



# Christian Science Sentinel

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

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## A Collection for Teens



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Quitting the  
complaining  
committee

Page 2

I was healed of bipolar disorder

Page 10

When I didn't get  
accepted to university

Page 15

# A Collection for Teens: January–June 2024

## CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SENTINEL

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## CONTENTS

Quitting the complaining committee Lily Hoyle	2
Overcoming academic challenges Oliver Simpson	3
How can I pray about all the wars going on? Jean Whitehead	4
The perfect fit David Martin	6
How can I feel motivated? Peter Fitzpatrick	7
What's so bad about identifying yourself with a star sign? Julia Schuck	8
I was healed of bipolar disorder Andy Crump	10
When my best friend spread rumors about me Holly Bell	11
When I wasn't healed right away Gabriela Mejía	13
Trusting God with track season Melissa Matlalcuatzi	14
When I didn't get accepted to university Tanya Mapeta	15
What's my motive? Holly Ashford	16
Can I actually be healed of anxiety? Susan Tish	17

See **page 20** for submission, subscription, and contact information. We look forward to hearing from you!

# Quitting the complaining committee

Lily Hoyle

**OBNOXIOUSLY LOUD SIGHS** and “Ughs!” filled the hallway as my friends and I trudged to our next class. It was only 8:30 in the morning, and we had already effortlessly produced a record-breaking number of complaints about school, the weather, people—and school again.

This was a daily ritual. I embraced complaining because it seemed like an easy way of connecting with others, since common grievances were easy to find. But this practice took a toll on my mental well-being and amplified the stress I felt about my life.

One day, my mom heard me complaining and asked if I had anything positive going on. Her question surprised me—and also made me think of this from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: “To those leaning on the sustaining infinite, to-day is big with blessings” (p. vii). I realized that my contribution to my

been founded on rock” (Matthew 7:24, 25, New Revised Standard Version). My habit of focusing on negativity was a foundation of sand—unstable. This meant that when I faced a problem, my experience reflected the foundation I’d built, and I was flooded with doubt, anxiety, and a feeling of being out of control. But this passage spoke to me because it helped me see that grounding myself in God would give me a strong foundation to rely on when I’m faced with a “storm.” And then my conversations, thoughts, tasks, and relationships would reflect what I know to be true about God, who is good.

In reality, the “comfort” I found in complaining wasn’t comfort at all, so it needed to be replaced by something that was actually substantial: trust in God and the comfort that comes from that. I needed to see my days through the lens of Love and help my friends see the value in recognizing all the good in our lives.

The next day, I piloted my friend group into the uncharted territory of gratitude. I challenged our pessimistic habits, and we all discovered there were opportunities to acknowledge good qualities in our peers, comment on the things we were looking forward to learning, and look at our challenges more optimistically. Instead of talking about deadlines or gossip, we wholeheartedly embraced gratitude. We were acknowledging the good in our lives, and we were able to find joy in our days. It eased the weight of our typical problems and workload. By changing our perspective, we were recognizing and expressing God—and feeling His love and care.

I’ve always loved Mrs. Eddy’s thoughtful question: “Are we really grateful for the good already received? Then we shall avail ourselves of the blessings we have, and thus be fitted to

**I embraced complaining because it seemed like an easy way of connecting with others.**

friend group’s “complaining committee” was actually undermining my trust in God to bless my life. I was relying on complaints and drama to sustain me and help me make connections rather than understanding that God leads and sustains me.

This realization also reminded me of a passage from the Bible that I’d been studying in Christian Science Sunday School. It’s something Jesus said to his followers: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had



receive more” (*Science and Health*, p. 3). It not only reminds me to express gratitude for the good in my life, but it’s also a promise that God meets all of our needs. Quitting the complaining helped all of us see this more clearly, and gratitude made God’s blessings in our lives so much more tangible.

This experience showed me how fulfilling it is to turn to God and recognize the good in my life. It also taught me the importance of catching—and getting rid of—habits that don’t benefit my spiritual growth. I’m so much happier now. I encourage you to see how giving gratitude can also change your life! ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

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## Overcoming academic challenges

Oliver Simpson

**AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT**—secondary school student in the United Kingdom—academics were really challenging. Exams were particularly difficult, since reading and writing didn’t come naturally to me. I regularly needed extra time to complete exams because it was hard for me to remember answers and write cohesive essays. To address this, my school suggested that my academics should be evaluated by a learning specialist, who diagnosed me with dyspraxia.

I was brought up attending Christian Science Sunday School and had learned that prayer had helped so many people overcome all kinds of challenges. So why not me, too? I knew that my parents were praying about my struggles in school, and I also decided to pray about them.

One thing I’d learned in Sunday School is that I am God’s reflection. I’d also learned that Mind is a name for God, and that means intelligence is divine, not human. So, since I reflect all that God is, my intelligence doesn’t come from a brain but from God and is infinite, immediate, and unobstructed. With this spiritual fact in mind, it made sense that ideas must come naturally and at the right speed to God’s creation—me.

I also prayed with something that a Sunday School teacher shared with me. I would say, “Because God is [fill in the blank], I am . . .” For example, “Because God is Mind, I am able to think quickly and learn whatever I need to know.”



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

As I grew older, my academics improved, and I received several “improvement” and “academic progress” awards from my school. But I still had a hard time with remembering facts and figures and being able to write coherently. I also still needed extra time during exams into my last two years of high school in the UK.

When I began attending an undergraduate college in the United States, I was encouraged not to see limitations in my ability to learn or excel academically. I also stuck with my prayers about God being the source of my intelligence. I understood that I wasn’t getting ideas from a human brain and that as God’s beloved son, I could not, even for a moment, be the expression of anything less than infinite Mind.

Throughout my college years, I improved academically and began scoring better in both short- and long-form exams. After receiving my undergraduate degree, I went on to take a master’s course in journalism. This course required me to take exams, and as a result of my spiritual

growth, I didn’t feel dread when taking tests anymore.

I felt the healing was truly complete when the professor of one of my master’s courses posted the exam scores on a chart to show how the class had done. On two of the exams, my grades were so good that he explained they were anomalies in the data. After a very challenging academic career, it was such a demonstration of what I’d been praying about—and it gave me such gratitude for my progress and for God.

I know that it was my turning to God as the one Mind that brought these results. And it showed me that the diagnosis I’d received was nothing but a suggestion about me that, through Christian Science, I’d proved to be wrong.

I love knowing that I can always apply the spiritual fact that as God’s reflection, I must express Him. So if I’m ever tempted to say, “I’m not able to learn this,” I can remind myself of what is true. God is infinite Mind, and He gives us every idea we could ever need. ●

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# How can I pray about all the wars going on?

Jean Whitehead

**Q: I’M SCARED OF ALL THE WARS** going on.  
How can I pray?

A: I once studied in a country where there was a lot of upheaval. It was also conducting a war beyond its borders. There had been bombs on campus, and a military training building had been burned down.

In the tiny house where I lived, my bed was alongside a window overlooking the street. One

night in bed, I heard a lot of shouting outside. I opened the curtains a crack, and there was a flash and a bang about five feet away. I quickly closed the curtains and pulled the comforter over my head. I was scared, but several verses from the ninety-first Psalm in the Bible immediately came to mind: “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust,” “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,” and

“A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee” (verses 4, 5, 7).

I was in a scary situation and out of my depth. I needed to reach out to a higher source of wisdom and love than my own thinking, which is why I turned to God in prayer. As a student of Christian Science, I’d learned through previous experiences that prayer meets every need. I was assured by these Bible verses that no matter how close the danger seemed to be, I was safe in God’s care. After several hours, the disturbances stopped.

Later, I felt that more prayer was needed. I’d focused only on protecting myself. How could I help the people outside—and even the larger situation? The answer came in the form of another Bible verse: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18). I remembered how fearful I’d been, and this verse

## “When terror is at hand, prayer does bring answers and help.

was a reminder that the only way to eliminate fear was to replace it with love. The love the Bible is referring to is not a human sense of love, which is fleeting and conditional. “Perfect love” comes only from God, because He is Love itself. His love is impartial and unconditional and includes everyone. And He created us *all* as His children—loved, lovable, and loving. Our prayers reveal this to us.

Loving others is not about excusing evil actions and aggression, though. Loving as God causes us to love is about recognizing who these individuals truly are and expecting to see that

expressed in their resistance to doing anything that could harm another. I needed to change my view of man as prone to anger and violence and instead see the spiritual view of man as created in God’s image and expressing only good qualities of thoughtfulness and consideration.

So loving in this way didn’t mean loving the actions of the people who had caused the trouble. But I could separate the people from those actions and see their true, spiritual nature as loved and loving children of God. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy says that “Love is reflected in love” (p. 17). As I began to glimpse the potential of this true nature, I saw the good that it could lead to, and I no longer felt afraid. After that, I experienced no more campus disturbances.

I don’t see wars as too catastrophic for anyone to pray about effectively, because I’ve learned not to be deceived by threatening appearances. When terror is at hand, prayer does bring answers and help to anyone who needs it. I pray to know that individual leaders and antagonists can also receive the spiritual guidance that will bring them in line with God’s universal law of peace and harmony and end the conflict. This is not an impossible task, because we’re not many independent minds; there’s only one, infinite Mind, Love, informing and governing everyone.

Our prayers about today’s conflicts are just as effective as mine were for me during this experience. God doesn’t change over time, but remains all-powerful, ever-present Love. As we put our trust in God, we will see good unfold in our own lives and across the world. As Mrs. Eddy writes, “Step by step will those who trust Him find that ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble’” (*Science and Health*, p. 444). ●

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# The perfect fit

David Martin

**SHORTLY AFTER I STARTED** college, I found myself wanting to express more of my individuality. This led me to buy an ankle-length wool coat and combat boots at a thrift store—both of which were many sizes too big. After the first rainy bike ride to class, the coat was wet and heavy, and the toes of my combat boots curled up like elf shoes. Not exactly the look I was going for.

Although I thought my intended new style fit who I was, I actually felt uncomfortable focusing so much on myself—though I wasn't exactly sure why. But I would soon find out.

Growing up, I'd attended a Christian Science Sunday School, where I'd learned that my identity was spiritual and that I'm the reflection of

**Becoming more conscious of the great worth of our spiritual identity inevitably leads to fuller freedom to be who we are.**

God. Now, as I continued my study of Christian Science, I learned more about what that actually means. I started to value my individuality as defined not by me but by God. I learned that my individuality is distinct, loved, and complete. As this spiritual sense of identity dawned, I began to focus less on myself and instead looked for ways to love others. This led to an opportunity to work at a crisis center halfway house. I also began attending both a local Christian Science Sunday School and the Christian Science organization meetings on campus. I had a deepening desire to feel closer to my Father-Mother God.

I learned that becoming more conscious of the great worth of our spiritual identity, our

individuality as God's valued child, inevitably leads to fuller freedom to be who we are. To me, this means beginning to know ourselves as God knows us: beautiful, good, and loved. *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* speaks to our spiritual individuality in this passage: "Man is not absorbed in Deity, and man cannot lose his individuality, for he reflects eternal Life; nor is he an isolated, solitary idea, for he represents infinite Mind, the sum of all substance" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 259).

A lot of factors in our lives may lead us to think that we need to be focused on ourselves and shape our own identity. Or, if we are part of or lumped into a group, we might feel defined by others and robbed of our individuality. But there is a third option: We can turn to a view of ourselves that's fully defined by God. We can be completely satisfied in the understanding that we belong to and express Spirit, another name for God. This includes both sparkling individuality and meaningful relationships that prove we are part of God's family. It also includes a feeling of peace and the assurance that our identity is just right already. So while we can always discover more about who we are, there's nothing we need to add to our identity and nothing that can ever be taken away from it.

This might go without saying, but it wasn't long before I ditched the too-big shoes and coat. Thanks to what I'd learned in Christian Science, I'd found something that fit me much better. •



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF  
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# How can I feel motivated?

Peter Fitzpatrick

**I WAS HAVING** a hard time with school. During my first year of high school, the Covid-19 pandemic shut my classes down, and everything went online. As the school year continued, my grades declined. I didn't feel motivated to finish any of my work, and I failed a bunch of classes. This wasn't good, because I needed a certain number of credits to graduate. I started to be stressed and anxious about making it to the next grade level and graduating on time.

I called a Christian Science practitioner to help me pray about this. I've always prayed about things and called a practitioner when I've had a challenge, so I was looking forward to the problem being resolved as we prayed together. The practitioner told me that I could go forward without any fear of classes, the pandemic, or anything else because God, who is Love, is loving and guiding me. She also reminded me that because God is perfect and I am God's expression, I'm also perfect. There are no mistakes in God, so there are no mistakes possible in me. God creates only spiritual perfection. And that includes the ability to effortlessly express God's perfect order, harmony, and intelligence.

She also shared a hymn from the *Christian Science Hymnal*. It begins:

Shepherd, show me how to go  
O'er the hillside steep,  
How to gather, how to sow,—  
How to feed Thy sheep;  
I will listen for Thy voice,  
Lest my footsteps stray;  
I will follow and rejoice  
All the rugged way.  
(Mary Baker Eddy,  
*Poems*, p. 14)

We talked about how this is much more than just a nice hymn we sing in Christian Science Sunday School—it's a prayer. And it's about how God is meeting our needs right where we are, including giving us motivation and joy. Speaking with the practitioner and talking about this hymn made me feel peaceful about the situation, and I didn't feel stressed and worried anymore.

As the lockdown ended and school started up again, things began to get easier. I made a few friends and was doing better in school, but I was still struggling with finding the motivation to do the work needed to get my grades up.

Two months before the end of the school year, the principal gave me a deadline for turning in the work I hadn't completed. I knew I couldn't finish everything if I was just relying on my own efforts. So every time I hit a roadblock while doing my schoolwork, I prayed. I knew that as God's reflection, I already had what I needed, because God is omnipresent and all-knowing. It helped me to remember that God was the strength and intelligence behind my efforts.

I ended the school year with decent grades, and I was so grateful. But I still had to attend summer school to make up the rest of the credits I'd



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF



lost. I wasn't looking forward to it, because I was used to enjoying the summer holidays—relaxing and attending camp.

Remembering what I'd been praying about, though, I took summer school one day at a time

**I started to be stressed and anxious about making it to the next grade level and graduating on time.**

and really felt the inspiration from God that I needed to get me through each day. It was such a relief to pass both sessions of summer school.

After that, I got to do an internship at a Christian Science nursing facility. I loved every minute of it! I really felt useful as I expressed spiritual qualities like orderliness, patience, punctuality, and joy. And it was easy to be motivated, since these qualities come from God and have God's power behind them. The internship went well, and I know that was because of all the praying I'd done leading up to and during it and all the ways I'd been expressing these qualities in my schoolwork.

This experience wasn't easy, but it helped me grow spiritually and showed me what it means to express God as His idea. It taught me that even when I'm having to do a lot of hard work, I can still find joy, because God is the source of that joy. ●

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## What's so bad about identifying yourself with a star sign?

Julia Schuck

**Q: I'VE BEEN GETTING** really into astrology, but my Sunday School teacher kind of freaked out about it. What's so bad about identifying yourself with a sign?

A: My star sign tells me that I'm practical, reliable, and a diligent worker. But it also tells me that I'm a perfectionist, I'm stubborn, and I overthink. That's OK, right? I have some good qualities and some bad qualities, just like everyone else.

A lot of people think astrology is a shortcut to knowing who we are and understanding those around us. Plus, it's fun. But I've found that when I feel drawn to something in order to figure out who I am, it is helpful to ask myself if it's really something I want to trust.

At one point during college, I deeply identified with my and others' star signs. I swore off

dating guys who were a certain sign, and I tried to make sense of my friendships based on our sign compatibility.

But one thing that really bothered me was the baggage that came with believing in astrology. I hated that I had to deal with the flaws this sign assigned to me as well as the flaws assigned to my friends, boys I dated, and others. Although it seemed to give me confirmation about my relationships, it also made me feel like I'd been put in a box. And I didn't like feeling vulnerable to the stars, the moon, and the planets. I worried that my future, health, and relationships were at the mercy of something completely out of my control.

It came to a point where I decided that if I was going to let something determine my identity, I needed to feel completely good about it. Astrol-

ogy didn't give me that. So I knew there had to be another way.

I had grown up attending Christian Science Sunday School and had practiced Christian Science now and then, but I'd never explored it very deeply. I'd learned in Sunday School that God is good and that because we are God's creation, we are also good. But though I felt connected to this idea, it still wasn't enough to help me feel good about myself.

I realized I needed to go deeper in my understanding of God. As I did, something cool happened. I realized that because God is always present, always good, always loving me, I did have something that was reliable, stable, and secure.

I also came to see that because God doesn't come with baggage or have any bad qualities, my identity as His creation isn't a mix of good and bad. Sure, we all have things we need to work on, things we'd like to be better at. But that's a version of us that we can actually see redeemed and then let go of as we embrace our God-given identity, which is wholly good. By understanding ourselves as God's image, we recognize that we're capable of being fully good, loving, joyful, and so much more.

The more I learned about God's infinitely good nature, the more I learned about myself and those around me. I started to feel more secure about my own identity. I knew that I was joyful, bubbly, intelligent, strong. Instead of feeling that my life and identity were out of my control, I was trusting God to care for me and tell me who I am. I also realized that I'm not vulnerable to a negative power; I'm an expression of God, good, who is the only power.

After that, the friendships I felt were unfulfilling didn't continue, but I was OK with that. I started to see more good in everyone, and I stopped putting people into boxes based on what I thought they'd be like. Far from hurting my relationships, it's actually given me a deeper connection with others because I'm seeing them, and myself, from a spiritual basis.

Today, I feel better about my identity and more confident in who I am. But the biggest lesson from all of this is that if we really want to know who we are, we have to see that we're not mortal. We're spiritual. Recognizing our spiritual identity brings us a feeling of freedom and an understanding of the fullest sense of ourselves, which is what we're all really searching for anyway. ●

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## Notes

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# I was healed of bipolar disorder

Andy Crump

**MY FRESHMAN YEAR OF COLLEGE**, I learned about some major world problems and was really disturbed by them. Feeling that I'd lost all hope, I suffered a mental breakdown and threatened to end my life.

Over the next few months, I transferred among several different hospitals and housing situations. I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and was prescribed various medications to treat the aggressive symptoms. Though I was sometimes required to take the pills, I resisted because I didn't like how they made me feel.

I grew up attending Christian Science Sunday School, so I also turned to Christian Science for help at various times during this period. I called

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several different Christian Science practitioners, and they were all very helpful. But I wasn't always receptive.

After I moved back home, I went back to my local Christian Science Sunday School. My teacher was shocked by the way I was acting—so unlike myself. He knew me well, and he refused to believe that the Andy he remembered could exhibit this disturbing behavior.

I'm convinced that his commitment to seeing me as I really am—seeing my true, spiritual nature and character—accelerated my progress. By the next Sunday, I was calmer and more receptive to spiritual ideas. This was a turning point for me.

One idea that kept coming to thought during this time was something Mary Baker Eddy wrote:

“If you wish to be happy, argue with yourself on the side of happiness; take the side you wish to carry, and be careful not to talk on both sides, or to argue stronger for sorrow than for joy” (*Christian Healing*, p. 10). Sadness seemed so appealing at the time because it allowed me to be a victim and blame the world for my problems. I realized, though, that I did want to be happy. After all, who really wants to be sad?

I thought about this a lot and about how I needed to actively argue for—spiritually stand up for—my own happiness. To me this meant understanding that I truly am happy because God, who is all good, made me in His image (see Genesis 1:27). Joy isn't a temporary emotion; it's a quality that permanently belongs to us as God's reflection. The more I thought about this, the more light I could see through the darkness.

I also realized that I wanted to go back to school, be with my friends, and finish my degree—and I knew that was possible. The improvement didn't happen overnight, but by the end of the summer I was completely free from the symptoms and have been ever since—over a decade now. I was admitted back to my college and was even able to graduate with my class.

This passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mrs. Eddy shines light on how I was healed: “It is ignorance and false belief, based on a material sense of things, which hide spiritual beauty and goodness. Understanding this, Paul said: ‘Neither death, nor life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.’ This is the doctrine of Christian Science: that divine Love cannot be deprived of its manifestation, or object; that joy cannot be turned into sorrow, for sorrow is not the master of joy; that good can never produce evil; that matter can never produce mind nor life result in death” (p. 304).



I understand so much better now that sorrow is not more powerful than joy and that nothing can separate me, or anyone, from God's love. And if I do find myself feeling sad or overwhelmed by events in the world, I remember that God is permanent and infinite good. So the spiritual reality of things—the goodness of God's creation—is

always present. I can see it by turning to God in prayer and acknowledging what I know to be true.

I'm so grateful for everyone who supported me during this difficult time. I'm also grateful for Jesus, who demonstrated that healing is always possible and for Mrs. Eddy, who discovered the Science that shows us how to do it. ●

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## When my best friend spread rumors about me

Holly Bell

**I LOVE SPENDING TIME** with my friends. Whether it's catching up after a long time apart or seeing each other every day, I've always found quality time important, and I love the warmth and support that friendships provide.

A few years ago, though, something changed. My best friend of five years suddenly didn't want to be my friend. One day at school, she ignored me every time I tried to speak to her. I couldn't figure out what was wrong. And when I went to school the next day, things had gotten even worse.

My friend had spread rumors about me and told everyone why they shouldn't be my friend. I was really hurt—I couldn't figure out why she'd done this. Was it because I had made friends with other girls? Had I upset her in some way? I wasn't sure. By the third day of this, nobody talked to me; people

called me names as I walked past them in the hallway and passed notes about me in class. Upset and overwhelmed, I asked the teacher if I could go home.

When my mum picked me up from school, she knew something was wrong, but all I told her was that I didn't feel well and that I wanted to go to bed. Later that evening, I went into the garden and sat by myself. I didn't want to go back to school at all. I was so upset and just kept asking God, "Why has this happened?"

I love attending Christian Science Sunday School and learning about God. I'd learned in Sunday School that God is good, so how could these things with my friend be happening? Was this somehow God's plan?

My mum came outside and sat beside me and asked what had happened. I told her everything. She told me that God is always protecting me—that



His love is wrapped around me so tight that nothing can harm me. She also suggested that I call a Christian Science practitioner to pray for me.

The practitioner explained that my classmates' unkind words were not thoughts from God, who is Truth, so they couldn't be true. And even with the rumors swirling around, I could still listen for God's angels. She also shared this

**“When I went back to school, I remembered that God’s angels were protecting me and that I could let them lead the way.”**

statement from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: “Angels are pure thoughts from God, winged with Truth and Love, . . .” (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 298). The practitioner told me I could let those angels carry me and protect me throughout the school day—could hold on to those good thoughts and let God guide me through each moment.

Then she asked if I wanted to play the “glad game,” where we go back and forth saying every little thing we’re grateful for. This game always makes me feel better because it reminds me of how much good I have in my life—that despite what I might be going through, there is still so much to be thankful for. We did that, and it made me feel more peaceful and close to God.

When I went back to school, I remembered what the practitioner had said about God’s angels protecting me and how I could let them lead the way. That gave me the courage to talk to a group of girls I’d never really spoken to before, and they were so nice and welcoming. When a boy came over to spread rumors about me, they told him that they weren’t listening to him and to leave us alone. I was so grateful! I thanked them for the support and then quietly thanked God. I had felt His protection through those

girls. We went on to become great friends! And very soon, the rumors died down and many of the other girls became my friends again. After that, I knew I could always rely on God’s angel messages.

As for the friend who had started the rumors, she ended up moving to a different school a few weeks into the new term. Some years later, I did see her again, and we talked. I didn’t feel resentment or hatred toward her, which to me was proof of how complete this healing was. I left the conversation happy that we were both doing well.

When I remember this experience, I think about this promise from *Science and Health*: “Step by step will those who trust Him find that ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble’” (p. 444). I found I truly could rely on God to give me the strength and courage to go back to school and to provide me with great friends. I have so much to be grateful for. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

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# When I wasn't healed right away

Gabriela Mejía

**ONE SUMMER, I NOTICED** that one of my fingers was really red and itchy. After a few days, the irritation spread to the rest of my fingers. I am a student of Christian Science, so it was natural for me to pray about what was going on. From studying the Bible, I knew that God made me in His image and likeness. Since God causes only good, there's no way for me to express anything less than perfection. That includes health. I continued to pray for a while until the irritation stopped, and I was grateful.

But when the next summer rolled around, the irritation came back. As it persisted, I felt more and more discouraged and, frankly, very disappointed. I'd prayed earnestly. I wondered

**“Every prayer, every inspired and good thought, was valuable.”**

if maybe the warm weather was causing this reaction. I tried to address this in my prayers, but I couldn't shake the fear that this was something I was going to have to deal with every summer.

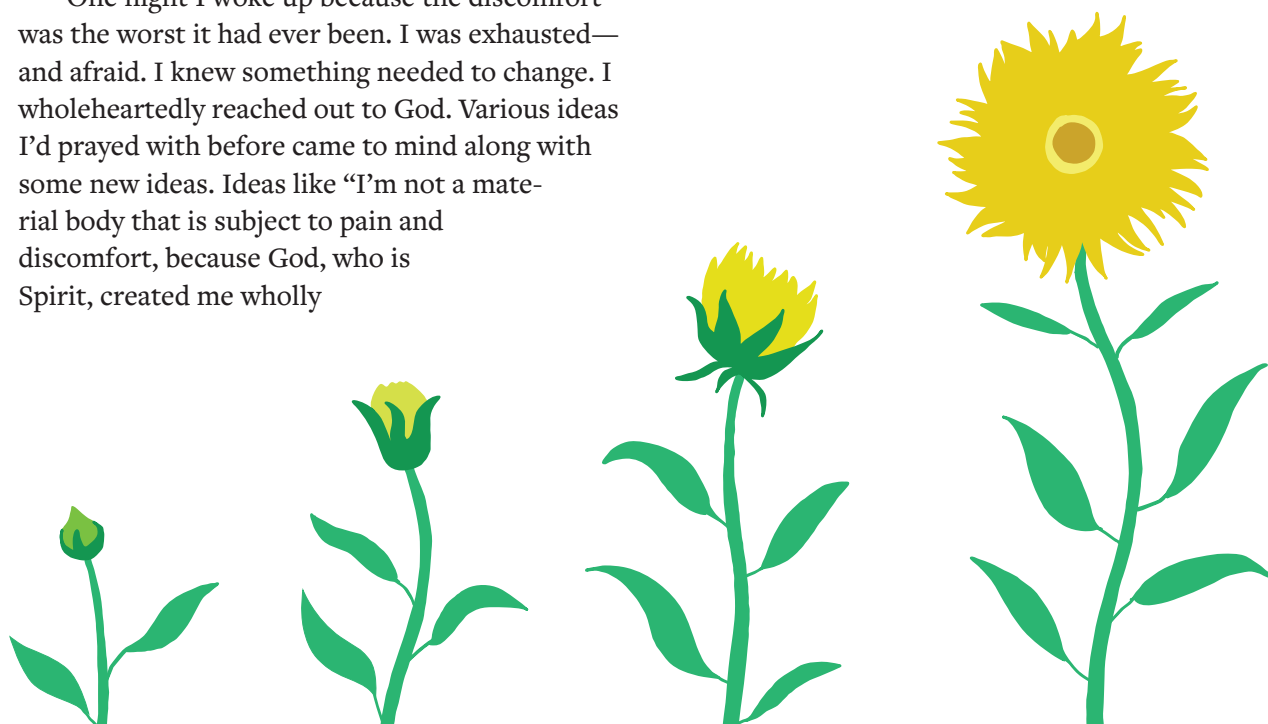
One night I woke up because the discomfort was the worst it had ever been. I was exhausted—and afraid. I knew something needed to change. I wholeheartedly reached out to God. Various ideas I'd prayed with before came to mind along with some new ideas. Ideas like “I'm not a material body that is subject to pain and discomfort, because God, who is Spirit, created me wholly

spiritual.” No matter what my body was doing, I knew what was true: I reflect God's perfection, so I can expect my body to reflect this truth. I soon felt some relief and was able to go back to bed and sleep soundly. The next day, there was a lot less irritation. It was a few more weeks before the problem was completely healed, but once it was gone, it never came back. It's been several years since this healing.

I know it may seem like that one night did the trick. And it was definitely a turning point. But I truly felt that every prayer, each declaration of truth, every hymn I turned to, every inspired and good thought, was valuable. Every step had given me the tools and understanding for the next step.

If you've been praying about something for a time, and healing isn't apparent, don't be discouraged. Gaining a clearer view of yourself as God's beloved child, one step at a time, ensures your growth.

In my case, the physical picture hadn't been encouraging at all. But without realizing it, I had been becoming more confident and more prepared to take a firmer stand against the



claim that my body could become irritated and inflamed.

Over the years, I've come to appreciate this encouraging statement by Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of Christian Science: "The more difficult seems the material condition to be overcome by Spirit, the stronger should be our faith and the purer our love" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 410). I've found that when faced with a "more difficult" situation, my faith has actually already grown stronger and my love purer. And since the condition is really being overcome by Spirit, as this passage points out, whatever we're

dealing with is completely within our ability to handle.

It may seem like everything is trying to convince us that prayer isn't effective or that we aren't good enough. But God really does equip us with everything we need to meet every obstacle with confidence. I appreciate how this verse from the Bible illustrates this idea: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (II Corinthians 9:8). We can trust that—and expect healing. ●

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## Trusting God with track season

Melissa Matlalcuatzí

**DURING MY SOPHOMORE YEAR** of high school, I joined the track team. I was excited to run with my friends and make progress on my speed throughout the season. I became really invested in my running and in trying to improve my times.

So when I started to experience shin splints, I was beyond disappointed. It was very difficult for me to focus on anything else. I wanted to have a successful season, which meant I needed to run

so I reached out to God for help. I also turned to the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, which helps me understand more about God and who I am as God's child. In it, I found a statement that has meant a lot to me: "Mind's infinite ideas run and disport themselves" (p. 514). This helped me because I know I'm one of God's, Mind's, ideas, and this was telling me that it's natural for me to run and enjoy myself without anything holding me back.

As we trained for districts, I had lots of jitters and stress about performing well. I knew I needed to continue praying if I wanted to enjoy this time. I thought about a verse from the Bible that I'd heard many times: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). This reassured me, so I kept thinking about it, especially when I felt nervous. I knew all the stress I was feeling would

**As we trained for districts, I had lots of jitters and stress about performing well.**

harder at practice, but I also felt I wouldn't succeed unless I took better care of my body. And it seemed that I couldn't do both at once.

Feeling hopeless because things weren't getting better, I knew I needed a change of mind-set. I've always found that prayer shifts my perspective,

dissolve once I put my trust in God. This meant replacing every stressful thought and every pain with a good thought from God and knowing His care for me.

As districts arrived, I felt so much more peaceful. I still wanted to do well, but I felt a burden lift from my shoulders when I realized that I could turn things over to God and would be supplied with everything I needed for the race.

The race itself was one of the best I'd ever run. Our team moved on to sectionals, and we ended up having an incredible finish to our season. During this time, I was healed of shin splints—the pain completely disappeared.

I'm so grateful for the opportunity to run on a track team and even more grateful for the healing that I experienced by turning to and trusting God. ●

AARON CRANFORD — STAFF  
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## When I didn't get accepted to university

Tanya Mapeta

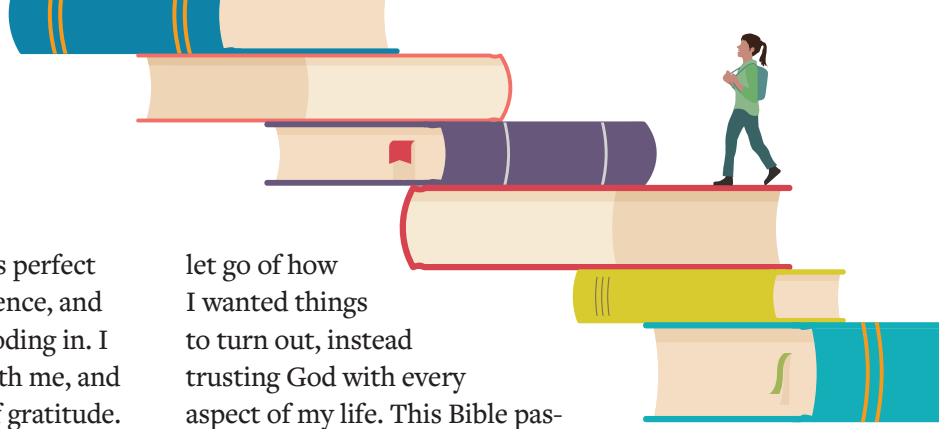
**A FEW YEARS AFTER** finishing high school, I decided to upgrade my exam results from my final year of high school by retaking some of the exams. This is a common practice in South Africa, where I live. I did this in hopes that I would gain admission to university. When I received results that met the requirements for admission, I applied. But I wasn't accepted.

Feeling hopeless, I turned to God in prayer as I've been learning how to do while studying Christian Science. I also contacted a Christian Science

practitioner and asked him to pray for me. The practitioner reminded me that, as the image or reflection of God, who is perfect, I am complete. To me this meant that I couldn't be missing any quality I needed for progress or success. He also said that God's law of good is always in operation, which helped me feel less worried about the future.

As I thought about these ideas, I recognized that I really am a loved child of God who is made, according to the first chapter of the Bible, in His image and likeness, just like everyone else. Since I'm made





in God's image, what could I lack? If God is perfect and good, I must reflect goodness, intelligence, and ability. As I prayed, I found these ideas flooding in. I could see that God was communicating with me, and I felt immense peace and love—and lots of gratitude. I kept praying and studying, and my fear subsided.

One thought in particular came to me that changed the way I was thinking about the process of finding, and being accepted to, a university: I'm not a victim of being placed on the waiting list of a school due to "space constraints." Although this appeared to be what was going on, my prayers helped me recognize that it couldn't be the truth about God's creation. The truth is that God abundantly blesses all His children, and no one can be left out, because God's goodness is limitless. I continued praying this way, and also recognized that, as the reflection of God, who is Spirit, we are spiritual—and this means that our experience can, and does, reflect what's really true.

At the beginning of 2023, I applied to more universities. One school rejected my application because they could obtain only my old exam results, not the upgraded results, and the other declined due to space constraints. I turned to prayer again and

let go of how I wanted things to turn out, instead trusting God with every aspect of my life. This Bible passage resonated with me: "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).

I thought, "I trust You, God." I affirmed this for myself three times, and on the third time, an angel thought—a message from God—came to me, which was, "Thank you, My child." I felt calm and loved, and I knew without a doubt that it was God reassuring me. I wasn't worried.

A month after that, I got an email from the university that had had only my old exam results, saying that I had been granted admission. To me, this outcome is best explained by this Bible passage: "Help me, O Lord my God: . . . that they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, Lord, hast done it" (Psalms 109:26, 27).

God takes care of each and every one of us. I am so grateful to God for all the blessings that He has bestowed on each of us as His loved children. ●

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## What's my motive?

Holly Ashford

**I LOVE PARTICIPATING IN** the arts—I dance, act, sing, and play an instrument. I'm even thinking about musical theater as a career, so I joined a local Christian youth theater company to continue my singing training. This theater company also asked me to be part of a worship team, where I sing Christian songs with a small acoustic band every Saturday morning.

I was excited to have this opportunity and began diligently practicing the songs I was assigned.

I felt good about my performance when I sang with the group. But I also felt I was approaching rehearsals in a way that really stressed me out. Soon, I realized why.

During one practice, we were discussing whether we should change the song order or even add a new song on the fly. There were some concerns about this, and some people in the group felt that it might not be a good idea because our voices would be unprepared and the songs under-practiced.

But then someone said something really interesting: It doesn't matter whether we sound perfect or not. It's not a performance; it's worship, which is really about glorifying God. I've learned in Christian Science Sunday School that God created us in His image and likeness (see Genesis 1:26, 27). This means we glorify God by expressing Him. So the talents I'm expressing are not mine; they're God's qualities individually reflected in me.

This made so much sense to me, and it was clear what I had been doing wrong. I'd been looking at this as a chance to perform and to show off



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

**I was approaching rehearsals in a way that really stressed me out.**

what I thought was *my* talent, when my motive should have been to glorify God. I'd had a desire to be applauded for my gifts and efforts, and that's what had been driving me.

I thought about how I love singing hymns in Sunday School and how that has always felt more about glorifying God than performing. And it is never stressful. So it made sense to me that when I changed my motive from performing to glorifying, the performances wouldn't feel stressful anymore.

I also thought about this assurance from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 494). It can be tempting to chase the lead role when participating in a show or other performance. But no matter what I might think I want or need in terms of a role, vocal part, or dance number, it's divine Love, God, that is meeting every need in just the right way, and I can trust that. My talents will always be put to use perfectly—and so will everyone else's. This idea took the pressure off my auditions and performances.

These insights led me to think about my motives for every activity I participate in. As God's reflection, I never need to demonstrate my skills with any extra effort or focus on myself. I've felt more comfort since this realization because I know that I'll always be in the right place to glorify God with my God-reflected talents. I couldn't ask for more. ●

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## Can I actually be healed of anxiety?

Susan Tish

**Q: I HAVE SUCH BAD ANXIETY.** My whole life I've prayed about all my problems, but I don't know how to pray about this.

**A:** I can totally relate. There was a time in my life when I was struggling with almost constant anxiety after my mom suddenly passed away. I grew

up attending Christian Science Sunday School and had learned early on that I could turn to prayer to address any problem. In fact, prayer has always helped me get quiet and find greater peace and joy. But this anxiety was overwhelming, and I had trouble finding peace even through prayer.

So I called someone whose whole job is to pray for people—a Christian Science practitioner—and she got right to the heart of the matter. She told me that it was too late for anxiety to show up! What she meant was that my identity couldn't change from something good into something bad. I was already made strong, good, and resilient in God's image and likeness, just as the first chapter of Genesis in the Bible explains. Essentially, she was telling me that good was the foundation of my identity and the forever truth about me. She reminded me that, grounded in this spiritual foundation, I was safe. And this would never change, no matter what circumstances I faced. It was like she was pulling the reasons for those anxious feelings right up by the roots.

What she said sounded really good, and I thought how great it would be if it were true. But when anxiety and the chest pains that often accompanied it welled up in me, those thoughts and sensations felt very real and scary.

It was hard to identify with the idea that I was strong and secure and that the anxiety wasn't really a part of my nature. I guess I had to think

**The anxiety was overwhelming, and I had trouble finding peace even through prayer.**

a little more deeply about what it meant to be spiritual—the image and likeness of God, Spirit—and to have that feel like a permanent and steady foundation. I began considering the God-given, spiritual qualities that I naturally express, such as strength, resilience, goodness, and joy. I started to realize that these qualities couldn't come and go; they were hardwired in me. They were part of my inheritance as God's child, and nothing could change that.

As I began spending more time thinking about spiritual qualities from God that I express, I really started noticing them in myself. Those true ideas were becoming so much clearer. And soon, with practice, when anxiety would begin to wash over me, I was able to set it aside. This strengthened my trust in this great new understanding about my life that I was gaining from my prayers.

One day, a verse from the Bible came to mind that was exactly what I needed to hear: "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold" (Psalms 45:13). I started to repeat that to myself every morning as I looked in the mirror. I'd say, "There she is! The king's daughter—all glorious within!"

I would throw my shoulders back and know that I had everything I needed because it all comes from God—so it could never go away. This was a great way to start the day. It helped me stand my ground when anxious thoughts would try to overwhelm me. As this understanding of my true nature became clearer, the anxiety was soon in the rearview mirror and then just completely faded away. The great thing is that I'm now able to see that I never really was an anxious person; that was never part of who I am.

I get that it can be hard to turn away from feelings that come so frequently or something that seems so much a part of your daily life. It's OK to say that you need a little help praying about it and ask a practitioner to pray with you. Practitioners are so good at understanding the truth about us, even when we don't yet see it ourselves.

One thing you can know for sure is that this anxiety isn't part of you. It's not how you were created and, ultimately, not part of your story, or identity, at all. You are beautiful, strong, good, pure, resilient, and glorious—within and without! ●

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This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for writing or drawing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

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