



# Christian Science Sentinel

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

July—December 2023 | [cssentinel.com](http://cssentinel.com)

## A Collection for Teens



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# A Collection for Teens: July–December 2023

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SENTINEL

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We look forward to hearing from you!

# Getting all my questions answered

Susan McCandless

**I WAS RAISED IN** a mainstream Christian religion and went to church and Sunday School with my family every week. But when I was in high school, I began questioning what I understood about God and my relationship to Him. I yearned to know if God really existed.

I wondered, Did God create man, or did man create the concept of God in order to explain long-held beliefs and traditions? If God exists and loves me, as I'd been taught in Sunday School, why do bad things happen? Does God punish me when I'm "bad" and reward me when I'm "good"? In search of answers to these questions, I took every opportunity to visit other church denominations with friends, and I also began reading books on spirituality.

By the time I got to my sophomore year of college, I felt lost. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I did know that I wanted to transfer to

At first I declined, thinking I knew all I needed to know about this religion, based on what she'd told me. But eventually my curiosity got the better of me, and we attended a testimony meeting together.

As I sat in the church that evening, listening first to the comforting passages from the Bible and then the deeply inspiring readings from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, I felt I had come home. But it was the sincere, joyful testimonies shared by other attendees that made me realize that Christian Science was what I'd been searching for.

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a different college. But either the schools I applied to didn't accept me or I felt they were a wrong choice for one reason or another.

That spring, I met a girl my age through a mutual acquaintance. When I discovered that this new friend was a Christian Scientist, I peppered her with all sorts of questions about her faith. Although she'd been raised in Christian Science and did her best to explain, she felt my questions might be better answered by my going to church with her.



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It was more the feeling I got from hearing those testimonies than the specific words or healings that were shared. I felt joyful, honest gratitude for God and His guidance. I also sensed a profound trust in God, something I myself had never felt. All those who testified sounded like they really knew God, Love, and trusted Him in all aspects of their lives. Afterward, I stayed to speak with members, who were more than happy to share their insights and thoughts about Christian Science with me.

The next day, I went to a local Christian Science Reading Room, and the attendant patiently explained how to read the weekly Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*. She even gave me an old copy of the King James Version of the Bible and a copy of *Science and Health* for my very own. I was so grateful, and this began my journey of discovering more about my relation to

God and how to live and apply Christian Science in my own life.

I was like a sponge, soaking up as much as I could about this entirely spiritual view of existence. It answered my questions simply but in an absolute way, which made me want to understand more about God and healing.

Soon after my visit to the Reading Room, I decided to apply to a college for Christian Scientists. I was accepted, and when I couldn't pay the tuition, my financial needs were met quickly and harmoniously as I trusted all the details to God. My last two years of college were filled with spiritual inspiration, happy friendships, and an excellent education, which eventually led me to a successful career.

I am deeply grateful that I was introduced to Christian Science, which has blessed my life immeasurably. ●

Originally published in the July 10, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Discovering what Christian Science is really all about

Nina Riley

**I'VE GROWN UP IN** a family that practices Christian Science. We attend church every Sunday; we pray whenever we have a problem; I've even had the privilege of attending summer camps for Christian Scientists for a lot of my life. One of the most consistent messages I've heard through my years of Sunday School, prayer, and camp is that God is Love and is omnipresent—meaning that Love is everywhere and includes everyone. And yet, for many years I felt as though I were missing something. I felt disconnected from God's love and couldn't understand how Christian Science was applica-

ble to my life. I didn't feel I'd really had healings or would ever have one.

As high school began, I found myself struggling even more with my understanding of Christian Science. Fortunately, I was part of a program for high school-aged Christian Scientists, and one of the projects we were assigned was to read the textbook on Christian Science, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, cover to cover, with an adult mentor.

As I think back on my first couple of months of reading, I'm a bit surprised by how little it seemed I was getting out of the project. I strug-



gled to understand Mrs. Eddy's complex sentences, and the hundreds of pages ahead of me seemed daunting.

However, as I continued reading, annotating, and discussing, something amazing happened. What before had been a daunting task quickly became the highlight of each day. And I watched as the ideas I learned during my reading began to permeate every aspect of my life.

The first notable change was in Sunday School. I'd already felt comfortable exploring ideas with my teacher and class, but as I read through *Science and Health*, I found that I became much more inclined to question and to voice my own perspectives. I engaged more deeply with the subjects we were talking about, questioning things that I didn't understand. Whereas before I

**I didn't feel I'd really had healings or would ever have one.**

usually just accepted or nodded along with what other people had to say, now my own understanding of Christian Science was beginning to take shape. And I realized that, for the first time, I was looking for opportunities to understand more about God outside of just an hour on Sunday or a week at summer camp. I found that I wanted to apply Christian Science to challenges in my life—and that I was expecting healing.

The most pivotal development for me came as I realized what a healing really is. I'd always thought that a healing had to be something dramatic. But as I read through *Science and Health*, I began to understand that healing can begin with simply feeling the presence or touch of divine Love. And more importantly, I saw that feeling this to any degree brings a change in perspective, and that is a healing.

I finally understood that my entire life was overflowing with healing. I didn't have to overcome a major physical problem to experience



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

God's law of love.

I could recognize Love in action everywhere. I could see that everything is governed by Love and that Love isn't expressed just in tiny moments here and there but truly is omnipresent. The love I felt for my friends and family, the love that was coming from the people around me—all of this is sourced in God, divine Love. And every recognition of that shifts me to a more spiritual way of thinking, which is a perfectly valid example of healing in my everyday life.

I realized I didn't need to go to Sunday School for a certain amount of time or meet an imaginary set of requirements in order to "earn" a healing, as I'd thought in the past. I was already experiencing God's constant care, and I had more proofs of it than I could have ever imagined.

This understanding changed the way I related to God. I was no longer afraid that I might do something wrong that could somehow disconnect me from Love. I understood that everything in my life was already embraced in Love. And this made me feel more comfortable turning to God for help in difficult moments. I also stopped being afraid that my prayers could fail, because I finally understood that prayer is based on divine law and that this law can't fail; it's always operating. God's love had always been there, and I felt assured that it always will be.

Reading *Science and Health* changed my life. I feel I've discovered for myself what Christian Science is really all about, and I'm excited to go on learning more about the truth of being. ●

Originally published in the July 24, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# Feeling at home, away from home

Kate Shipp

**I'VE ALWAYS FELT A** strong connection to my home. But until this past summer I hadn't realized that I can feel a more expansive sense of home anywhere.

I'd been hired to be a counselor at a summer camp for Christian Scientists. I arrived at camp ecstatic to be there, but soon I was hit with an unexpected wave of homesickness. I started to feel uncomfortable because it seemed like the peace, comfort, and security that I associated with home weren't there. The more I focused on these feelings, the worse I felt, until I realized that sadness had consumed my entire first week. I didn't

**Something had to change, or it was going to be a long summer.**

see how I could have a productive or happy camp experience this way. Something had to change, or it was going to be a long summer.

I knew that camp was a great place filled with good people and fun activities, but this reasoning could carry me only so far. To have a truly happy and memorable camp experience, I needed to change the way I was thinking. I realized I could pray. To me, prayer is listening to what God is telling me about myself—about the way He sees me. I realized that because God is Love, instead of trying to reason my way through this homesickness, I could trust Love to help me feel at home. I knew deep down that I didn't have to *be* at home in order to *feel* at home. God could help me feel all the qualities of home at camp.

When I found a quiet place to pray, one of my favorite statements from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy came to me: "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (p. 494). To me, this was

a promise that God was already providing me with what I thought I was missing. I knew I could pray with this idea by looking for ways that Love was meeting my needs right there at camp.

Another idea that came to me through my prayers was that I was at camp because God had a purpose for me there. By continuing to listen to God, I could recognize my purpose at camp even more fully. I felt so much better as I prayed with these ideas.

I decided that every day I would listen for inspiration from God that would help me to help



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others at camp. As I did, I began to recognize the qualities of home in myself and in others.

I found peace as I connected with old friends and a past conflict was resolved. I also saw peace in the beauty of my surroundings and the love expressed by the horses I was working with in the corral. I found comfort in the consistent and loving support of my supervisor, who knew I was struggling and offered inspiration of her own. I felt secure working through camper challenges because I was guided by God, and that blessed the campers, and me, and everyone else.

Within a few days, I realized that my physical home wasn't the only place I could be happy and helpful. No matter where I was, I could find all the qualities of home because they are spiritual and come from God.

I've read the following explanation in *Science and Health* many times before, but this experience really showed me what it's all about: "Prayer cannot change the Science of being, but it tends to bring us into harmony with it" (p. 2). My prayers didn't actually change camp or my physical location, but they did help me to see and experience the harmony of home—everywhere. ●

Originally published in the August 7, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# If you need help with anxiety

Jenny Sawyer

**ANXIETY USED TO HIT ME** like a wave. One moment I was OK, the next I felt like I was drowning. Sometimes the thoughts were specific; sometimes it was just a crushing weight of anxious feelings. All of it was awful.

As Youth Editor for the *Sentinel*, I've heard from so many of you that even if your situation looks different, anxiety is something you're concerned about for your friends or are dealing with

**I want to share my own healing of anxiety, because we can do more than just manage this problem.**

yourself. That's why I want to share my own healing of anxiety, because we can do more than just manage this problem. Healing is possible because of who we are.

Anxiety would try to tell us one story about who we are: that we're at the mercy of our thoughts and feelings. That they can barge in, batter us, and we're helpless to do anything about it. That's the way I used to feel. But one day, during one of these anxious episodes, a thought broke through that I knew was from God.

This wasn't a total surprise—I'd prayed about anxiety a lot. Prayer had been my go-to because Christian Science had helped me so much with other mental health issues. And it made sense to me that feeling more of the presence and power of infinite, unstoppable good—God—would help me feel more peaceful, less anxious. I felt sure that, just like pure happiness leaves no room for sadness, being conscious of the divine qualities of goodness, peace, and stability would rule out anxious, unsettled, fearful thoughts. One naturally excludes the other.

I'd had moments of relief praying this way. But the anxiety continued until I heard this thought

from God. It said, *How would you pray about this if you were praying for a friend?*

I know that thought doesn't really seem to relate to my problem. But what I love about ideas from God is that they help us get to the core of whatever we're dealing with rather than leaving us to chip away at it on a surface level. And this thought woke me up to my approach to praying about anxiety. I'd been tentative, I realized. I was giving anxiety the power rather than God, even though I knew from reading the Bible that God is omnipotent—literally *all* power.

I recognized all of this as I thought about this question of how I'd pray for a friend who was struggling with anxiety. And as I did, I felt a strength well up in me that I'd never felt before. I knew I'd be absolutely convinced that anxiety

**“That feeling of being overwhelmed by nerves and fear broke apart and dissolved. The deepest peace I'd ever felt settled over me.**

could not control my friend and was no part of their thoughts or life. I knew I'd see anxiety as an enemy to be destroyed rather than a bully to be pushed around by. I knew I'd stop listening to any negative, fearful thoughts about my friend and completely devote myself to listening to the thoughts divine Love was giving me.

So? Came the follow-up thought from God. *Why not do that for yourself?*

I knew what God was nudging me to do didn't involve willing anxiety away. I'd felt such authority in thinking about praying for a friend dealing

with the same problem because I understood so clearly who that hypothetical friend was—God's expression. When you express yourself, that expression reflects who you are—be it funny, creative, intelligent, serious, or all of these. Similarly, God's expression must be like God. And since God isn't anxious, we can't be either. God's qualities include peace, strength, balance, harmony, constancy. Those are the kinds of qualities that make up who we are.

This was my basis for praying for myself, too—knowing who I really am. Being God's expression, the expression of good, meant I could say no to anything that wasn't good. And I could say no with authority. I felt so much strength as I thought of how Mary Baker Eddy characterized this rebellion against every ungod-like thought: “Know, then, that you possess sovereign power to think and act rightly, and that nothing can dispossess you of this heritage and trespass on Love” (*Pulpit and Press*, p. 3).

This might sound like something out of a Marvel movie, but the moment I rose up against the anxiety on the basis of my God-given identity, it was like a great “Boom!” happened in my thoughts. That feeling of being overwhelmed by nerves and fear broke apart and dissolved. The deepest peace I'd ever felt settled over me. I knew I was free—and I was. That was the end of those anxious episodes.

The spiritual identity I recognized that day is yours, too. Sourced in God, it's not vulnerable to mental health issues or destined to endlessly struggle against bullying thoughts. It includes peace and freedom—and the strength to claim those qualities as your own. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

Originally published in the August 21, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



# One summer, two healings

Merit Brustman

**I'M GRATEFUL FOR** the healings I had during two experiences in one summer. For the first, I traveled to Mexico with a group of Christian Scientists. And later, I attended a camp for Christian Scientists in Missouri.

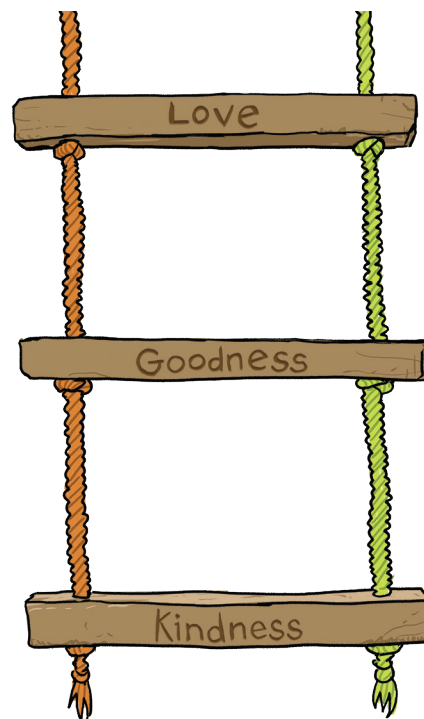
In Mexico, I loved swimming with cool fish, being with my friends, and going to an adventure park that had a high ropes course. The course looked like a lot of fun, so I really wanted to do it. But I was a bit intimidated because I had a fear of heights.

To overcome this fear, I thought about my favorite Bible verse: “The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3). It reminded me how much God loves me and

**Feeling Love’s presence defused the fear and gave me confidence to try the ropes course.**

that divine Love is all around me. Feeling Love’s presence defused the fear and gave me confidence to try the ropes course. And not only was I able to complete the course but I was able to help one of my peers complete it as well. My fear of heights diminished significantly because of this experience.

Later, at camp, I had another healing after I accidentally fell backward on a water slide and bruised my tailbone. It hurt to walk, so I asked for help from a Christian Science practitioner who was at the camp. The practitioner and I spoke, and



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he helped me understand how to pray for myself by listening for ideas from God.

As I prayed, something came to mind from an online video that I’d seen. On the surface, it doesn’t have anything to do with Christian Science, but I found a unique way to apply it to what I was going through. A character in the video says, “No prison can hold me!” I realized that “no prison can hold me” could apply to what I’ve been studying in Christian Science. I took it to be a reminder that I am an expression of God, so no “prison”—discomfort, pain, or any other bad feeling—has power over me, because God, good, is the only power.

This idea was so helpful that I was able to go about the rest of my day more freely, and the pain didn’t hold me back at all in the following day’s activities. At the end of the second day, I realized that the pain was completely gone and I’d been healed.

I am so grateful for these experiences because they’ve helped me grow as a student of Christian Science, and I’ve learned how to pray more effectively for myself. ●

Originally published in the September 4, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# Worried about your future?

Savannah Tully

**IT WAS TIME TO** think about college. But I felt lost. I'd filled my schedule with sports, school, and other activities for years, so I always knew what was coming next. Now I didn't.

My worries followed me into the summer, when I was working as a counselor-in-training (CIT) at a camp for Christian Scientists. I couldn't stop thinking about where I was going to go to college, and I was also focused on my upcoming soccer season. I was so distracted by these concerns that it took a toll on my ability to participate in activities at camp.

One day, I felt so unhappy that I thought I wouldn't be able to continue working at camp. But then something popped into my head that my mom had always told me when I felt out of place or homesick: With God, I would always be in my right place. And if something seems like it's not right, then God will lead the way to what is. As helpful as this idea was for me, I wanted to go deeper with it and to understand my "right place" and what that would mean for my future after camp.

My answer came one morning when I read an article called "Place." It was just what I needed. It explained that the place you need, needs you, and that God, divine Principle, brings need and supply together. I continued to think about this idea a lot, and it was very comforting. I loved the concept of a place "needing me" and of God, who I've learned in Christian Science is good and all-power, directing and guiding me in all my decisions. As I prayed with these ideas, I felt calmer.

Later in the summer, I found out that I'd been offered the opportunity to attend a school in Colorado for my senior year, but it meant I might not be able to continue playing soccer.

I continued praying. I revisited the article, and another idea jumped out at me. It related to listen-

ing to and obeying God when He gives us direction. This idea stuck out to me because I've learned that being quiet and listening to God is the best way to know what to do when at a crossroads. God is infinite Love and intelligence, so there's no better or more reliable source for guidance. I've also learned that patience is helpful when listening to God, and this helped me let go of my preconceived ideas about what might be best and trust God.

Soon, all the pieces fell into place for college, and I knew it was the right decision to accept the offer to play soccer at this college. Tying down the continuation of my soccer career meant that I felt free to take advantage of the opportunity to spend my senior year in Colorado. It was so clear to me that this was the God-directed path that I stopped worrying and just felt grateful for God's guidance. Although I had a few concerns about what my future would look like because of these decisions, I trusted that my prayers were leading me to my right place.

As the summer came to an end, I visited this college and felt even more confident that it was just what I needed. I'll be able to continue my soccer career there, while also enjoying my senior year in a new state at a new school—both of which are blessings.

Best of all, I was able to conclude my summer at camp free from worry and to feel I'd had a full and joyful CIT experience.

Praying through my concerns about the future really strengthened my trust in God and taught me that I can let go of my fears and know that God is always directing and guiding me. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

Originally published in the September 18, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

# A healing—and a way forward

Hannah Wymer

**I WAS ATTENDING A COLLEGE** that hadn't been my first choice. Although I tried to keep my spirits up about this new experience, I was unhappy. I was a freshman on the basketball team and my schedule consisted of waking up at 4 a.m. for practice, going to classes, practicing basketball individually, and staying on top of homework. This seemingly never-ending cycle repeated for the first three weeks of my freshman year.

I felt depressed, empty, and like something was missing in my life. Questions ran through my mind such as, "Is this really where God wants me to be?" and, "Do I have to stay here even though I'm not happy?"

Things seemed to get worse after one early morning practice. I felt fatigued and wanted to

**Things seemed to get worse after one early morning practice.**

relax at home before my afternoon class. Walking back to my car, I was unaware of an uneven portion of the sidewalk. My foot caught on the concrete and I fell hard on the rough ground.

I called for medical help since I couldn't stand. After several X-rays, a doctor told me I had a small fracture in my left leg. I was told not to walk or stand for at least four weeks to allow it to heal.

When I returned home with crutches, I was distraught. I couldn't understand why God had allowed this to happen. Why hadn't He caught me, or prevented me from falling?

I was still a relatively new student of Christian Science, and had been learning a much more healing way to think of God in prayer. Now I felt the urge to turn to God in this way, which was something I hadn't done since I'd started the semester.

As I prayed, I realized that I'd allowed myself to get so caught up in my daily commitments that I hadn't spent much time with God or strengthening that relationship. I realized that's why I'd felt so empty and unfulfilled, and I knew that only turning to God would help me address the way I'd been feeling.

My prayers led me to a relevant Bible passage. It says: "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" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

That night, in response to this line from the Bible, I said, "God, I know I haven't been trusting in You and that I've been leaning on my own understanding. I can't do this on my own. I need You. I only want Your will to be done."

The next day, I called a friend of mine who is also a Christian Scientist. I told her what had happened and she shared a healing she'd experienced of a similar problem. What stood out the most to me from what she shared was that she'd never fallen out of God's care because God is ever-present Love. It struck me that it didn't matter what had appeared to happen; the truth of God's presence was more real to her than anything else.

I started to ponder that idea as she also shared a helpful passage from Mary Baker Eddy. It says: "Remember, thou canst be brought into no condition, be it ever so severe, where Love has not been before thee and where its tender lesson is not awaiting thee. Therefore despair not nor murmur, for that which seeketh to save, to heal, and to deliver, will guide thee, if thou seekest this guidance" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, pp. 149–150). I thanked my friend for her story and loving support and hung up the phone.

Our conversation inspired me to keep praying and listening for God's voice. As I did, I heard a lov-

ing, confident voice in my thoughts that said, “Get out of bed and stand.” I knew this was from God because it wasn’t something I would have come up with, and I also felt God’s love and presence with

**“I was able to go back to playing basketball right away, but there was more to this healing than that.**

me as these words came to mind. I followed the instruction and was soon standing up on both legs and remaining balanced without any pain.

Then I heard God’s voice in my thoughts again: “Now, walk around your room.” With

one foot in front of the other, I took small steps which turned into larger ones, and I still didn’t feel any pain. I fell to my knees and cried tears of joy because I knew I’d been healed. I no longer needed crutches and had no more pain from this injury. I was able to go back to playing basketball right away, but there was more to this healing than that.

After this experience, I didn’t feel any anxiety about my future. I chose to withdraw from the college I’d been attending and am now studying at a college for Christian Scientists that has best suited my academic studies and has fulfilled my life in so many ways.

Looking back on that day, I know now that I never truly fell out of God’s care. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

Originally published in the October 2, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



# Finding God again

Tessa Parmenter

**I WAS HIKING** a small mountain near my parents' house, where I was living at the time. It was my first year out of college, and life at that point felt like an uphill climb. That day I was upset about a rocky exchange with a coworker that had left me questioning my life and whether God even existed.

I'd grown up learning about Christian Science, which teaches that God is good and created everything good. But I couldn't see how life could be good if bad things were happening. I was upset and losing faith.

As I went down the mountain, I felt bold enough to try a new trail—not unlike the new trail I wanted to blaze for my life and career. While there wasn't a visible path, there were many blue markers on the trees, and I thought following them would get me where I needed to go.

Those blue markers became less clustered as I went on, and as they thinned out, I would find the next one farther away. Then farther. Then they stopped. I looked around. If only I could retrace my steps . . . But there was no path.

The sun was going down, and I needed to get back to my car. I remembered a small river I'd passed, and I knew I could follow the river down to the foot of the mountain. But the map I'd seen earlier had shown the river on the opposite side of the mountain from my car. There wouldn't be enough time to follow it and then circle back to where I had parked.

First I started to panic. Then I started to pray. It came in the form of pleading: "God, if You're real, get me out of here!"

I took a few steps, and then an idea came to me that I should "stand on the rock." There was a boulder just behind me, and while that message was probably about standing on a firm, spiritual foundation, I took it literally and stood on the rock to get my bearings. Interestingly, the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, defines *rock* spiritually as "spiritual foundation; Truth. Coldness and stubbornness" (p. 593). Definitions like this in the book's Glossary give the spiritual meaning of many symbols in the Bible, followed by the material or unenlightened view as presented by the five physical senses.

I was certainly feeling cold and stubborn at the time and could have benefited from a spiritual foundation. And what happened next began to move me from that stubbornness to a more solid sense that God really was there for me. As I stood on that small boulder, I saw a little clearing between the trees. I felt so much joy as I bounded off the rock.

As I walked on and on, however, I started to doubt again. I wondered whether it had just been my imagination. I needed more. I reached out to God again, eyes brimming with tears: "God," I thought, "if You will show me a clear path, I promise I'll never doubt You again."



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

I waited for a response, then felt as if someone said, “Keep going. I’ll show you.”

I was reassured and continued forward. I couldn’t have gone more than a few yards when I saw the forest open up to a huge dirt road. I was in awe! As I followed the road, I thanked God each step of the way—reaching my car before nightfall.

As it turned out, my life after that hike also reached a clearing of sorts. I found a part-time job that was related to my college degree and was able to move to an apartment of my own. I had come

to see that standing on the rock meant relying not on the five physical senses but on Spirit—another name for God. I had started to understand that none of the bad comes from God or is the reality of life. Instead, it is Spirit that is present, permanent, and reliable. Spirit gives us spiritual good that is tangible, and even healing, as Jesus himself proved.

It wasn’t that life never again felt like an uphill climb. But I’d found something that helped me to overcome rocky situations and pointed me to the right path. I’d found God again. ●

Originally published in the October 16, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Learning to respond with prayer

Shari Charlston

**WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER**, I loved scuba diving and would go as often as I could. To sit on the ocean floor and watch the gentle movement of the kelp forest above me was one of my favorite things to do. The quiet beauty under the water brought me a deep, almost indescribable peace.

One day, after hours of diving fun, I was unpacking my car and tried to close the trunk while juggling some of my equipment. As I did, I dropped a two-pound diving weight—used to keep

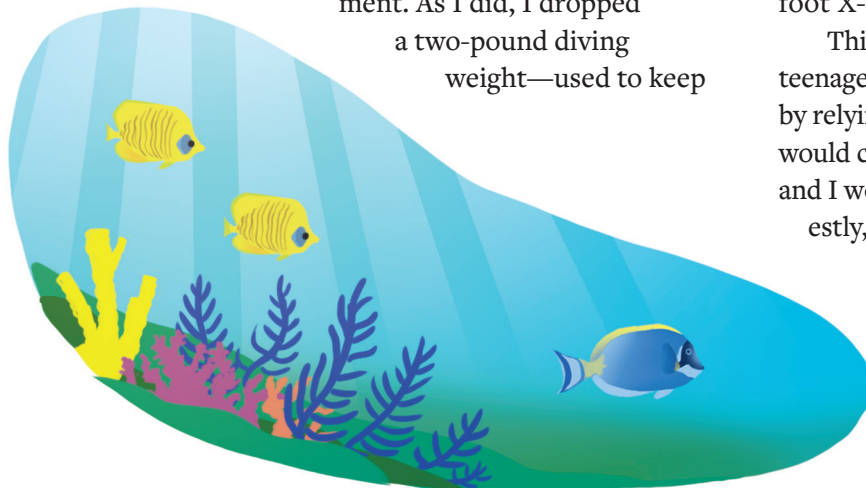
me submerged when diving—which struck my foot with great force. The impact was directly on one toe. At first, I felt lightheaded, but I was able to make it into the house.

I think I looked a little ridiculous as I hobbled around. My brother even accused me of faking it. For the next few days, I tried to walk normally. But I couldn’t, and after I limped around for a bit, my dad suggested I have my foot X-rayed.

This caught me by surprise. As a child and young teenager, I’d had many healings in Christian Science by relying on my parents’ prayers. Or sometimes we would call a Christian Science practitioner for help, and I would experience freedom quickly. But honestly, I hadn’t really been praying about my toe.

I’d been thinking it would just get better on its own.

I did get my toe X-rayed, and the X-rays showed that one toe had been broken and was mending crookedly. The doctor suggested the bone be rebroken and set correctly.



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

He said that otherwise the toe would always be crooked.

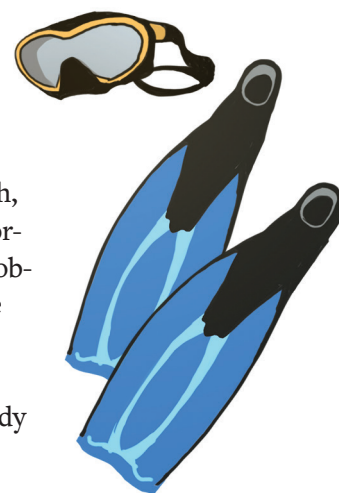
Right there I made the decision that I wanted to rely on Christian Science for healing, and I asked my parents if I could call my Christian Science Sunday School teacher to pray with me. My parents fully supported my decision.

My Sunday School teacher, who was also a Christian Science practitioner, encouraged me to pray by seeing myself as spiritual—a child of God, Spirit—faultless and unbroken. After my call to

been. The healing was soon complete, and I couldn't even tell which toe had been broken.

The biggest blessing, though, was my realization of how important it is to respond to every problem or accident with immediate prayer. This prayer included seeing myself as a spiritual idea or expression, not a physical body that could be damaged. I also saw that I could instantly claim my—and others'—freedom from accidents. This passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* became the practical wisdom I needed: "Stand porter at the door of thought. Admitting only such conclusions as you wish realized in bodily results, you will control yourself harmoniously" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 392).

A few years after this healing, I was led to train to become a Christian Science nurse. At the time I really wasn't sure I was capable of taking this training, but I knew without a doubt that that's what I was supposed to do. The healing of my toe had been the turning point—the first experience I'd had when I really understood my identity as spiritual. And with this understanding as my foundation, I knew I could support healing for myself and others. ●



**I felt a powerful presence that was hard to describe, and I knew without a doubt I would be completely healed.**

her, I felt a peace that was even greater than what I experienced when I was scuba diving. I felt a powerful presence that was hard to describe, and I knew without a doubt I would be completely healed. In fact, my concern about my toe completely vanished.

Very soon the limping stopped, and I noticed that the injured toe had naturally aligned with the other toes on that foot. I wasn't surprised, because what I'd felt through our prayers had become so much more real to me than the problem ever had

Originally published in the October 30, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

## Notes

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# I didn't know if I could be healed of depression

Sophie Ungerleider

**FROM THE OUTSIDE**, it probably didn't look like I was depressed. It was the beginning of high school, and I was keeping up with my academics, athletics, and extracurriculars. But my friendships weren't as strong as they'd been, and I felt like I was having an identity crisis. I was consistently moody and sad, and things seemed to be going downhill.

Depression affected my home life the most. I really needed my family, yet I found myself pushing them away. And I was making decisions that didn't align with my family values. I was so influenced by the new "friends" I was surrounding myself with that it negatively affected my relationships with the people I cared about the most.

I knew I needed help, and I wanted to feel better. But even figuring out where to start was overwhelming, so my mom suggested I call a Christian Science practitioner to pray for me.

Every time I talked with this practitioner, I cried—mostly because it felt like things weren't improving. But I also cried because what she

challenge of discovering how I could love myself. I read a lot of testimonies about love and mental health in the Christian Science magazines. These brought me comfort because I realized that I wasn't alone in how I was feeling and that healing is always possible.

At one point, the practitioner asked me to begin keeping a gratitude list. I started with giving gratitude for my loving family, for my education, and for having enough to eat. Then I was able to add more things to the list—a helpful teacher at school, a cross country practice that went well, the leaves on the trees changing colors. But the one thing I still struggled with was feeling grateful for *me*.

One night, after being in this dark mental place for about six months, I became extremely intoxicated after consuming a significant amount of alcohol. My parents took care of me and called the practitioner who'd been praying for me. This was a turning point. Not only did I make a complete recovery—a huge healing in and of itself—but I realized that my one-foot-in-the-door-one-foot-out-the-door approach to solving this problem wasn't really working. I wanted to turn completely to prayer for a solution. With this realization, it felt like a weight had lifted off my shoulders.

I did turn wholeheartedly to God, but I still believed that my happiness was situational. I kept thinking and saying, "I'll be happy when . . ." I thought that the friends I had, the way I looked, and how successful I was, determined my happiness and my ability to love myself. But I was beginning to learn that being happy was really about recognizing—and leaning on—God's all-embracing, ever-present love.

Something that helped me feel I could rely on God during this time was the opening line

**I embraced the challenge of discovering how I could love myself.**

shared with me was so loving and comforting, and I wanted to believe what she was saying—that in spite of how I was seeing myself and how I was feeling, I really was a child of God—perfect, complete, and whole.

Something else the practitioner was showing me was that if I could love others, I could also love myself, because all love comes from the same source—God, divine Love. That was hard for me. But I really wanted it to be true, so I embraced the



from Mary Baker Eddy's book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings" (p. vii). I liked the idea that this pressure I was feeling wasn't as legitimate as it seemed. I

**“It became easier to see that my worth didn't depend on how I looked or on any outside validation.**

wasn't on my own. I could turn to God and ask what to do next, and that didn't have to be a hard process.

In addition to my gratitude journal, I began keeping a list of my God-given, spiritual qualities like patience, love, and intelligence. It became a joy to see the good unfold in my daily life and to recognize all the good I was expressing, too.

As I learned more about my true, spiritual identity, the decisions I did—and didn't—want to make became clearer, and things naturally began to shift. I stopped hanging out with the people I was trying so hard to fit in with. I learned to be more independent, because I knew that I wasn't really

on my own and that God was guiding me. It also became easier to see that my worth didn't depend on how I looked or on any outside validation.

I knew I was healed of depression when I was able to see past the darkness, and when instead of crying on the phone with the practitioner, I could share with her all of the positive things going on in my life. My relationships, especially those with my family, grew stronger. And for the first time, I felt I was catching glimpses of what it meant to love myself and to know that God created me.

A couple of months later, I knew I could continue my journey without the practitioner's close support—something I'd never thought would be possible. It felt like the sun had come out after I'd been in the dark for a long time.

This experience helped me grow spiritually, in both my understanding of God and my appreciation for Christian Science. I learned that when I put my trust in God, I can find healing, even when a situation seems unresolvable.

I'm also grateful for the Christian Science periodicals as a place to go when you don't know where else to turn. For those moments when you feel so hopeless and lost, reading someone's healing experience can be the light that leads you forward. I know it was for me. ●

Originally published in the November 13, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



# Need a good idea?

Bob Cochran

**I HAD AN IMPORTANT** paper due in five days, and I hadn't started it. In fact, I didn't even have a topic.

My professor had handed out a list of topic choices, but all of the topics seemed obscure or dull. I couldn't make myself choose any of them.

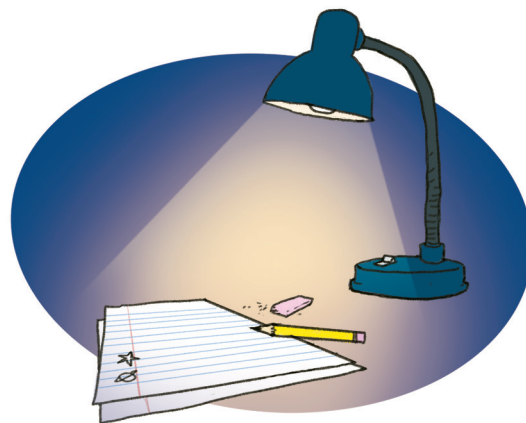
As zero hour approached, I knew it was time to do something I should have done earlier—something I'd done many times as a student of Christian Science. In prayer, I turned to God, infinite intelligence, for help.

The first idea that came to me as I prayed was part of Mary Baker Eddy's explanation of our spiritual identity in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: “the compound idea of God, including all right ideas” (p. 475). It

**All of the topics for my paper seemed obscure or dull. I couldn't make myself choose any of them.**

occurred to me that the decision about which topic to choose was itself a right idea because finishing my paper was the right thing to do. And according to that explanation, that idea was already part of me. It had to be. Otherwise, I'd be incomplete, and God can't make anything or anyone that is incomplete.

Then why wasn't I able to pick a topic? I realized that this was the wrong question, because it still assumed that the necessary idea was somewhere outside me, and that I had to pick, find, or wait for it. In reality, I didn't have to do any of those things. What I had to do was accept my completeness as the compound idea of God.



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

It's no different than dealing with a health problem. The purpose for our prayer isn't to make our body feel better. Our prayer is about understanding more clearly that, as God's children, we are, in reality, already whole and healthy. Similarly, I didn't have to pray to think of or choose something I lacked; I just needed to know that I couldn't lack anything, including necessary ideas.

I resolutely pushed aside concerns about my circumstances—my opinion about the topics, the time pressure, the consequences of not turning a paper in, and so on. With growing conviction, I claimed the truth of my completeness as God's child and insisted that no anxiety, worry, frustration, or any other negative thought could intrude on or interfere with that completeness. I prayed that way for a while, until I felt confident and free of concern.

Only then did I allow myself to glance back at the list of topics. Immediately, one jumped out at me. It no longer seemed obscure or dull but instead felt like something I wanted to know more about. I got busy right away. I enjoyed researching and writing the paper, turned it in on time, and received a good grade.

There are no formulas when it comes to the practice of Christian Science. But this basic insight—that each of us includes every necessary idea—was very helpful to me in my remaining years in college and graduate school, and it has continued to be helpful. Any job or situation we find ourselves in requires an idea or a flow of ideas. And it's comforting to remember that as “the compound idea of God” we already have whatever ideas are needed. ●

Originally published in the November 27, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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