometimes just fade away, and that there wasn't much he could do to help.

When I got home, I called a friend who has years of experience raising pigs, and she said one of her pigs had experi-



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

enced similar symptoms, which possibly indicated cancer, and had shortly passed away. These words filled me with fear. Nevertheless, I fought the urge to give in to hopelessness and despair.

I've had many healings through prayer in my life, often with the help of a Christian Science practitioner. I called a practitioner to pray for me this time, too, and was immediately grateful that I had done so.

The practitioner firmly and confidently explained that all of God's creatures are essentially spiritual ideas under God's loving government—and she shared the idea from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy that there is “no stoppage of harmonious action” (p. 420). I understood that God is the source of all action, and that since God is supreme, there is nothing that can interfere with or stop God's harmonious, life-giving action.

My fear immediately disappeared. I saw that Otis was not governed by laws of mortality but by the harmonious, sustaining laws of God, good. And as I sat next to him, I no longer saw him as a sickly, elderly pig. I saw him as the tiny spotted piglet wearing a Santa hat underneath the Christmas tree. I saw him running away from me in the orchard with an apple in his mouth. I remembered how he patiently listened to a group of third-graders read *Charlotte's Web* to him. I knew that the passing of time could never deprive him of the innocence, playfulness, patience, and vibrancy he exemplified on each of these occasions. They are qualities he embodies forever because they come from God.

*The passing of time
could never deprive
Otis of his God-
given innocence,
playfulness, and
vibrancy.*

When I went out to the barn a few hours later, Otis greeted me at the gate, grunting hungrily and wagging his tail. Happy to see him up and about, I ran back to the house to retrieve his next meal. He inhaled his food with gusto. He was active and hungry the next day, too. I was so grateful to have witnessed his healing.

A few days later, though, Otis was manifesting the same symptoms again, and I gave the practitioner another call. She asked me, “How can you go back to someplace you've never been?” It was a good point. I realized that if Otis had never been anything other than his God-given spiritual identity, which was governed by God, then he couldn't fall back to something he had never been—sick. In my own prayers, I denounced the be-

lief that there could be a lapse in spiritual progress, since “progress is the law of God ...” (*Science and Health*, p. 233).

Sure enough, the next time I went to check on my pig, he was whole, perfect, and full of life. He has since regained the

25 pounds he lost and would like to be fed as often as possible.

This wonderful healing renewed my confidence in God and the efficacy of prayer. Otis continues as king of the barnyard—at least as far as he's concerned. ●

Originally published in the September 9, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Staying the course—with God

By HOLLY FRIBORG

Why on earth did I decide to do this? That was the question bouncing around in my head every day for 12 weeks.

Two days before sports camp started at my boarding school, I'd decided to switch from my usual fall sport to cross-country running. Even though I immediately loved running and the progress I made, I hated the soreness after practices and the feeling that I was pushing against a barrier that wouldn't budge. I also had small struggles on and off with catching my breath. Still, I decided to challenge myself and continue with the sport.

*The only conclusion
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God's voice.*

As our first meet approached, I became incredibly nervous about it. But I knew I could pray, since prayer had helped me in the past when I'd been feeling nervous or unsettled. When I pray, sometimes I get quiet and listen for a good or comforting thought from God; other times I think about a specific passage from, for instance, the *Christian Science Hymnal*, and how it applies to my situation.

This time around, I'd been praying with part of a verse from Hymn 144: "In atmosphere of Love divine, / We live, and move, and breathe" (Robert P. Stewart). The words that stood out to me were *move* and *breathe*, because that's what I thought I needed to focus on for my race.

The meet arrived, and time seemed to speed up in the moments right before the start of the race. Then the starting gun sounded, and I was off with the rest of the competitors. I was running well—until I hit the mile mark and was suddenly overwhelmed by the feeling that I couldn't get any air past my throat. Slowing down only made it worse; I felt like I was suffocating.

Then I heard it—through all the shouting of the fans, a still, small voice telling me, "Run faster." And then, "In atmosphere of Love divine, / We live, and move, and breathe."

At first, it kind of startled me. It didn't sound like my own thoughts, because all I wanted was to stop running, so I knew I couldn't possibly be telling myself to run faster. I also knew that no person around me had said anything.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

But there it was, that firm but comforting message. So I decided to listen to it; I ran faster. Immediately my breathing improved, and I continued steadily through the two miles left in the course.

After I heard that message, I had the rest of the race to figure out where it had come from, and the only conclusion I could draw was that I'd heard God's voice. The clarity of those lines from the hymn hit me in a completely new way. And there had also been an emphasis on the word *we*. That emphasis helped me realize that the race wasn't about a single "I"—wasn't about me running the race alone. God was right there with me.

That message was enough at the time to change the course of my race, but I later realized that *we* wasn't really the right word for it, because I am actually one with God; God is the source of all my

abilities. I was also happy I could carry these thoughts of my oneness with God through the rest of my cross-country season, and I never had any breathing problems after that.

I am extremely grateful for this spiritual breakthrough, because this idea of being one with God has helped me break through so many barriers I'd previously thought of as permanent. For example, in swimming: There have been a lot of races I've wanted to quit, because I felt they would either embarrass me or "destroy" me if I attempted them. But the thought of this experience on the cross-country course, in which I glimpsed that I couldn't be separate from God, has helped me overcome many of those fears. And I know it will continue to help me going forward. ●

Originally published in the September 23, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

How can I deal with relationship problems?

By SUSAN BOOTH MACK SNIPES

Q. *How can I deal with relationship problems—friends, family, romance?*

A. Dealing with relationship problems has often felt stressful to me, especially when it has seemed like something needed to be said or done, but I couldn't figure out what that was. One time in particular my thoughts were consumed with confusion and distress. I

kept swinging between a self-righteous monologue about how right I was, and a "self-wrongness" monologue about how the problem was all my fault.

I could see no human actions that would bring resolution, which was probably good because it turned me to prayer. I've learned a lot about prayer, or turning to God for spiritual answers, through my study of Christian Science, and prayer has helped me in lots of rela-

tionship situations over the years. But I guess in this case I was so befuddled by the issues that it took utter helplessness for me to remember to turn to God.

I tried to pray by saying, “Here, God. You take this issue.” My prayer was sincere enough, but if you look at it carefully, maybe you can see the flaw in it: I was still holding on to the concept of having an identity separate from God, and then asking God to solve my relationship problem. That doesn’t exactly fit with what I’ve learned in Christian Science about the nature of God. God is All, our very Life. We don’t have our own independent lives that we need to bring God into, or problems that we need God to fix. Problems are fixed and healing happens when we surrender to God’s loving government of His creation as the only fact of our existence.

Not surprisingly, the worries and chatter in my

head wouldn’t stop. So I prayed again: “Help me to know how to yield this relationship to Your control, God.” What I heard back was immediate: “Don’t yield the issue to Me; *yield to Me.*” By this, God was saying that His nature and government were what I needed to wholeheartedly consider.

Oh, wow! I could see the difference instantly. God can’t take our issues and deal with them, because God knows nothing of problems. It’s the fact that God is All-in-all that’s the only issue, topic, or subject for consid-

eration. When we yield to God as the thing we need to ponder, know, or magnify, then we are actually coming into alignment with our place in Being as the perfect effect of the one perfect cause. Mary Baker Eddy, who wrote the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, puts it this way: “For right reasoning there should be but one fact before the thought, namely, spiritual existence” (p. 492). In other words, yield to God as the important thing to understand.

This shift brought an amazing feeling of peace and a release from concern about whether I had any responsibility for straightening out the other person. I was willing to say or do something if I felt clearly impelled by God, but I was no longer obsessed with figuring it out or making it happen. And as it turned out, the relationship righted itself and was back to normal without my saying a word.

One of my favorite stories in the Bible illustrates this kind of yielding to God. Jacob had a twin brother, Esau, with whom he’d had a huge fight. They hadn’t seen or spoken to each other in years. Finally, Jacob decided he wanted

The greatest thing about the prayer of yielding is that we can all always do it.



ANNA LUTWILLER—STAFF

to straighten things out with his brother, but he couldn't get over the mental agitation and fear about how the reconciliation might go. One night, though, when Jacob was wrestling with these thoughts, an inspiration came to him as an angel message from God, and a switch in thought came too. The Bible says that he saw himself as the face, the reflection, of God, and he also saw his brother as the face of God. And his brother was pleased with him. In other words, he didn't hang on to the issue of two warring brothers and try to get God to fix it. He yielded to God as the source of his and his brother's true identity. He yielded to trusting God to govern him as the issue that needed his full attention. And the next

day, he and his brother had a sweet reunion (see Genesis, chaps. 27, 32, 33).

The greatest thing about the prayer of yielding is that we can all always do it. It's like setting a heavy suitcase down. But remember, don't just yield the suitcase of issues to God; yield to God and your relationship to Him as the issue you need to focus on. In this sacred place of seeing everything and everyone as belonging to God, we find God holding all Her ideas in perfect government, harmony, and peace. And if there's anything we need to say or do, then we do or say it—not to *cause* peace, but, like Jacob and Esau, to celebrate the peace that God is always causing. ●

Originally published in the October 14, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

A healing of social anxiety

By ZEMMA KITCHEN

During my sophomore year of high school, I really struggled with self-confidence. It was hard to talk to people because I felt shy, anxious, and uncomfortable.

My dad, who is not a Christian Scientist, tried to help by encouraging me to talk to people with whom I wasn't close or didn't feel comfortable. While I was able to put on a façade of confidence, it didn't solve the problem, and I ended up feeling like I wasn't being honest about who I was.

So, socially things were hard. I felt like everyone around me was progressing, and I was just staying the same. My

friends started to make new friends I didn't know and, honestly, didn't really care to get to know.

All of this turned my self-doubt into self-loathing. Whenever I had free time to think, my thoughts would inevitably return to the suggestion that I was a failure and always would be. It wasn't long before the self-loathing turned into depression, and my family started to get worried. My dad decided it would be a good idea to take me out of school. My mom, who is a Christian Scientist, encouraged me to rely on what I'd learned in Christian Science to better understand my value and my place in the

world. I temporarily stopped attending my high school and traveled to the other side of the country.

Every morning I spent two hours by myself out on the water, thinking about God's love and care for me and trying to understand how to find healing. I'd had small healings before, like when I'd been sick or gotten hurt, but those had seemed more obvious somehow in terms of what I needed to pray about. In this case, I wasn't even sure where to begin. I felt confident about my appearance and had good grades, good friends, and an amazing life. But still, I hated myself. I didn't know how to change that.

I had spent days trying to understand what I was doing wrong, when a thought struck me out of nowhere: God didn't make me wrong. God is pure good, pure Love. He couldn't make wrong, so where was the "wrong" coming from? The answer was so clear to me: The "wrong" wasn't coming from anywhere because there wasn't anywhere it could come from. This passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy sums up my realization: "God is the creator of man, and, the

divine Principle of man remaining perfect, the divine idea or reflection, man, remains perfect" (p. 470).

I realized that no matter how real the self-loathing seemed, it had no source or power, and therefore no sway over me. That was all it took. With that one inspired thought from God, the constant self-doubt was gone. I was so happy to be me and to understand that there is nothing that can stop or interfere with the joy God is expressing in me.

When I returned home, people began to notice my new demeanor, and students I didn't know would approach me and say things like, "I love your smile." Or, "You always seem like you're having fun even when things are boring. How do you do that?" It became effortless to talk with people, because nothing was holding me back anymore.

This was all the result of prayer. I learned that the good I reflect from God can never be overshadowed. It's what's real and true about me, and the moment I recognized that, I was completely free. Today I'm a much happier person, and my confidence is soaring. I'm so grateful for this healing. ●

*It became effortless
to talk with people,
because nothing
was holding me
back anymore.*

Originally published in the October 21, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

I never thought I'd choose to stop drinking

By LIZZIE WITNEY

"No chance." That's what I would have said if you'd told me I'd *choose* to stop drinking back when I was drinking on pretty much a daily basis. I also probably would have laughed.

From the time I was around seventeen, drinking was a big part of my life. It started as an every-now-and-then thing, but it wasn't long before I was binge drinking nearly every day and had fallen away from Christian Science—and even from being interested in spirituality. I thought alcohol gave me confidence and deeper relationships with my friends who also drank—and also that my life would be pretty boring without it.

So you can imagine my shock when I found myself among a group of Christian Scientists my age and noticed how genuinely happy they were. How could they be so open with each other, have such deep relationships, and even have a good time, without alcohol?

Something clicked for me in that moment. I'd thought I was pretty happy overall, but when I saw this pure joy that these friends were experiencing, it became so obvious that my happiness was surface-level and fleeting. And I realized that the deeper, more permanent happiness I'd been looking for wasn't something I could get from drinking; it comes from God.

Having had a taste of the blessings that come from focusing on God, I wanted more, and this desire far outweighed the desire to drink. So, I decided to stop. But I was concerned about how my drinking friends would react and whether they'd feel uncomfortable. I was also worried

they would think I'd been dishonest with them by hiding a big part of my life. They knew I believed in God, but whenever they asked me about my religion, I would always act like it wasn't important to me.

My friends and I met most weekends at a local pub, but I decided not to go back until I felt really peaceful about my decision. In the meantime, I was studying *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy and getting a deeper understanding of God. I knew I was ready to meet them again when I was no longer afraid of the outcome. I had complete trust that God was with me and that He would be guiding me to say the right thing. I also reasoned that whether or not my friends still wanted to hang out, God's goodness would always be with me—and with my friends. The fear I'd initially felt was replaced by excitement to see what would happen.

I arrived at the pub and went to the bar to order a soft drink. The barman asked for my ID—which I hadn't brought, because I knew I wouldn't be drinking. I'd completely forgotten that I needed my ID even to be in the pub. When the bar staff asked me to leave, there was nothing to do but explain the situation to my friends. I actually told them that the reason I hadn't brought my ID was that I wasn't going to drink anymore. Then I wished them a good night and said I'd see them next week.

I got in the car to drive home, and as I did, I heard a tap on my window. My friends had run out after me! They said they didn't need to drink that evening either and offered to go back to one of my friends' houses instead. It was a real-

ly lovely night, and I was able to explain a bit more about the reasons behind my decision.

To my surprise and relief, my choice not to drink never negatively impacted the dynamic of the group. In fact, getting together without alcohol became a regular part of our social activity, and often, friends would thank me for not drinking, because it gave them confidence to do the same.

I can't say I never felt tempted to drink again. But there is a chapter in the Bible that has really helped me over the years. For quite a few months I read it every night before I went out with my friends. Part of it reads: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of

salvation" (I Thessalonians 5:5–8). These verses helped me realize that being sober isn't a passive act of not drinking but is active; it means keeping your thoughts clear and full of love, peace, and joy. This form of "active" soberness meant that I always had a good time.

I went from thinking I'd be missing out if I didn't drink to feeling so secure in the fact that I'm not missing out on anything. I've learned that all the good things I had thought I was finding in alcohol were not actually there, but can be found in any situation simply by recognizing that they actually come from God and so must always be present, since God is ever present.

My decision to stop drinking wasn't so much about cutting something out of my life as it was letting in something so much more joyful and fulfilling. Today, the relationships I have with my friends are deeper, and my life is so much more interesting and fruitful than I ever could have imagined. ●

Originally published in the October 21, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.
Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the
very God of peace sanctify you wholly.*

—I Thessalonians 5:21–23

The shaking stopped

By ANDIE RAFFLES

“I can’t seem to get it to stop,” I explained to my softball coach, as my right hand trembled uncontrollably.

I was a right-handed pitcher, and this lack of control made pitching impossible. So I sat on the sidelines, unable to play. That night I told my parents about the situation, and we did what we’d done many times in the past: We prayed. Praying the way I’d learned to in the Christian Science Sunday School had always helped me, so I was confident I would be healed.

As my hand was still trembling after school the next day, I decided to call a Christian Science practitioner for additional help. He directed me to this passage in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: “There is no involuntary action. The divine Mind includes all action and volition, and man in Science is governed by this Mind” (p. 187). I prayed with the idea that no matter what appeared to be going on, there actually couldn’t be any movement outside of God’s, divine Mind’s, control, so my hand couldn’t shake uncontrollably.

The trembling did stop, and I was grateful. But every so often it would re-occur. Each time, I would come back to the idea that there can be no involuntary action, and each time the shaking would stop.

After about four years of the intermittent trembling, one day the shaking in my hand wouldn’t stop. I ignored it for a few days, assuming it would go away.

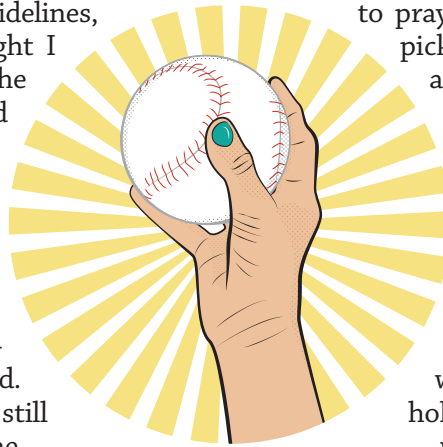
But it didn’t. So this time I sat down to pray for complete healing.

I picked up a copy of this magazine for inspiration, and as I read, I was struck by an article in which the author described the importance of a shepherd’s staff, which a shepherd uses to guide and protect the sheep.

OK, I thought. If God were a real-life shepherd holding a staff, and the staff were precious and important, God would probably hold the staff in His right hand (if the shepherd were a righty like me). And if God held the staff, it wouldn’t shake in

His hand, because God is all-powerful. His grip would be firm, strong, and unshakable. So since I’m made in God’s image and likeness, as it says in the Bible, I couldn’t have a trembling hand, either. It’s not true about God, so it couldn’t be true about me. With this realization, the trembling stopped. It’s been ten years since this definitive moment, and the healing has been permanent.

I am so grateful for this healing, for Christian Science, and for the inspiration the *Sentinel* provides. ●



*I sat down to
pray for complete
healing.*

Originally published in the November 4, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

'Christian Science had a better answer'

By XUXA NUNEZ

While volunteering at a local food bank, I moved a really heavy box of cucumbers for my coworkers. At home that night, it hurt to breathe.

I thought the pain would probably go away by morning, but I tossed and turned all night and couldn't sleep because of the pain.

When after a few days I still didn't feel any better, my mom scheduled a doctor's appointment for two days later, since my family is used to going to doctors. It still hadn't hit me that I could use what I'd been learning about Christian Science to pray about and heal this issue.

The doctor explained that I'd sprained my rib cage and would be in pain for three to four weeks while the injury healed—and that the only help she could suggest was to take a painkiller.

At that point, it was clear to me that Christian Science had a better answer.

I'd been reading the textbook of Christian Science, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, and meeting with a Christian Scientist once a week to help me understand what I'd read. The week I sprained my rib cage, I was reading the chapter "Science, Theology, Medicine," and two passages stood out to me as a helpful way of thinking more spiritually about what had happened. The first was, "The seasons will come and go with changes of

time and tide, cold and heat, latitude and longitude. The agriculturist will find that these changes cannot affect his crops" (p. 125). This passage reminded me that when I understand myself as spiritual, and God's universe as spiritual, too, then cold, heat, sickness, and sin can't touch or hurt me. Because my identity is spiritual, not material, nothing can change me—not even lifting a box that is "too heavy" for me.

The other passage that helped me was this one: "Christian Science brings to the body the sunlight of Truth, which invigorates and purifies. Christian Science acts as an alternative, neutralizing error with Truth" (p. 162). I thought it was so cool that Christian Science was working for me, helping me rule out the

bad thoughts and giving me good ones. I thought of it like having my personal "hype man" who tells me, "You can do it!" and, "You're OK!"

When I talked to my Christian Science friend a few days later, I explained what had happened and what the doctor had said. I also told her how I'd been praying and said I was feeling much better. Over the next week, I continued praying with these ideas, and before I knew it, I wasn't in any pain at all and could move normally again. This healing took a *lot* less time than the doctor had predicted, and I know that's because of God. ●

Christian Science was helping me rule out the bad thoughts and giving me good ones.

Originally published in the November 18, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Helping a suicidal friend

By HANNAH MITCHINSON

2018 had the highest number of suicides in my county in recent years. Unfortunately, 2018 was also the year I learned that a close friend wanted to add himself to that statistic. Though I'd been aware of this tragic trend at my school, it was only when I began to have long conversations with my friend, desperately trying to convince him not to take his life, that I thought to turn to Christian Science for an answer.

At first, I wasn't sure how to go about it. I've read lots of great testimonies in which people were almost instantly healed just by reading the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. But sadly, helping my friend would not be as easy as handing him a book, considering that he isn't very religious or fond of reading. Still, I knew that even if he wasn't interested in learning about God for himself, I could make a difference by praying to clarify my own understanding of my friend as loved by God, known by God, and protected by God.

As a starting point for my prayers, I studied a story in the Bible about the prophet Elijah and how he listened to God (see I Kings 19:1–12). Elijah faced some pretty terrible things—like an earthquake and a fire—which might have made God seem very far away. But the Bible says that while God wasn't in the chaos, He was still there—and Elijah was able to hear God as “a still small voice.”

That last verse was important to me, because I could put any human problem (depression, suicide, and so on) in place of the fire, and the story would apply. God is not in the chaotic problems we seem to face every day. But He is the still, small voice guiding us to have good lives—to feel secure and valued.

Elijah's story was also helpful to me in praying about my friend's desire to take his own life, because after Elijah ran away from some problems he was dealing with, he was so upset that he actually asked God to take

away his life. However, by listening to God's still, small voice, Elijah ended up being led in the right direction—not only out of his despair, but also to specific solutions to his problems (see verses 15–18). After reading through this story, I felt much more assured that I

wasn't alone in trying to help my friend.

God gave me a good way to think about my friend's situation, but the question still remained: If I couldn't share these ideas with him, how could my prayers help him change his mindset? I continued to pray about this question, and I also read some testimonies in the *Sentinel* related to preventing suicide. As I did, this passage from *Science and Health* stuck out to me: “Truth has a healing effect, even when not fully understood” (p. 152).

I suddenly understood that even if my friend didn't know it, he couldn't escape God's presence, care, and love, because God's presence, care, and love

*I knew that even
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a difference by
praying.*

are the truth, the reality, of each of our lives. No matter what someone believes, they really are protected from fear, sadness, and depression and can be guided by God out of any troubling thought or situation, because that is the nature of our relation to God as His dearly loved children. I realized that on the deepest level my friend was safe, always protected by God, always loved—and that he could feel that.

What I've learned from praying to prevent suicide is how necessary every

individual is to the wholeness of God's creation—that each of us is God's valued and loved child, not a corporeal body to count in a statistic. Now more than ever before, I see this preciousness in both my friend and me. While both his and my mind-sets have improved over the course of my prayer, I know I'll continue praying about this issue, because I now know how much of a difference prayer can make. ●

Originally published in the November 18, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

'I feel like I don't have faith in God'

By JUDY OLSON

Q: *I feel like I don't have faith in God.*

A: When I was in my twenties, I got really sick. Our neighbor, a doctor, overheard my coughing and told my husband I should be in the hospital, adding, "That's pneumonia." My worried husband, who wasn't studying Christian Science at the time, agreed. He told me that if I wasn't better by morning, he wanted to take me to the emergency room.

I'd had other healings through prayer before, so all that long night I prayed—or tried to. But fear and doubt, it seemed, were all I had. And my faith in everything that I believed felt sorely tested.

As the sun came up, I was still exhausted and no better, and I felt ready to throw in the towel. *I've given this*

prayer thing all I've got, I thought. But then, wanting to be really honest with myself, I asked, *Have I really? Is every one of my thoughts on the side of God, His love, and His care?* A quick inventory of my thoughts from the previous night showed that very few had been; most had been more on the side of fear and doubt.

Right then I apologized to God for giving up, then added this P.S.: "But, God, there's one thing I'll never give up on—that You are Love. *That*, I'm sure of."

Well, with that, it was like the flood-gates opened. Starting with that one tiny thing I had faith in, suddenly all the proofs I'd had of God's loving care for me and my family poured into my thoughts. In minutes, all the fear, doubt, and disbelief was gone. My fever was also gone. I felt filled with God's love for me, and I

got up. I made breakfast for my family and could speak without coughing. In a couple of days I was totally well.

While it may seem like that early morning turning point was a result of my faith—tiny though it was—I can see now that every step toward healing was in fact God’s love getting through to me. I’ve learned in Christian Science that God is the source, the origin, the loving creator of everything good, and we are the expression or reflection of God. In other words, we are created to reflect all of God’s goodness and love, but we don’t generate it ourselves. So even what appeared to be “my” faith had its source in God. It was really His faithfulness to me reflected right back to Him.

I learned more about this from my study of the Bible, where it says of faith: “It is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). This means we all must have faith, even if we haven’t discovered it yet, because it’s God-given. And this faith has unlimited potential to lift us up and move us forward because it’s sourced in the infinite—God. “If you have faith as small as

a mustard seed,” Jesus told his disciples, “you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you” (Luke 17:6, New International Version).

That’s what my “You are Love” moment was about. The very first thing I’d learned as a little girl in the Christian Science Sunday School was that God is Love. Lots had happened between my early days in Sunday School and that night when I needed healing, but “God is Love” was my mustard seed. It started small, but it came to my rescue when my faith was

tested. And it has continued to, in more instances than I can count. And every time, in some sweet, tangible way, that sound, solid, overarching truth that He is Love—unstoppable, omnipotent, irresistible—has supported me in knowing Him even better and trusting Him even more.

Your mustard seed may be different, but it’s there, because it’s a gift God has given you that can never be taken away. And through His love you’ll find it—and it will grow. ●

Even what appeared to be “my” faith had its source in God. It was really His faithfulness to me reflected right back to Him.

Originally published in the December 2, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

A quick healing of swimmer's ear

By *TEAGAN HUBBARD*

After a long day at school, there's nothing I like better than being in the pool. I swim about three times a week, and my favorite strokes are free-style and butterfly. I love swimming because it makes me feel so free—like I am flying.

A few years ago, though, I got an ear infection called swimmer's ear. At first, I tried to will my way through the pain. During the practice in which my ear began to hurt intensely, I did my best to ignore the problem and swim through it. Obviously, that didn't work, and I felt frustrated. I didn't want to have to miss practices or take any time off from swimming.

In the Christian Science Sunday School, I've learned to pray, so I wanted to pray about my ear. That night before bed I talked to my dad about it and told him I was frustrated and wanted to be healed. My dad shared a really interesting idea with me. He had me close my eyes and picture a tiny zero the size of a pea.

"How much does that equal?" he asked.

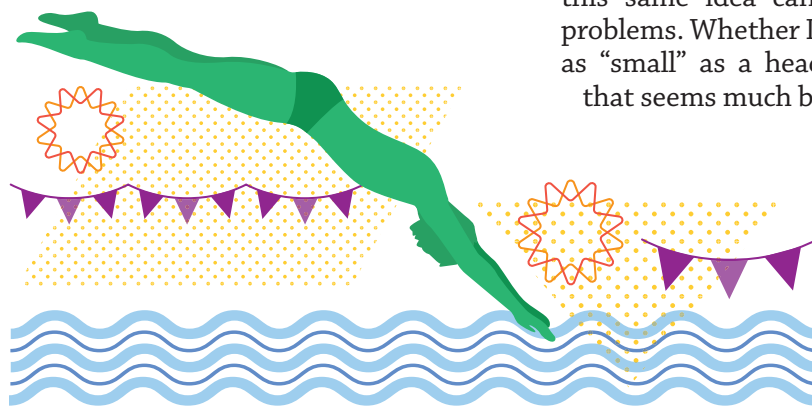
Of course I said that it equaled nothing.

Then he had me imagine a huge, towering zero. His point was that even though the zero I was picturing seemed so big, it was still nothing.

I realized how this applied to the ear problem. I've learned in Sunday School that God is all good and loving. And since God is All, there is no room for pain or anything bad. That means that something like an ear problem can't exist; it's actually a zero. It doesn't matter how big the zero seems to be—in other words, it doesn't matter if the problem is scary, painful, or impressive—because it's still a zero. It's nothing, because good, health, and harmony come from God and are real. I fell asleep thinking about this idea.

The next day I was able to go back to swimming without any problem. The pain was completely gone, and I was healed.

Since this healing, I've realized how this same idea can apply to big-scale problems. Whether I'm facing something as "small" as a headache or something that seems much bigger, it's still always equal to zero. God has all the power, and I'm grateful to have proved this for myself. ●



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Originally published in the December 16, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

How the Christmas story fixed a friendship

By JENNY SAWYER

"This is the season to have drama, Fa-la-la-la-la ..." I sang ironically.

The frosty ground crunched underneath my boots, while my attitude, I must admit, was equally frosty. I was too busy feeling frustrated and unsettled about a friendship to feel even a hint of the Christmas spirit.

I definitely wasn't in the mood to read the Christmas story. But I had a Christian Science Sunday School class to prepare for, so when I got home, I pulled out my Bible. I was not expecting this story to become a handbook for dealing with difficult relationships.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise," the Bible says. "When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18-20).

My heart went out to the guy. Think about it. You're all set to marry this girl, and out of the blue she tells you she's pregnant ... and it's the Son of God? Of course, we have no idea what Joseph was thinking, but I could imagine how unsettled, confused, and maybe even

heartbroken he might have initially felt. "While he thought about these things," the story says. Doesn't that capture the essence of so many of our relationship challenges? Feeling stirred up or worried about what another person has said or done, or what they might be thinking?

But here's the hopeful part. Joseph and Mary both got their own angels. (You can find Mary's version of events in chapter 1 of the book of Luke.) And while the angels' messages were unique, they did have one thing in common. A key part of each angel's message was: "Do not be afraid." And then in Joseph's case, the angel went on to help him understand where Mary was coming from and to let him know that everything would be OK.

It dawned on me that no amount of talking or explaining would necessarily set things right with my friend.

*God was doing
for me today what
had been done for
Mary and Joseph
centuries ago.*

But it didn't matter. We each had our own angels! I got out my copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* and read this definition of *angels* by its author, Mary Baker Eddy: "God's thoughts passing to man; spiritual intuitions, pure and perfect;..." (p. 581). We had God's thoughts, divine Love's thoughts, coming to each of us, meeting us where we were, and speaking to us in just the right way.

It's easy to think we're the ones having to say the right things or make someone else understand where we're coming from. But the Christmas story shifted

my perspective and put God at the center of my relationship “story.” It made the harmonizing, peace-giving power of divine Love paramount. It took away my frustration and fear and left me with a newfound trust that God was doing for my friend and me what He’d done for Mary and Joseph all those centuries ago. Isn’t that story a great handbook for all relationships?

That was the end of the friendship drama. Pretty soon, my friend got her own message of peace, and our relationship found even firmer footing. But the best part of that Christmas was the deeper understanding I got that no matter how confusing or upsetting things might get with the people we love, God’s angels are always there to say, “Do not be afraid”—and to set things right. ●

Originally published in the December 23, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

‘I stopped smoking pot’

NAME WITHHELD

I’d always been shy. When I was little, my sister often answered for me when someone asked my name. Despite the shyness, I managed to have friends, both boys and girls. But when I became a teenager, I withdrew—especially when it came to boys.

I was introduced to drinking alcohol and smoking pot, which seemed to loosen me up so that I became less self-conscious and had more fun. The trouble was that as time went on, I became more and more dependent on these substances to enjoy myself.

It got to the point where I was getting high even to enjoy activities that would have been fun without the drugs. Worse, after graduating from college, although I had a great job as a computer programmer and worked from home, I was getting high so often that I couldn’t discipline myself to

do much work, and I finally quit my job.

After another short-lived job and some travels, I decided to live off my savings and experiment with different spiritual and healing systems. I had always struggled with the concept of God, but I was interested in finding deeper and more lasting peace and happiness. I tried everything from meditation and astrology to Native American practices, Buddhism, and yoga. My use of drugs continued, with the hope that they would enhance my spirituality. Finally I was down to two hundred dollars, a bag of marijuana, a backpack, and a plane ticket to Honolulu, where I hoped to find a community of like-minded people with whom I could live in peace and harmony.

Instead, I became further detached from reality. When this finally dawned on me after a few years in Hawaii, I

I was interested in finding deeper and more lasting peace and happiness.

thought of my parents, who had a good, stable life, and of how my mom loved the Bible. I figured there had to be something to that, so I hitchhiked to town and bought a Bible of my own.

For a while, I smoked pot constantly, meditated, and read my Bible. I also borrowed two books from the religion section of the library. One was *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I connected immediately to the author's logical approach to understanding God and the Bible. I felt I had found a book of truth, and the contrast between how I was learning to think and my old way of thinking was clear. Previously, I'd been depending on positive thinking, which had led me into some precarious situations and poverty. But now I was understanding God and His creation as completely spiritual and good. And I could see how this new way of thinking was actually dependable because it was based on solid, divine Truth.

Initially, I was constantly getting high while reading *Science and Health*, but halfway through the book I stopped smoking pot. It was effortless. What I was reading filled me with so much hope and happiness that I no longer had a desire to get high. It was just as Jesus promised: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). My freedom came naturally as it dawned on me that God is the only real power, so nothing else, including pot, could have any power.

Later, on a friend's birthday, I did give in to the pressure to have some cocaine and pot. But surprisingly, I didn't

get high. The drugs had no power over me because of all that I'd learned about God. That was the end of years of drug use.

Reading the Bible and *Science and Health* completely transformed my life. I went on to have physical healings that assured me that what I'd been reading really was true and that I could rely on God for healing, wherever it was needed. Even more significant has been the new, spiritual view of my identity that I've gained from studying Christian Science. I've

learned that I'm not flawed, incomplete, or a certain personality type. I am God's image and likeness—the image and likeness of good—and so is everyone else. With that understanding, the extreme self-consciousness and shyness have fallen away, and I've found so much freedom and the ability to be myself without limitations or fear.

For so long I'd been putting my faith in some substance to make me feel OK. But now I've learned that the only faith I need is in God. And with that faith has come the understanding and confidence that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). ●

What I was reading filled me with so much hope that I no longer had a desire to get high.

Originally published in the December 30, 2019, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

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