



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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**CHRISTIAN SCIENCE
SENTINEL**

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A night in the woods

By ERIN DEMAREE

Anight out in the woods near The Lost Wonder Hut, a cabin in the Rocky Mountains at about 11,000 feet, should have sounded like an adventure. But I was apprehensive. First of all, the overnight was solo. Each of the teens in my group was spending the night in a different part of the woods—alone. Second of all, I'd heard stories from others who'd done the solo overnight before ... and they were almost all bad. I didn't want to have the kind of experience they'd had.

Around dinner time, a few hours before we were to leave, I developed a very severe headache. The idea of spending this solo with a headache made me dread the experience even more.

I was feeling sorry for myself when two of my friends joined me and began reading the Christian Science Bible Lesson with me. One of them even shared a healing she'd had of a headache. While I wanted to be healed, and all the thoughts they shared with me were really good ones, I was still struggling. A few minutes later it was dinner time, and one of the chaperones came over and sent the other girls to dinner.

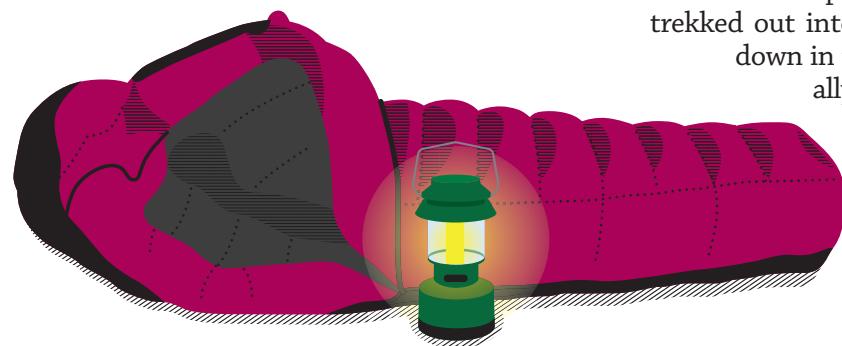
My chaperone reminded me of something I'd learned in Christian Science Sunday School: There is only one Mind,

God, and this perfect, harmonious Mind includes no pain. Mind is also all-powerful and good, so Mind would never allow pain, or even the thought of pain, anywhere in its creation. She told me that whenever the headache bothered me, I could think about the one Mind and what this meant for me.

I have always loved thinking about Mind as a synonym for God, and this gave me a new view on it as truly all-governing. I thought about how if there really is *only* one Mind, then that Mind must lovingly control everything I do—every thought and every action—and everything every other child of God does, too. This has really helped me pray for the world more effectively by knowing that there can be no conflict in divine Mind.

After praying this way, I was feeling a little better and went to join my group. As I did, another chaperone came and sat next to me, and we talked about the beautiful trees surrounding us in the mountains. Every time the thought of the headache came, all I had to do was go back to that simple but powerful idea of "one Mind" and then continue with the conversation. By the end of our discussion, I was completely healed of both the headache and the fear of the overnight.

I finished preparing for the solo and trekked out into the woods. When I sat down in my sleeping bag, I was really able to enjoy the peace that was encompassing me. That night my thought was uplifted, and I was so happy to be healed. I felt so close to God. And I didn't have any prob-



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

lems sleeping. I slept the whole night and woke up feeling rested.

While the overnight did prove to be a wonderful adventure, what's meant the most to me is the healing I experienced. The power of that simple truth of

one Mind has remained foremost in my thoughts and has been a source of inspiration for other healings as well.

I am so grateful for all Christian Science has done for me in my life. It has truly been a blessing. ●

Originally published in the July 11, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Praying together about the Orlando shooting

By JENNY SAWYER

One thought. That was all I could hold on to. And it wasn't even a particularly inspired thought. To be honest, the only thing I could think was, "No."

I wasn't facing terrorists, but I was battling what felt like my own personal terrorism: a painful skin condition that seemed to be raging out of control. After weeks of praying with no change, I felt frightened and helpless. Would this ever end?

In tears, I called a Christian Science practitioner for what felt like the five millionth time. Although she was kind, she was also firm: Even if there was nothing else I could do, she told me, I could say "no."

What kind of a prayer is "no"? I knew it didn't mean just pretending everything was OK. To say "no" was to deny fear, helplessness, the presence of evil or its ability to operate. And I could say "no" because of what I knew about God from my study of Christian Science. God, divine Love, was loving me.

God, Spirit, was showing me my spiritual identity as His child—an identity that could never be touched, compromised, or contaminated by the belief in evil. God, divine Life, was protecting my purity and maintaining my wholeness.

Such power in one little word! It didn't feel that way at first. At first, as the waves of helplessness and fear crashed over me, "no" felt like a life vest that was barely keeping me afloat. But something began happening as I persisted in saying "no." The evil that seemed so real and threatening became less impressive. The waves of fear began to ebb. The overwhelming feelings of despair and helplessness lost their intensity as a new feeling took hold. God was there! God was there, and I was safe. Within a few hours, I'd done a complete 180. The fear was gone, and even though it was a couple of more weeks before I was completely healed, that moment was undeniably the turning point. >

Today, as I read reports about the mass shooting that happened over the weekend in Orlando, I can't help but think of that healing. No, the two cases aren't at all the same. But I learned something about how to deal with situations that seem completely overwhelming, and I think that same lesson applies. Even when the darkness, fear, and pain seem crushing, we can take a step toward the light, toward feeling a glimmer of God's presence—as I did—by saying "no."

This "no" opens the door a crack to the idea that no matter how compelling the picture before us, something else is actually going on. I had a hard time believing this in my own experience, especially at first, when I was so afraid. And you may be feeling similarly now, given what happened in Orlando. But even one "no" can make a difference. This statement from the Bible explains why: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). And here's how Mary Baker Eddy puts it in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Error is a coward before Truth" (p. 368).

Claiming the reality of God's power and presence does make a difference, and does contribute to healing—not just now, in the aftermath of these attacks, but also

going forward, in lessening aggression in our world. Instead of being overwhelmed, we can resist evil's bravado. And we're not in this alone. Divine Love itself is impelling this resistance. Love is the power behind this protest. Love supports our persistence and courage, and the effect is that we find ourselves capable of staying true to Love, instead of buckling under the suggestions of evil.

"Will this ever end?" asked one of my friends in a Facebook post about the shooting. Through our persistent prayers, our patient commitment to loving good and resisting evil, we can take steps to help bring it to an end.

I might not have believed as much when I was alone and afraid, struggling through that skin condition. But having found healing by discovering something about God's steadfastness even when it seemed as if God might not be there, I now have faith that this is true. As we open our hearts to God to understand more of who He is, more of what's really going on, evil has to lose its foothold. And this kind of prayer does bring healing and the promise of peace.●

This article was originally published on JSH-Online.com/TeenConnect



Originally published in the July 18, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Always prepared for honest labor

By GUSTAVO BATISTA

In August 2011, I began attending a college in the United States and started playing on its soccer team. I hadn't played or exercised at all in six years, and after about four days of training, I started to feel a sharp pain on the top parts of each of my feet.

We had two training sessions a day—one in the morning and one in the afternoon. One day, after I trained in the morning, the pain was so acute that I could barely walk. I got a bit discouraged and thought seriously about not playing soccer for the school and instead focusing only on studying.

I decided not to make use of ice or any material means to relieve the pain. Instead, I called a Christian Science prac-

titioner, who was very loving. That same day he visited me in my apartment, and we talked for an hour. We exchanged many inspiring ideas and read some passages from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy.

This particular passage helped me a lot: "We should relieve our minds from the depressing thought that we have transgressed a material law and must of necessity pay the penalty. Let us reassure ourselves with the law of Love. God never punishes man for doing right, for honest labor, or for deeds of kindness, though they expose him to fatigue, cold, heat, contagion. If man seems to incur the penalty through matter, this is but a belief of mortal mind, not an enact-

USA ANDREWS-STAFF



ment of wisdom, and man has only to enter his protest against this belief in order to annul it. Through this action of thought and its results upon the body, the student will prove to himself, by small beginnings, the grand verities of Christian Science" (p. 384).

Sometimes friends would tell me they were not so sure if the college we were attending was the one where they should or wanted to be. So, when I read that "God never punishes man for doing right," it made sense to me. I had earnestly prayed before deciding to enter that school and felt that I was there by following God's direction, because it was His will. There was no doubt in my heart that studying there meant doing right. Therefore, I could not pay a penalty for being there, longing to study seriously and to be part of the school's soccer team.

I thought of every word of the paragraph mentioned above—for example, the word "fatigue." The training was very intense, and I was struggling with all that physical labor. But I was invigorated by knowing that, despite being exposed to strenuous activity, I didn't need to incur a penalty through matter for that honest labor of playing for my school.

On that day, a Friday, I wasn't able to train in the afternoon. There was no training on Saturday, but on Sunday, some friends had planned a friendly match in the evening.

During the day on Sunday, I pondered especially this part of that passage: "man has only to enter his protest against this belief in order to annul it." That's what I did. I protested against that false material belief that was being expressed

through pain, by firmly acknowledging that, because God didn't create anything unlike Him, my true being—spiritual and perfect, as the reflection of God—could not include anything that would cause me to be in pain or take away my peace.

Later that day, the pain had lessened and I was able to walk well, so I decided to play with my friends in the evening. I was so focused on the game that I didn't think of the pain at all. When I did think of it, it was completely gone and never re-

turned. I played on the school team until last year, when I graduated.

Very often I found myself praying—literally talking to God—during a match, in particular when I was very tired and feeling that I would not endure to the end. Usually my prayer was based on ideas from the weekly Christian Science Bible Lesson.

In one of these Bible Lessons, I read this passage: "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee" (II Corinthians 5:5, English Standard Version). I began to prepare myself for the soccer matches and for my classes with the ideas in this passage.

And so I prayerfully prepare today for work and for all the activities I am involved in. I always pray to know that it is God who prepares me to be in a certain place, fulfilling a certain role, and I know this is a truth on which I will always lean. ●

Originally written in Portuguese, this first appeared in the July 2016 Portuguese, Spanish, French, and German editions of *The Herald of Christian Science*.

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I could love him no matter what!

By KELSEY ARMSTRONG

J aquan was the cutest kid I'd ever seen! His smile and big brown eyes made my heart melt. Jaquan was one of the children at a children's home, where I was visiting as part of a service trip to a foreign country. Jaquan and I had been paired before I left home, and I'd really been looking forward to meeting him.

Before I left for the trip, I bought children's books, Play Doh, small board games, and other activities to use during our visit. I also talked with my mom and dad about caring for young kids, and they graciously shared some ideas with me. I was completely convinced that I had everything it took to be in charge of a four-year-old for a few days and was so eager to help make a difference in a life.

But when Jaquan and I began reading together the first day, it quickly became clear that he had no interest in listening to me read or even looking at the pictures. Instead, he was disruptive—running around, stealing other kids' toys, rummaging through my bag, and making a mess of things. While the other kids sat quietly and behaved themselves, I spent the first session and a half sprinting after him and hearing my friends tell me, "Catch your kid, Kels!" since Jaquan was the only one who couldn't seem to sit still.

*I realized that it
wasn't my job
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child but, instead,
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view of him.*

I began to dread visiting the children's home and did not want to go back.

Later, after we left for the day, I had time to talk to the other volunteers in my service group about what to do about Jaquan. They suggested I pray about the situation and do some research in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* to see what Mary Baker Eddy has to say about children.

In the Glossary of *Science and Health*, I found this definition: "CHILDREN. The spiritual thoughts and representatives of Life, Truth, and Love" (p. 582).

That night, I stayed up late praying to understand this spiritual concept and how I could think about Jaquan and love him unconditionally. I realized that it was not my job to try to change Jaquan but, instead, to correct my own view of him. I truly wanted to see him the way God made him—not a kid with behavior problems, but God's good and innocent



SUMMER SWITZER

child. After I prayed with the definition of *children* for a while, it came to me so clearly that I could walk into the children's home for my time with Jaquan and love him no matter what. Nothing could get in the way of my ability to do that, since God had created him as lovable and me as capable of loving.

The next visit was completely different! I was no longer waiting around for Jaquan to change but rather was seeing

him in a new light, thanks to my prayers. And I could tell he was receptive to my love.

We had such a good time together, reading a fun call-and-answer book and playing hopscotch and ball. That day, we were both smiling from ear to ear.

I am so grateful for Christian Science and what it has taught me about how to love. ●

Originally published in the August 22, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

I couldn't lose anything!

By MESA GOEBEL

Q: I think my relationship with my boyfriend (or girlfriend) is going downhill. Any ideas on how to pray?

A: I faced a similar situation in high school. When my relationship was falling apart, I prayed about a lot of different things—attachment issues, anger, depression. But the answers that would give me the settled feeling I was looking for didn't seem to come. I was struggling with lots of doubts and insecurities.

One day, though, I found a deepening peace as I read Hymn 224 in the *Christian Science Hymnal*, especially this part: "Henceforth my great concern shall be / To love and praise Thee more" (John Ryland). It reminded me that I don't need to stress about something that's under God's control—which every part of our lives has to be, as we see that God is di-

vine Principle and lovingly orders every aspect of His creation. I saw that my job is to love God and to express the qualities of God in everything I do. And when I felt concerned about the relationship, I could know that God, good, is governing, and showing me what's right for me.

When you live your life like this, with God at the center, your day-to-day experience becomes so much brighter. Depression faded away as I focused on my true source of happiness: God. I began to see His care, and the joy it brings, expressed so clearly in the love and care of my family and friends. I also realized that this wasn't so much about my relationship with my boyfriend as it was about my relationship to God. Whatever happened, I had to put God first.

If questions and concerns about your relationship linger, don't underestimate

the power of sitting quietly and listening to God. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "In order to pray aright, we must enter into the closet and shut the door" (p. 15).

When I took some time to listen to divine Love, I had a startling revelation: I couldn't lose anything! The pain I seemed to be experiencing originated from the fear of losing something important in my life. But my prayers showed me that human relationships are learning experiences that can help us shed misperceptions about love. And these prayers were also impelling me to go even higher—to understand God as Love and what that means for me.

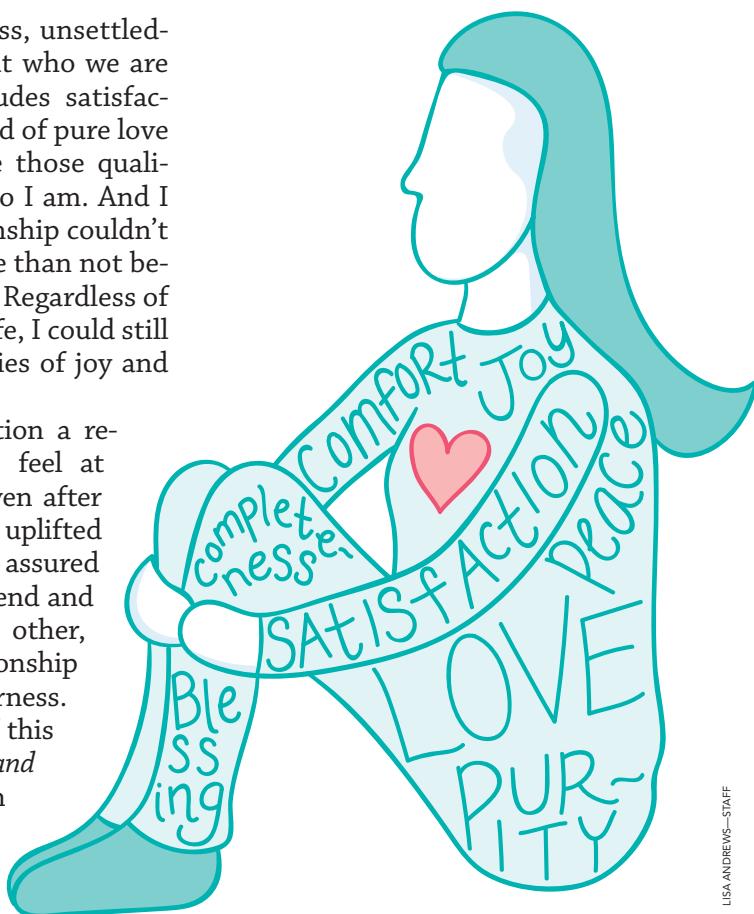
There is no unhappiness, unsettledness, or anger in Love. But who we are as Love's expression includes satisfaction, harmony, and the kind of pure love that heals. I began to see those qualities as the truth about who I am. And I saw that being in a relationship couldn't change who I was any more than not being in a relationship could. Regardless of what was going on in my life, I could still actively express the qualities of joy and completeness.

No matter what direction a relationship takes, you can feel at peace. Believe it or not, even after the breakup, I actually felt uplifted and comforted, as a friend assured me that because my boyfriend and I were a blessing to each other, the outcome of the relationship couldn't be pain and bitterness. To me, that was an echo of this statement from *Science and Health*: "Human affection is not poured forth vainly, even though it meet no return. Love

enriches the nature, enlarging, purifying, and elevating it" (p. 57).

It's true. Though in my case the relationship ended, I actually gained so much from praying about it and discovering more about who I was as Love's expression. That's not to say that it's always easy, but right now, in the place of uncertainty and unsettledness, you can feel Love's presence. And this presence reassures you that you are always loved, completely loved, no matter what. ●

This article was originally published on JSH-Online.com/TeenConnect.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Originally published in the September 5, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Side with God

By NAME WITHHELD

My family was fighting. And I was in the middle.

On one side was one family member with one perspective. On the other side was another family member with a very different perspective. It seemed as if the rest of my family members were forming opinions and choosing sides, while I struggled to remain neutral.

I really loved all those involved in this disagreement and didn't want to ruin any relationships. But how could I stay in the middle forever? Didn't I need to pick my team and settle things by fighting the battle for my side?

Before I could decide what to do, one of the family members called and told me she would be fine if she never spoke to or saw the other person again. That got my attention! And I realized the problem wasn't going to be solved by picking sides and fighting some kind of family war. I needed to pray.

As I prayed, one of the first things that helped me was understanding that anger didn't belong to this family member. In the Bible it says that God made

man, and that means everyone, including this family member, in His own image and likeness (see Genesis 1:26, 27). So anything that isn't Godlike and good—like anger in this case—can't truly be part of us as God's image. I prayed by recognizing that anger was just a false suggestion, trying to make itself legitimate by disguising itself as this family member's thoughts and words. I knew that the true man, God's man, was untouched by such resentment. In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "... divine Love cannot be deprived of its manifestation, or object; ..." (p. 304). I saw that this applied to my family members, who were both the expression of divine Love. So in reality, they couldn't think or act in a way that was unloving.

I began to talk to this family member about divine Love and how it includes everyone. Divine Love expresses limitless grace and perfect love in each of us. It knows nothing but Love! As we spoke, I still listened patiently to my family member's complaints, but I no longer

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felt tugged to take a side. I knew divine Love was present, and that because Love couldn't be deprived of its manifestation, its presence had to be felt and seen tangibly.

Eventually this family member began to calm down, and she was even able to see things from the other family member's perspective. When we got off the phone, she was in a much better place. A few days later, she sent me a text saying

she had completely forgiven the family member in question.

When families disagree, it can be hard not to pick a side. But this experience taught me that while we don't have to choose sides in our own families, we can always side confidently with divine Love. Knowing Love's power and feeling Love's presence defuses anger and hatred, and helps us love our family members in a way that actually heals conflict. ●

Originally published in the September 19, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

'Go into your race with God'

By EMMA HANSER

I've been on a competitive swim team since the end of fifth grade. But still swimming has always been a growing experience for me—especially once I got to high school and my coach put me in the three hardest events: the 200 individual medley (eight lengths of the pool doing two lengths of each stroke), the 100 fly (four lengths of butterfly), and the 500 free (20 lengths of freestyle). I started out my sophomore year doing the 100 fly, and then he put me in the 500 for several meets.

I was fine with it at first. After a couple of meets, though, it was starting to feel like a burden and I was no longer enjoying it.

One meet in particular stands out. The day before a meet we always find out which races we'll be swimming. My coach put me in the 500 again, and I was not excited. The next day, I complained a lot to

everyone. It felt like so much to handle. I mean it was 20 lengths of the pool at race pace. Who would want to do that? I actually started coming up with ways to get out of it: skipping the start, giving up during the race, or even lying about an injury, which I knew would be wrong.

My teammates assured me that I could indeed do this because I had demonstrated the necessary strength and stamina multiple times before. But even those reassurances just went in one ear and out the other. Then the thought came to me to be completely calm and listen. That's when I remembered an idea that had been shared during our team inspiration time, which was, "Go into your race with God."

I really loved that idea because it reassured me of God's omnipresence. I knew there was nowhere I could be, not a single leg of that race, where God wouldn't be.

Understanding this, I could feel supported and express the qualities of strength, grace, and power. I felt a complete sense of peace.

I stepped up to the block and kept the thought of God's omnipresence with me. The whistle sounded, and the other swimmers and I were off. I felt so sure of God's presence that the stillness and peace I'd felt before the race began stayed with me as I swam.

"C'mon Emma!" I heard my teammates shouting. There was also the sound of my coach's familiar whistle, letting me know I needed to go faster. I could see the counter getting closer to the 20-lap mark with every lap I did. 11! 13! 15! I was so close. Just another 100 and I would be done. "Red! Red! Red!

Let's go!" (Red during a 500 means you are on your last lap.)

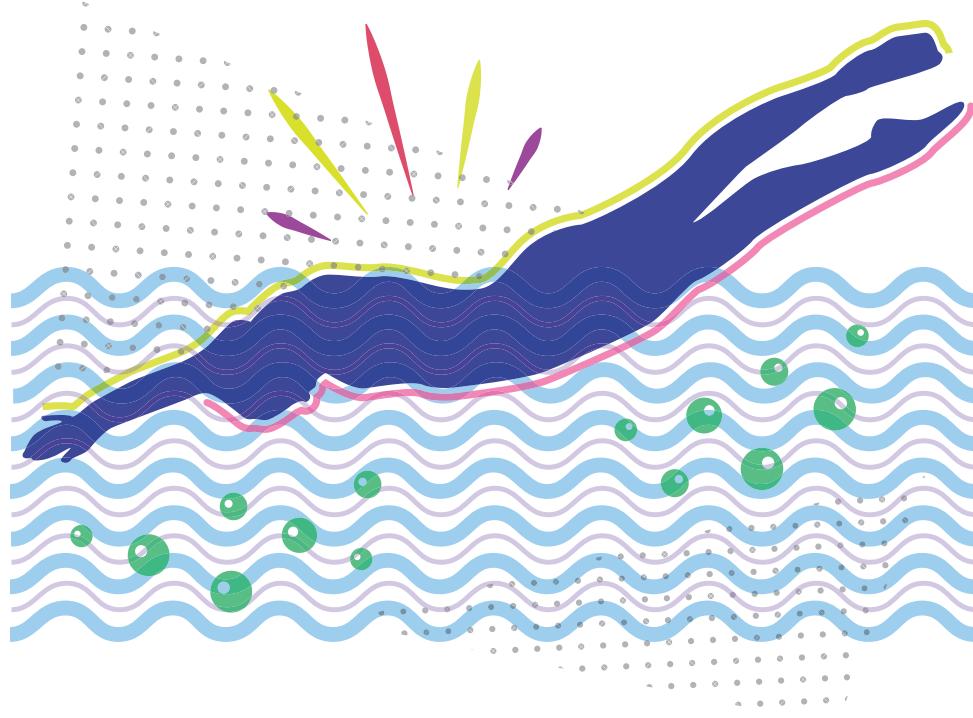
I sprinted to the finish. 7:46 on the board. A couple of seconds slower than my PR (personal record), but I still felt victorious. Not only did I finish the race, but for the first time, I didn't feel exhausted. And my mindset about the 500 had also completely changed. Since this experience, I have

come to see the 500 not as a burden, but as an opportunity to understand more about God and how this helps me break through limitations. Through the rest of that swim season, I swam the 500 several more times, and each time I improved.

I'm so grateful for the way listening to God changed my thinking completely. ●

There was nowhere I could be, not a single leg of that race, where God wouldn't be.

LISA ANDREWS—STAFF



Originally published in the October 3, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Stormy waters could not shake me

By TOM SEBRING

I've always loved taking trips out in the wilderness. Two summers ago, I was on my favorite trip of the summer: Pictured Rocks. It was a four-day, three-night kayaking trip along the Pictured Rocks National Lake Shore in northern Michigan with three campers and a young counselor. The views were absolutely incredible. Everywhere I looked, ancient rock formations along the cliff side made my jaw drop.

On our second day, we awoke to rainfall. I went out to the shore to examine the conditions of the water to determine if we should travel by boat at all that day. I came back to the group with the disappointing news that we would have to wait for the conditions to become calmer before heading out. After a few hours, it finally calmed enough for us to get our boats out in the water.

We paddled along with a light drizzle streaming down our backs, excited for the day's adventure. It wasn't long, though, before the weather worsened and the waves grew into giant swells. With every wave that came, I lost sight of the rest of the group. Fear also rose up

like a wave in my thoughts. The weather was frigid, the water even colder, and there was no good spot to dock the boats. I couldn't stop worrying that a member of the group might go under and be unable to right his kayak.

It would have been so easy to give in to that thought and start to freak out. However, right at that moment, I remembered a line from a hymn by Mary Baker Eddy in the *Christian Science Hymnal*: "For storm or shine, pure peace is thine, / Whate'er betide" (No. 160).

I realized that because God is everywhere, and peace is a quality of God, then peace must always be present. Stormy waters could not shake me. With this insight, I became calmer and was able to guide our group to a landing spot.

I began instructing my group on the proper landing technique in these large waves and watched as each member was able to dock naturally and with ease. I was very proud of them. I then headed in myself, happy that we had all made it to shore.

As I was coming in to dock, however, I lost control of my kayak, and a giant wave



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

tossed me like a rag doll into the lake. I was shaken by the fact that I was not able to dock correctly, and also shocked by how cold the water was.

I pulled my boat ashore but was dazed and unable to focus. Everyone was cold and wet, and we weren't able to start a fire. The peace I'd been feeling seemed shaken. I was an experienced trip leader, and somehow I had failed this group. I hadn't read the weather right. I didn't know whether to try to get us evacuated. I felt defeated.

The thought then came to me that since God is divine Principle, it's God's job to keep everyone safe, and His law of safety is always in operation. It's God's job to lead the group; as divine Mind, He was guiding each one of us. I realized that everything I'd taken on as my personal responsibility, God had already done. Har-

mony, as a quality of God, is a permanent fact that never changes. It occurred to me that my job, my responsibility, was to be a witness to God's ever-present harmony, give gratitude for it, and follow His guidance as I fulfilled my duties.

I had run a few miles away from the group in an attempt to get cellphone service, but now I ran back, knowing God would provide an answer. When I returned, they were boiling water on the stoves we'd brought and were using those as heat sources. Everyone was calm, and we resolved not to let fear and confusion influence us. God was at the helm of this wonderful trip.

Expressing gratitude to God for the way He was protecting and shepherding us made the rest of the trip amazing and memorable and also brought us safely home. ●

Originally published in the October 17, 2016, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Under pressure

By JENNY SAWYER

In the cheesy videos they made us watch during my high school health class, the characterizations of peer pressure made it seem so obvious. A "good kid" would find him- or herself around "bad kids," who would be pushing alcohol or drugs. The message was, "Beware: This is what peer pressure looks like."

But often, peer pressure doesn't even feel like pressure. We think we're choosing to do something because we really want to do it, not because we're responding to a pull to be accepted.

That's what happened to me.

My sophomore year in college, I started hanging out with a group of friends who were smart, funny, and articulate. They made me feel cool and intelligent, and I was flattered they were including me. We spent hours in each other's dorm rooms, talking about ideas ... and also indulging in a lot of negativity, which we all thought was really funny.

One day, I offered up a scathing remark about something going on on campus and felt good when it got a big laugh.

"That's what I love about you, Jenny," one of my friends said. "You're so cynical."

She meant it as a compliment, but it was as if I'd been slapped! "Cynical" was a characterization that felt dark and uncomfortable. And it woke me up to how I'd been unwittingly influenced to behave in a way that wasn't really "me."

That's why I say that peer pressure isn't always so obvious. In my experience, it was more like a subtle pull to shift my behavior ever so slightly, just so I could "click" with the group I was with. But that didn't make the pull any less insidious. Anything that would prompt us to act in a way that causes even minor discomfort with our words or behavior is something we need to be alert to and to stand up to.

How do we do that? In praying about how to deal more effectively with peer pressure, I got an answer that surprised me: Take a look at the story of Jesus' crucifixion.

Say what?

Now I realize that a Bible story, especially the story of the crucifixion, might sound totally unrelated to an issue like peer pressure. However, when I looked at the story more closely, I had the coolest realization. The way the disciples acted during Jesus' crucifixion is key to understanding both how peer pressure works and also what saves us from it.

You could call the disciples Jesus' closest friends. And yet, in Jesus' most difficult hour, at least one of the disciples—Peter—caved to the mentality of the mob. Instead of standing by Jesus and defend-

ing him, Peter pretended he didn't even know Jesus.

So let's break that down. What was it that made Peter give in to the "peer pressure" of denying his relationship with Jesus? Fear. Fear of being judged, being mocked. Fear for his own life.

Obviously most of us don't face such extreme circumstances when it comes to situations where what everyone else is thinking and doing is different from the way we know we should think and act. But when I find myself in one of those situations, I think back to this fear. I ask myself: What am I afraid of that's pulling me to act in a way that doesn't feel quite right?

Once I've identified that fear, I think about something else about the crucifixion story that stands out. The fact is, Peter wasn't just denying the man Jesus; he was denying everything Christ Jesus stood for and embodied—the idea that we are actually spiritual in nature, the sons and daughters of God.

To me that says that when I'm in a situation where I'm tempted to respond to peer pressure, subtle or otherwise, the



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way out is always by embracing Christ, the truth of who each of us is.

Instead of rejecting purity, goodness, and spiritual authority, I can actively embody them. And I can ask God to show me how He made me, and to help me live that way—to understand that I'm not alone in doing what's right, but that I'm completely supported by the strength and love God gives us.

I applied all these ideas to that experience I had in college, and something interesting happened. My relationship with that group of friends changed, but not in a bad way. I ended up growing

closer to one friend from the group I could talk with without the negativity. And I found myself naturally involved in other activities when that group was hanging out together.

Most important, I felt like myself again. The cynicism evaporated, though my sense of humor remained. But best of all was the feeling of peace I discovered—the peace that comes from knowing I'm the daughter of God, and then finding the strength to act like it.●

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Freedom from sports injuries

By SOPHIA HATHAWAY

I played three sports in high school, so I was constantly “in season.” During basketball, I was playing club volleyball. During volleyball, club basketball. And then during track season, I did club volleyball again.

So it got to be pretty frustrating when I sprained my ankle every single year while playing sports. Besides dealing with discomfort, I hated missing two sports, even for a couple of days.

Each time I'd sprain my ankle, I'd pray about it and be back on the court fairly quickly. I especially liked working with the definition of *man* from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I often thought about the part that says that man is “not made

up of brain, blood, bones, and other material elements” (p. 475). It was helpful to recognize that I wasn't made up of a bunch of parts that could be damaged, but that my substance was entirely spiritual. But I needed to deal with the fact that the sprains kept happening.

When my freshman year of college began, I was playing volleyball in a pre-season game when I landed on my wrist in a funny way. I shook the incident off because I didn't want to get subbed out. Afterward, though, it really hurt, and when I woke up the next morning, it was swollen and I couldn't move it very well.

I started panicking a little. Would I have to sit out freshman year volleyball?

I talked to my coach and the captains of the volleyball team, who are all Christian Scientists, and let them know what was going on. I knew they could help by seeing me in the right way—as completely untouched by the effects of an accident. But that whole day, I just kept pushing through and blocking out the pain, instead of actually praying about it.

When I got back to my dorm room that night, though, I noticed that one of my captains had printed out a bunch of quotes from the Bible and *Science and Health* and had put up a big sign that said she loved me.

Immediately, I was so filled with love. And I realized that in fact, I was surrounded by love. The love of my coach, captains, and teammates. The love of my fellow students. And I could feel how that love pointed to something bigger, which is divine Love. Since divine Love is ever present, we can never get outside of it. That night, before I went to bed, I prayed with that idea of being held by divine Love.

The next morning, as I was walking to the gym, I saw the smallest sliver of a crescent moon in the sky. It was so beautiful, and that feeling I'd gotten the night before of being embraced in Love reappeared. It hit me that like the moon, we shine by reflected light. The moon only reflects the light that the sun gives it.

We don't shine by our own light, but we include and reflect all the wonderful attributes of God, such as joy, grace, strength, and humility. I felt so clearly that I wasn't a physical person doing some physical activity by playing sports; I was God's spiritual idea, reflecting His perfect substance, goodness, and freedom.

With these ideas in mind, I went to practice, got through practice fine, and

my wrist didn't bother me after that. It was such a quick healing!

It also had a ripple effect, which I didn't even realize until after the school year ended. That summer, it suddenly occurred to me that I had gone the entire school year playing four sports without spraining my ankle once. I was thinking about why, and two things stood out to me.

First, I realized that the feeling of being embraced in Love had completely clicked with me. I really felt that atmosphere of Love and saw how it protected me from injury.

Second, I'd been working on the idea found in *Science and Health* where Mrs. Eddy talks about resolving "things into thoughts" (p. 123). This has helped me to spiritualize my view of my activities and to understand more clearly that everything in my life is governed by God. Playing sports is really about getting a clearer and more expansive vision of how God made me as His reflection, and how I express Him in all that I do.

This understanding has not only helped me be a better athlete, but it's also given me such awesome freedom from injuries. I'm very grateful! ●



LISA ANDREWS-STAFF

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My true north

By JOHN BIGGS

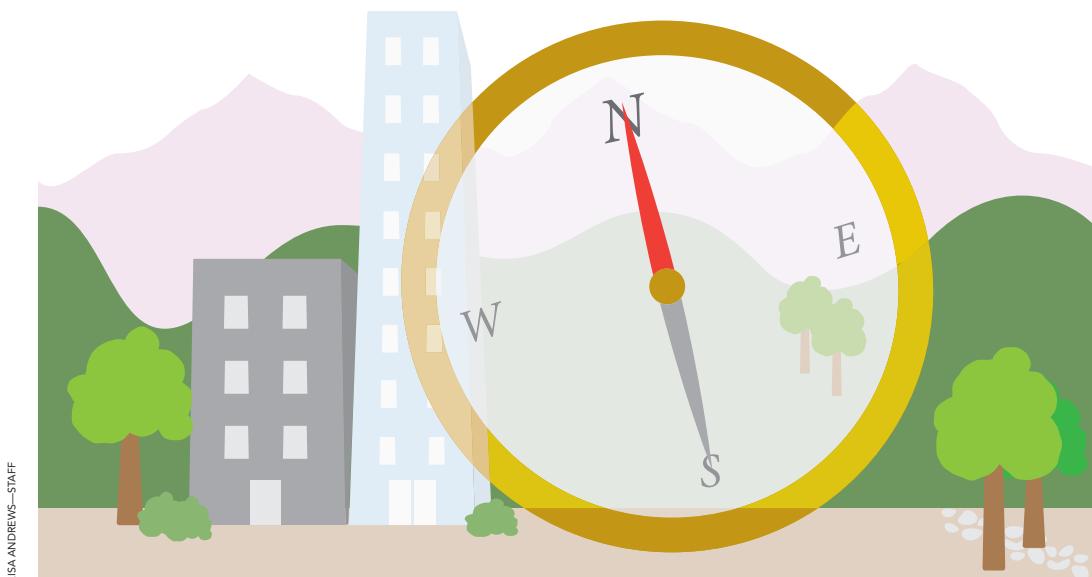
I'm not a Christian Scientist because of what Christian Science enables me to do. I'm a Christian Scientist because it's the best way I know how to be.

It can be easy to get a very utilitarian view of Christian Science—like it's this tool we pull off the shelf when we have a problem; this thing we use to resolve relationship issues or find better health. But actually, Christian Science is about understanding that the source of our being is God, divine Love. It's about seeing that because Love is, we are. We are Love's actual outcome and expression.

When you stop and think about it, that's a really radical way to live. Knowing that we're the outcome of Love enables us to feel fully loved and fully capable of loving at every moment. I like to go through my days being conscious of that as much as possible. Trying to feel more clearly that each of us is the expression of God—the loved of Love.

Here's a small example of how that has played out. Last year, I was on my way home from my office and was thinking about where I should have lunch. Now, that might seem like a pretty mundane question, but I find that when I'm consciously living and thinking and acting as the loved of Love, there are no mundane questions. The thought that came back to me was: If I knew that everyone was loved, perfectly loved, what would I do? And just like that, I looked at a restaurant I was about to pass by and I felt Love's unmistakable guidance: I would eat at this restaurant.

After I had lunch, I noticed a homeless veteran who had taken up his spot outside the restaurant. And in that moment I felt such a clear sense of who he really was spiritually—who he was and who I was; that we existed together in Love's infinite being. I got him a sandwich, and he talked to me about his



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experiences. It happened that my branch Church of Christ, Scientist, was sponsoring a lecture for veterans and their families and I was able to give him a flyer for it. It was so cool because it wasn't this thing I had to force in some way or even consciously think through. The whole experience was just about feeling who I was and who he was as Love's expression. Feeling held in Love. Responding to Love.

As I said, it's a tiny example, but it really encapsulates why I'm a Christian Scientist. There's nothing else on earth that gives me a clearer understanding of who I truly am *and* makes that practical. And it makes that practical in more and more expansive ways. That simple question—what would I do if I knew that we were all loved?—has turned into: I am the outcome of Love, so Love cares, supports, nurtures, and so much more, which means that as the manifestation

of Love, I express care, support, nurturing, and so much more. Knowing myself as the outcome of Love has infinite possibilities. So what it means to express God changes for me each day, each moment, as I feel more of my oneness with divine Love.

That's what I love about Christian Science. It allows me to understand that I'm governed by divine Love instead of by my own personal agenda. The needle of the compass, so to speak, points to true north, which is Love, and everything flows from there. And allowing that "true north" to be at the very center of who I am and what I do is what Christian Science is all about and what I'm all about. My identity is that pure expression of Love, every bit of it governed by Love. That's who I am, and who we all truly are. ●

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Finding my worth

By TORY SILVER

Growing up, I never wanted to speak out or call too much attention to myself. I made some progress with this lack of confidence when I started attending a camp for Christian Scientists every summer and learned to identify myself spiritually—as good and worthy, the way God created me. However, toward the end of my college career this whole suggestion that I wasn't good enough reared its head again.

The funny thing was that during this time, I was praying about a lot of other things—like stuff going on in my community and in the world. All of that seemed a lot more important than my own issues, so I put myself on the back burner. But then I was hit with a series of physical problems, like losing my voice and one of my eyes acting up. I knew that something needed to change. But what?

A few days later, there was a metaphysical talk about womanhood on my college campus. The professor who gave the talk shared stories of becoming an adult, the struggles she faced, and how she relied on prayer to effectively deal with the challenges. One of my biggest takeaways from that talk was that she prayed for herself every day. She'd take 15 minutes at the beginning of her prayers to see herself clearly as God made her. She admitted that when she first started praying for herself every day, the 15 minutes seemed very long. But later, 15 minutes went by quickly as her prayer became more effortless.

After this talk I was so inspired and so excited about this new way of thinking, and I began praying for myself every day. And that little bit of eye trouble I was having went away within a couple of days, as did the laryngitis.

I was also inspired to call a Christian Science practitioner, who had often prayed with me in the past. I wanted to share some of these new insights with him. While we were on the phone, we talked about this feeling of unworthiness and lack of confidence.

He told me this really cool story about Mary Baker Eddy, who founded Christian Science. She apparently told several of her students that the difference between her and her students was that when error, or thoughts that suggest we are disconnected from God or that we are something other than the children of God, came knocking at the door of her thought, she didn't check to see who it was; she knew what it was and what it wanted, so she wouldn't even bother to open that mental door. By contrast, she said, her students would sometimes crack the door open to check the error out and then try to shut the door on it (see *We Knew Mary Baker Eddy*, Expanded Edition, Volume I, pp. 181–182).

I realized I had done this a lot. For example, with the thoughts that argued that I wasn't very confident, I had sort of entertained them and then tried to pray about them to make them go away. Mrs. Eddy was so efficient. She completely shut out these erroneous suggestions before they could even get a toehold. And she did this by understanding God's nature, and the nature—the whole, spiritual, and perfect nature—of His creation.

The practitioner also shared one other thought with me that was hugely helpful. You know that phrase, "What would you do if you knew you could not fail?" Well, he told me he'd put a spin on it and had been thinking about it this way: "What would you do if you knew you were fully loved?"

That idea sealed the deal for me. I mean, what would I do if I knew I was fully loved? I wouldn't feel that I was in



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the way, uncared for, unintelligent. As God's fully-loved daughter, I could be myself, what God intended me to be, in every way, and know my own worth, which is completely God-given.

I prayed with these ideas to see more clearly that Love had always been expressed, embracing everyone—that I had always been loved by God and capable of feeling this love. As I did, I caught a glimpse that I really was an infinite

idea of God—completely loved and completely worthy.

This healing didn't come easily, but it proved to me that Christian Science really is applicable to anything we struggle with, and that knowing we are fully loved by God is powerful—and it heals. •

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Through a new lens—our brilliance!

By CATHERINE UPTON

Ultraviolet light is invisible to the eye. The frequency of its wavelengths is so fast that the eye doesn't register its existence. "Ultraviolet" is also the name of a song in one of my favorite romantic comedies, which is how the word first made its way into my life outside the classroom. But to understand the importance of ultraviolet light in my life, first I have to rewind to middle school.

In eighth grade, two years after my family made the life-altering decision to move to the United States, I was hit by a staggering feeling of my own imperfections. The feeling soon wormed its way into my everyday life, following me like a storm cloud wherever I went. I began to believe that everything that went wrong was inherently my fault, and so I started overthinking everything that I did. Nothing ended up the way it was supposed to, and this made me feel even more like an outsider. This feeling spread

like mold throughout me for much of high school.

Then the song "Ultraviolet" came along. After watching the romantic comedy in which the song is featured, I began to think about why Robby, the love interest of the movie's protagonist, would write a song about her in which he likened her to the "invisible" light, ultraviolet. This took me a while to work out. After a week of listening to the song on repeat, I came to the conclusion that her light—her good qualities—were difficult to see on the surface, but brilliant when looked at through the right lens.

I began to think about this, and I realized that it could also be true for me. As someone who grew up going to the Christian Science Sunday School, I had learned about divine Love and reflection. God is divine Love and we are Love's reflection—"the image, of Love" as Mary Baker Eddy wrote in *Science and Health*

with *Key to the Scriptures* (p. 475). And because God is perfect, we must also be perfect as His image.

I was unable to see my own positive qualities, and had not been for a while, but maybe I needed to look through a new lens. I saw that by switching my perspective to God's view, which includes only perfection, I could see my positive, spiritual qualities—my real identity as God had created me.

I began to do so, but it was difficult at first. I took to writing "ultraviolet" on the inside of my wrist so it would be there to remind me when I needed it. This habit shifted to writing other inspirational quotes on my hand—Bible quotes, quotes from *Science and Health*, and lyrics from songs that inspired me.

Any day that I had trouble with the way I was viewing myself, one of those quotes would come to my rescue. At one point, I spent an afternoon looking through the Bible, finding passages about beauty and perfection. I wrote these on my bathroom mirror so that every time I looked in, I would be reminded of God's view of me, rather than a flawed view of myself.

One passage that was meaningful throughout this whole experience was: "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48, English Standard Version). For so long, I had been blaming myself for things that went wrong because of what I

perceived to be "my" imperfections. But I began to recognize that if God is perfect, He couldn't make one defective child. I started countering these negative, self-critical thoughts with the truth of this passage, and gradually they lost their power over me.

I was unable to see my own positive qualities, and had not been for a while, but maybe I needed to look through a new lens.

It took a while to find my own "ultraviolet light" and to let it shine. But now that I have seen it, I know I can never lose the vision I've gained of myself by looking through the right "lens"—getting a glimpse of who I am as spiritual, unlimited, and perfect.

I still write quotes on my hand every now and then to remind myself of the infinite light I reflect, and which I have to give. They remind me that as I continue to see myself correctly, I can become a force for good in the world, recognizing myself and others in all our brilliant light. ●

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