



CHRISTIAN SCIENCE Sentinel

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

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Feeling annoyed?

By JENNY SAWYER

"She's annoying me right now," my friend said, making a face at her phone as she hung up. The name that flashed briefly on the screen before the call ended said "Mom."

Moms, dads, siblings, even friends—they can all get to us sometimes. One moment, everything's going along fine, and the next, we feel that familiar wave of annoyance washing over us. Sometimes, it even becomes a constant, like for Courtlyn, who writes about how she prayed about a fraught relationship with her mom and a physical healing that followed (see Courtlyn Reekstin, "From anger and annoyance, to love," August 20, 2014, *Sentinel*).

You might say that annoyance is just one of those feelings we have to deal with—part of life that's, well, annoying but inevitable. Except here's the thing: It doesn't have to be. I've learned that anything that would make us feel unsettled, upset, or out of sorts doesn't come from God, so it actually doesn't have any power over us—because God, good, is the only power, and God governs every aspect of our lives.

And that's a spiritual fact we can prove, as I saw in a tangible way recently. Someone I was working with on a project kept doing things that were really annoying me. I didn't want to be annoyed with her, because I knew it wasn't productive. But more important, I didn't want to give in to annoyance, because what I wanted to feel was God's peace. I knew the suggestions of annoyance were

really just the lie that God wasn't there and that some other power (like annoyance!) was operating.

So I prayed. I asked God, divine Love, to help me see that even though this feeling of annoyance seemed pretty justified, it actually couldn't be legitimate because it didn't originate with Love.

That's when this passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* popped into my thought. In the definition of *man*, which refers to our true nature as God's children, Mary Baker Eddy writes, "that which has not a single quality underived from Deity" (p. 475).

That felt like a big Yes! from God, because it reinforced exactly what I was praying about. To me that passage said that since nothing about us can be unlike God, then everything we are must be good, because good is all that can come from God, who is good itself.

That idea from *Science and Health* also did something else for me. It helped me see that not only are those feelings of annoyance illegitimate and powerless, but *they also weren't part of me*. Sure, they might feel like my own thoughts or feelings, but since annoyance isn't "derived" from Deity, or God, then it could never be anything more than a suggestion. And I could see how all the other qualities of God that I reflect—qualities such as strength, dominion, and grace—were my defense against that suggestion of annoyance, no matter how loudly it was knocking at the door of my thoughts. >

You might say that annoyance is just one of those feelings we have to deal with. Except here's the thing: It doesn't have to be.

In less time than it's taken me to write all of this, these ideas completely freed me from those annoyed feelings. They just vanished! And the project I was working on ended up going really well, because I was able to appreciate the person I was working with instead of being distracted by those unproductive suggestions of annoyance.

I'm sure this isn't the last time I'll be tempted to be annoyed. It's one of those feelings that seem to come barging in unannounced. But as a friend of mine

likes to remind me: We aren't responsible for the thoughts that come to us, but we do have dominion over our responses to them; we can refuse to be annoyed. That's an empowering reminder that no matter what suggestions come our way, we do have the strength from God to turn away from them and to embrace the beauty and peace of our God-derived identity instead. ●

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Originally published in the January 9, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Far from home, but close to God

By LAURA AMANDA MEJÍA

I am in my last year of high school and I live in Nicaragua. Last year, during school vacation, I had the opportunity to travel to Switzerland to visit my cousin and her husband, who have two small children. I stayed with my cousin's family for two months, and every day I helped my cousin care for her children.

One night after dinner, I took my cousin's son, Marcos, who was only two years old, to the bathroom, which is on the second floor, so that I could help him brush his teeth. After we finished brushing his teeth, Marcos asked me to carry him back downstairs. So I did. However, I was wearing only socks, and as we went down the stairs to the first floor, I slipped with Marcos in my arms and I banged my head against the wall.

I was immediately concerned about Marcos and was so busy checking to

make sure he was OK that I didn't even think about myself. My cousin's husband came running and was checking Marcos over, too. When he saw that Marcos was fine, he turned to me and was very scared by what he saw. I had a big bump on my head, and he and my cousin asked if they should take me to the hospital.

However, one of the things that had excited me about this trip was that I was looking at it as an opportunity to learn more about my relationship to God. So after I fell, I felt that the first thing I needed to do was to feel with all my heart that God was right there with me. I knew that God's presence is actually power. It is healing.

I called my mom in Nicaragua, and she lovingly talked to me. She encouraged me to stay calm, and she shared the idea that God was going to show me

whatever I needed to know. After we talked, I prayed for a couple of moments, affirming the truths that I have learned through my study of Christian Science: that I was God's daughter, spiritual, always protected, and never separate from the loving care of my Father-Mother. I immediately felt the rapid effects of this prayer because my thought calmed and the fear I was feeling started to disappear.

Before I went to bed, I thought about what Mary Baker Eddy writes about accidents in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Under divine Providence there can be no accidents, since there is no room for imperfection in perfection" (p. 424). I thought

about the fact that since God hadn't caused the accident, then I had never experienced one, because God is the only cause. God created me and knows me as perfect, and that fact cannot change. I also felt grateful for my trip to Switzerland, and I knew God was causing me to feel nothing but joy and health.

I improved quickly, and a couple of days later, I was outside playing with my cousin's children. The

bump on my head healed, and there were no aftereffects from the accident. I was completely free.

I am very grateful to God for showing me that He is always with me. ●

One of the things that had excited me about this trip was that I was looking at it as an opportunity to learn more about my relationship to God.

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LISA ANDREWS—STAFF



I didn't have to wait for healing

By DYLAN KAUFMAN

A few summers ago, my dad and I were watching a movie. At one point, we paused the movie, and he left to get me some popcorn. When he came back, he handed me the popcorn and then jumped up on the bed where we were sitting. Somehow my foot was right where he landed, and my ankle got pretty badly hurt.

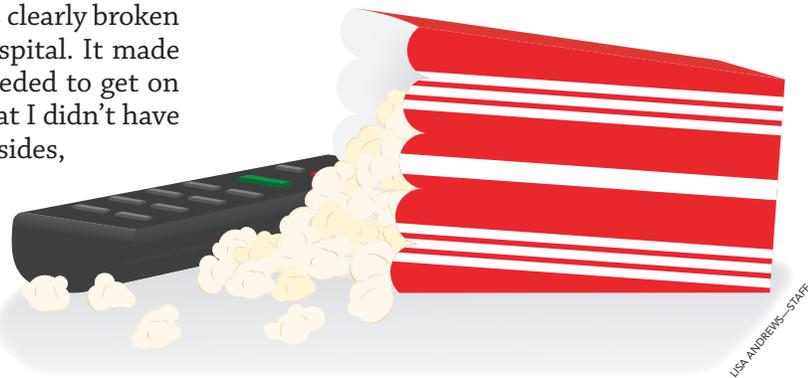
I told my dad about the pain, so he suggested we pray about it. I've had other healings through prayer, which helps me feel so close to God that the pain or fear or whatever just vanishes and I'm healed. So my dad and I prayed about it that night. I thought about my spiritual identity as a reflection of God. Since I'm spiritual, then an accident can't change me. It can't touch me, just like the number four can't be crushed or broken, because it's an idea, and an idea stays perfect. In the same way, I'm always perfect, the way God created me.

But in the morning, when I woke up, my ankle still hurt and I couldn't move it or put any weight on it.

I hobbled downstairs, and a member of my family who isn't a Christian Scientist said that my ankle was clearly broken and I should go to the hospital. It made me realize that I really needed to get on top of the problem and that I didn't have to wait for healing. Besides, I had baseball games coming up for my summer team, and I felt that it was right for me to be able to continue my regular activities.

I looked up the definition of *flesh* on page 586 of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. It reads: "FLESH. An error of physical belief; a supposition that life, substance, and intelligence are in matter; an illusion; a belief that matter has sensation" (Mary Baker Eddy). This helped me realize that the belief that I could be injured is 100 percent false, because it is a material belief that isn't a part of God. God is Spirit, so everything about His creation must be spiritual, including my substance and all the laws that govern me.

At that point, I felt so peaceful that I decided to take a rest. When I woke up about 15 minutes later, my ankle felt completely fine. I called to my dad to come quickly, and he raced up to my room. When he arrived, I jumped out of bed and hopped up and down. It was amazing! The healing was so quick, and I have not had any trouble with my ankle ever since. I'm so grateful! ●



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The answer to friend problems? Love!

By CLAUDIA LARYEA

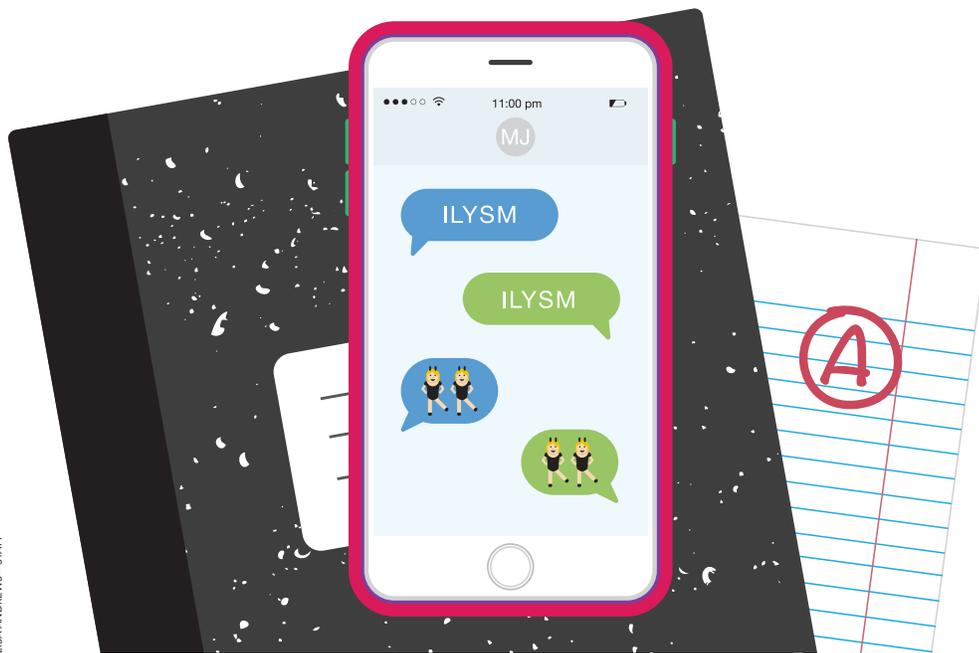
A couple of months into my senior year of high school, I was having problems with a friend. I've known this friend since middle school, and she has always had difficulties when it comes to relationships. One day she came up to me to talk about an issue she was having with someone else. I found myself getting really irritated with her. About halfway into her story, I snapped. I told her that I had had enough of her always complaining about somebody. The minute the words flew out of my mouth, I regretted what I'd said. But I knew I couldn't take them back. She became angry with me and stormed off.

Later that day I saw her in the hallway. I approached her to tell her how sorry I was for what I had said. Instead

of accepting my apology, she just ignored me and walked away. I felt horrible. After that, every time she saw me in the hallway or the cafeteria she would ignore me or walk in a different direction. This pattern went on for about a week. I knew things couldn't go on like this.

When I got home that afternoon, I lay down on my bed and listened in prayer for God's direction. I needed to know what to do next. To me, praying is being mentally still and listening to what God has to say. It's feeling that strong bond to God that nobody can ever break—knowing that I am actually one with God, inseparable.

It took me a while to hear God's voice because I was mentally rehashing the situation with my friend. And at first, even



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though I wanted to hear God, it felt hard to differentiate between God's ideas and the negative thoughts. Then I remembered something my Christian Science Sunday School teacher said about how we can know which thoughts are from God and which aren't. She said that if an idea came from God, it would make me feel at peace. As soon as I remembered that, the thought strongly came to me to love this friend. I knew that was an idea from God because in the Bible it says, "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

I realized I hadn't been very loving, but I knew I could love my friend because God, who is Love, made me. The Bible also says that we are made in God's image and likeness (see Genesis 1:26, 27). So since God is Love, then I am the image of Love, and so is my friend. Whatever God is, we all express. For example God is Life, Truth, and Love, so we all have and can express the qualities of God—like peace, love, kindness, and so

on. I realized that loving is in our "spiritual DNA," so it comes naturally to us.

The next day I made my way to my friend and sat her down so I could wholeheartedly apologize. This time, I was seeing both of us spiritually, as the image of Love, and that made all the difference. She began to loosen up and also apologized for the way she'd acted. We talked about how we could approach any future problems in a loving way.

I feel we both walked away from this situation with a new outlook on the power of Love and how freeing it is to commit to loving. For me, this experience confirmed Mary Baker Eddy's statement in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, "Love is the liberator" (p. 225). ●

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Originally published in the February 27, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

What do you see in the mirror?

By ELLA GATES

Close your eyes for a minute. Imagine yourself looking in a mirror. What do you see? For a long time, when I looked in the mirror, all I saw were the flaws. I would fixate on the blemishes and the imperfections, the small things that I couldn't stand about my image. But my problem wasn't only with my physical appearance. I was constantly worrying about not meeting expectations, and I

felt a crushing amount of self-doubt and negativity. I would lie awake at night wondering if I would ever achieve anything—if I would meet any of my goals.

Sometimes I missed school because I was emotionally and physically exhausted. I struggled with the idea of God being Love, because while I thought that I loved others, I felt I was unable to love myself. I stubbornly refused to turn to



Christian Science because of the nature of the problem; I felt it was up to me to change my thought and become more positive.

Something shifted, though, when I realized how many healings I'd had that came about due to my study of Christian Science. At that point, I did turn to the ideas in the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy, for help, and I'm so grateful I made that decision, because it changed everything.

Once I decided to tackle my struggle to love myself with my understanding of God and Christian Science, I went to the core of the problem, to the very meaning of the word *Love*. Since I've attended the Christian Science Sunday School from the time I was little, I've heard the phrase "God is Love" (see I John 4:8) innumerable times, but I never felt that I truly understood what it meant.

As I thought about it more deeply, I realized that to me "God is Love" means that the very essence of God, and the 100 percent pure and fundamental element of our relation to Him, is love. God is unwavering, ever-present Love. Love isn't partial—touching some but not others. Love includes everyone and bathes

everyone in its light. Therefore, the love I express, which is a reflection of Love itself, cannot be solely directed at others; rather, it has to include me, too. It embraces us all in its ever-presence.

A second idea that helped me overcome the challenge of resentment and self-doubt was the story of creation. Not the Adam and Eve story, but the inspired version of creation, found in chapter one of Genesis and illuminated by *Science and Health* as the spiritual and real creation story. In the Genesis 1 version of creation it says, "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (verse 31). I realized I'd spent a lot of time thinking, "Obviously I don't fall into this category of 'very good' because I'm not very good and I'm not going to achieve anything." But is it really my role, or anyone else's, to decide whether I am "good enough"? No. God's view of me as "very good" is the only true view, and it is what defines me.

As I prayed with these ideas, I started to view myself in a completely different light. I began to see myself the way God sees me: His perfect expression. I realize now that the "mirror" I used to look into was warped—distorted by my refusal to see myself as a perfect child of God. By turning away from it, and toward the spiritual sense of creation, I can now see myself in God's likeness—shaped by Love and worthy of love. Now that the burden has been lifted with this healing, I can stand up straighter, laugh louder, and be happier. This healing has strengthened my relationships by eradicating the negativity that used to hold me back from being what God made me to be. And, most of all, it has allowed me to love myself for what I am—God's reflection. ●

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Course correction

By WILL TOWLE

I broke my thumb playing soccer. I know, I know: You're not supposed to play soccer with your hands. But somehow, my hand got caught between another player and me. I thought the injury was just another jammed finger, and figured I would have a sore thumb for the rest of the day. I would later realize that this line of reasoning is where I went wrong.

It was my second year playing varsity soccer, and I loved being part of the team. We were about a month into our season when this incident happened. Quickly, I realized this was more than a jammed finger; my thumb was broken. The injury was holding me back, not just from soccer, but also from a class rafting trip in Idaho. I had been looking forward to this

trip for a while, and now I was worried that I wouldn't be able to go.

I ended up getting a brace for my thumb, which raised a lot of questions. What happened? How'd you do that?

How long until you get it off? The questions went on and on. I felt stuck on the image of the injury and was having a hard time addressing the situation through prayer, as I usually do whenever I have a problem.

School was tough, too. Writing simple sentences was a challenge. Typing was even harder. And worst of all, I ended up missing my class trip. Something needed to happen.

I had a change of thought. It hit me that all this time I'd been so focused on this image of an injury that I'd forgotten a basic spiritual fact: Because God

Holding on to powerful spiritual facts about God and man, I found I could now pray effectively and was healed.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

is Spirit, His creation, man, including me, must be spiritual. And because I am spiritual, everything about me is intact, whole, uninjured.

In a sermon titled *Christian Healing*, Mary Baker Eddy wrote, “Contending for the reality of what should disappear is like furnishing fuel for the flames” (p. 9). This quote sums up my shift in thought. As soon as I realized I was focusing on a lie about my identity—that I could be broken or hurt—I saw where I’d gone wrong: I needed to pray with the truth of the way God created me. Then I was able to think differently. Holding on to powerful spiritual facts about God and man, I found I could now pray effectively and was healed.

I was scheduled to have the brace on for three to four weeks, but within five days, my thumb was completely fine and I no longer needed the brace. I was told that I would have less mobility in my

thumb, but my thumb is just as flexible as it was before the injury. Oh yeah, and soccer? I didn’t miss a single game or a practice for the rest of the season.

This healing was a blessing from God. Because I couldn’t go on the rafting trip, I was assigned a four-page essay. Doesn’t sound like a blessing, right? Well, it was. The paper was about overcoming obstacles, and I discovered many new things about beating adversity that I hadn’t known before.

Though I initially accepted this injury and struggled for a few days as a result, things immediately changed when I began to see myself spiritually and to recognize my spiritual being. I am very grateful for this healing and for the fact that I have Christian Science in my life. ●

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‘This is for You, God’

By CAITLYN DEMAREE

Is humility a weakness? In many areas of life, especially competitive sports, it might seem like it is. But what I’ve learned through Christian Science and in following Christ Jesus’ example is that humility brings us the greatest strength, even in athletics. When we humbly rely on God, all pressure, stress, and fear are removed from the picture.

I learned these powerful facts while playing basketball last year. I had gained

some recognition because of articles in the local newspaper that highlighted my shooting ability. Although I thought I was expressing humility by being gracious and politely saying thank you when people congratulated me at school, I wasn’t getting what true humility was.

After the articles circulated, I started to feel more pressure to perform and to shoot well during my games. And that led to my worst game that season, when

I was 0–14 (zero baskets made out of 14 attempts) from behind the three-point line.

That was a wake-up call, and before the next game I called a Christian Science practitioner. I knew that calling for help through prayer meant that I could expect to feel and know God and divine power better, and to better know myself as God’s spiritual image and likeness. My focus could shift from myself to God and what He is knowing about His creation.

The practitioner told me that I could play to show myself “approved unto God” (II Timothy 2:15). Anything that I was doing on the court was to glorify and express the goodness of God—not to live up to other people’s expectations or even my own expectations of myself. After praying this way, I immediately saw some improvement. During that next game I shot better than I had in the previous one, but still not as well as I normally do. I continued to desire to understand God better and how best to praise Him on the court.

Before the next game, I remembered something my coach had told me. Before he wrote a paper, he used to say, “This is for You, God.” I took that idea and applied it to the game. I realized that I wasn’t even playing for my coach or for my teammates; I was playing only for God, and I was playing *with* God.

This relieved a lot of the pressure, because then it didn’t seem to matter how I performed as long as I made sure I was expressing the qualities of God that were inherent in my being—dominion, strength, and poise. Throughout the game I kept my thought focused on God, and as a result, my performance followed suit and I shot the way I usually do.

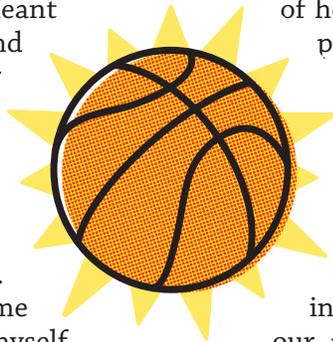
But my lesson in humility didn’t end there. During this time, I had to write a speech that reflected on several things: one of the aspects of love from Henry Drummond’s book *The Greatest Thing in the World*, an example from Jesus’ life

of how he demonstrated this aspect of love, and an example from my own life of that same quality. Because of my experience on the court, I chose to discuss humility.

I talked about how humility means acknowledging and understanding what the true source of our ability is: God. It is understanding that we can both do good and be good because God is good, and we reflect God. I also shared how Jesus’ humility enabled him to do whatever God led him to do. The speech gave me another opportunity to reflect on humility and on Jesus’ words, “I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30). When Jesus said that he could do nothing of himself, he was not expressing weakness, but humble confidence in God’s power. This kind of humility was so complete that it reflected God’s power to raise the dead. When Lazarus had been in the grave four days, Jesus stood outside the tomb and acknowledged that God was the only power, and Lazarus walked out of the tomb alive (see John 11:1–44).

The week after I gave my speech was my last regular season game before playoffs started, and we were facing a really good team. With ten seconds left on the clock we were down by three points. We had the ball on the sideline and ran a play designed to set me up for a shot. My teammate set an awesome screen that left me wide open to take a three-pointer. I made it and tied the game back up.

Then, at the end of the first overtime period, we were down by two with little



time left. I was able to lay the ball in to tie the score up again and force the game into a second overtime.

We ended up pulling ahead and winning, and I played one of my best games of basketball ever. I truly felt that I was just being God's expression. All of the

glory of that moment was God's glory. All the glory of *any* moment is God's glory—evidence of His goodness, omnipotence, and omnipresence. I am beyond grateful to have learned that true humility is not weakness, but spiritual strength that has practical, powerful effects. ●

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Stay connected

By JENNY SAWYER

I have so many reasons to be on my phone. Don't you? Emails and texts to answer, photos to like on Instagram, news stories and updates and friends to follow. I'm on my phone so much that sometimes I don't even realize how often I reach for it instinctively—not just when I need to, but just ... because.

Then one of my high school-aged friends made a comment that brought me up short. She said she often went on Instagram when she was bored, but lately, she'd been noticing that she felt down and self-critical after scrolling through her feed. Still, she kept doing it, because she felt like she needed to "stay connected."

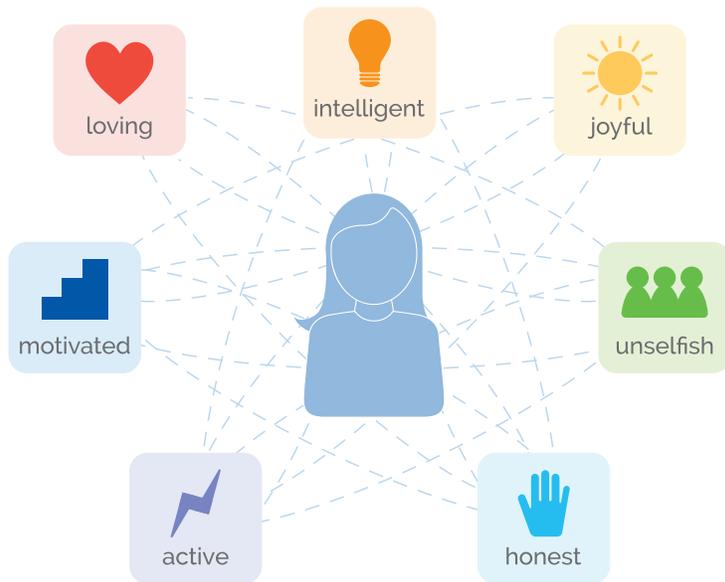
Stay connected. Those words got me thinking. When we log on to social media, what are we connecting to? Our friends, sure. Maybe the world outside our own neighborhood or community. But as I thought about it further, I realized that jumping on Facebook or Instagram or Snapchat also connects me to some things that aren't the greatest. Being on social media connects me to

negativity, sets me up to compare myself to others, and often (unwittingly) catches me in a current of news stories that make me feel helpless, overwhelmed, or afraid.

Now before you stop reading, this isn't an article about how we should all get off social media and go back to living in caves. This is about how I woke up to a different way of staying connected that has improved my life, like, majorly, and has even helped me approach social media with more poise and discernment.

Stay connected. Those were the words that woke me up, and those were the words that also offered a solution. I started asking myself: What do I really want to connect to? The answer was obvious. I wanted to connect to something that would show me that I really am loved, that I am innately good and have the ability to do what's right. I wanted to connect to God.

Connect might sound like a weird word choice, since our relationship to God is one of constant, unbreakable connection. I love the way Mary Baker Eddy describes it in *Science and Health with Key to the*



Scriptures when she writes, “As a drop of water is one with the ocean, a ray of light one with the sun, even so God and man, Father and son, are one in being” (p. 361). We are truly one with God at all times. But in my own life at least, I find that I need to consciously tune in to that, acknowledge it, and spend some quiet time feeling close to God each day.

I’ve felt that closeness, that oneness, with God when I’ve loved a friend with a pure, unselfish love, or responded to a difficult situation with grace instead of anger. But the thing that helps me feel connected to God most consistently is prayer. This means taking some uninterrupted time to talk with God each day and, more important, to listen to what He’s saying about His entirely good, pure nature as divine Love, and the entirely good, pure, spiritual nature of His creation, including me.

These moments of feeling that connection are holy. They illuminate my days with insights I couldn’t have come to on my own, free me from misconceptions I’ve been carrying around, and heal me, too. Listening to God with a

heart wide open to His love has also helped me when I’ve been feeling down and lonely.

Those lonely moments were often the times when I found myself reaching for my phone without even thinking, but lately, I’ve been making a conscious effort to connect with God instead. When the impulse comes to hop on social media, I turn away from my phone and toward God. When I did that recent-

ly, the thought came so reassuringly that I could never be alone, because I live in God, divine Mind, in the presence of an infinite number of ideas. I felt a genuine sense of companionship as I caught a little glimpse of living in what Mrs. Eddy calls “the teeming universe of Mind” (*Science and Health*, p. 513).

And when I do go on social media now? I feel different. When I know I’m connected to God and am really listening for His healing messages, I’m prepared to face down thoughts of envy, fear, disappointment—whatever the news stories and updates I’m seeing would provoke.

These days, my phone is still close at hand. But my thought? More and more often, it’s close to God. ●

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USA ANDREWS—STAFF

Would I ever see my dog again?

By JOEY WAHL

It was summertime, and my best friend was over. We were both really hungry, so we asked my mom if she would drive us to get food. On the way, I felt a sort of worry pass through me. I started to think about my dog, Kiah, because I wondered if she was OK. Once, Kiah had somehow escaped from the backyard. The neighbors had found her down the street and brought her home, but now I was concerned she might have escaped again. I asked my mom if Kiah was in the backyard. My mom assured me that she was, so I let go of the worry.

When we arrived home with our food, my friend and I thought we'd go into the living room to eat and watch TV. But first I wanted to bring Kiah into the house. When I went out into the back, she was gone. I started to freak out. I ran into the house and told my mom and my friend. We all went outside and called her name, but there was no sign of her.

My mom got into the car while my friend and I jumped on our skateboards and searched for her around the neighborhood. We asked a bunch of people if they had seen her, but no one had.

After four hours of searching, my friend and I decided to go home and my mom continued driving around. When we got home, I broke down crying, thinking I would never see my dog again. I decided to go into another room to pray.

I began by knowing that God was taking care of Kiah, so she couldn't be harmed. I knew that as one of God's ideas, she was completely safe. I remembered the part of the 91st Psalm that says, "He [God] shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (verse 11).

I felt so strongly that what that psalm was saying was true, and I suddenly felt very calm. At that exact moment, a thought, almost like a voice, came to me that Kiah *was* in the backyard. I went outside, but I still couldn't find her. So I listened for God's guidance again, and the thought came to look in the hole in our fence. That didn't make sense, because the hole was very small. But I went to the hole anyway and yelled for Kiah.

I heard a whimper! I called to her again to make sure. She whimpered and jumped, and I saw her face. I had found Kiah.

I climbed the fence, which was about 15 feet tall, and saw that she had trapped herself between the fence, a wall, and a bunch of trash cans. She was breathing very rapidly and shaking. I couldn't reach her, and I knew that we had to get her out of there immediately.

I called my mom and told her the news. My mom was still driving around the neighborhood, but on her way back, she saw our neighbor, who happens to be a fireman. She explained the circumstances, and he hopped in her car and came to help. He was able to climb the fence and lift our dog to safety.

When Kiah came into the house, she was still shaking, but she was overjoyed to see us. And very quickly she was back to normal—as if nothing had happened.

I knew this was a healing. In that quiet place of prayer, I was able to hear God's voice. This experience showed me that God really is always there, protecting us and guiding us. ●

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Originally published in the April 10, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

When life seems hard

By JENNY SAWYER

“Today I was trying to figure out why life seems so hard,” my friend texted. “So I asked Google.”

Google, unfortunately, did not offer up any satisfying answers, which is why my friend texted me. And while I didn’t have an answer to “why,” I did agree that we all want to know what to do when things seem hard. How to deal. How not to get submerged in the waves of life’s challenges.

I’m still learning this day by day in my own life, but there is one answer I keep coming back to—because it helps me every time. The way I deal when life seems hard comes down to one word: gratitude.

Let me back up a little. Shortly after college, when I was suddenly faced with lots of things in my life that seemed very challenging, I asked a friend about this feeling of drowning in a sea of problems. How could I pull my head above the surface when every single thing seemed so incredibly hard?

She offered me these wise words: Life only seems hard when we think we’re being asked to give more than we’ve been given.

It makes sense, doesn’t it? A friendship seems hard when we feel that we don’t have enough patience or love to give. An assignment for work or school seems hard if we feel that we don’t have the intelligence, insight, or even discipline to complete it. And prayer seems hard when we think we’re out of inspiration, or don’t have enough spiritual understanding.

This is where Christian Science comes to the rescue. Because what I’ve learned through my study of the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* is that God has enabled us to do whatever is being demanded of us, because God is the one, infinite source, and His children, including each of us, are His limitless expression.

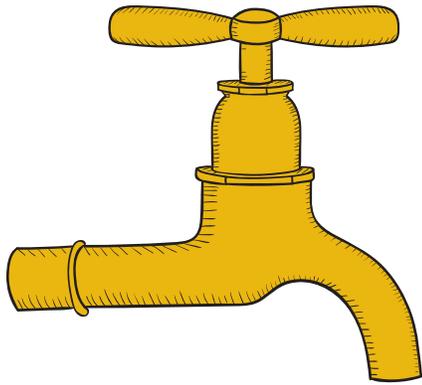
I love the way Mary Baker Eddy explains this in *Science and Health*: “Man is God’s reflection, needing no cultivation, but ever beautiful and complete” (p. 527).

In the middle of things feeling hard, we’re not likely to think of ourselves as beautiful and complete. More like totally inadequate! And yet, the recognition that we express all the goodness of God right now is powerful—and it’s a form of gratitude. In acknowledging that we’re not struggling to bear up under life’s burdens, but that we are whole, strong, and infinitely capable, we’re thanking God for what He is and the way He made us. We’re thanking God for doing enough, being enough—and also for having actually given us what we need to be successful.

This kind of gratitude isn’t positive thinking. It’s based on the spiritual law of our God-derived capacities. It’s a prayer—and a powerful one. Actually, I saw just how powerful a few weeks ago, when someone I love very much needed a lot of my prayer, patience, and love over a period of several days.

About 48 hours into helping her, things started to feel hard. Too hard. I didn’t know how I could keep giving so much; I was especially drained of patience,

*The way I deal
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which was what she seemed to need the most.

And then a new idea dawned on me. I thought back to my friend's words about things feeling hard when we think we're being asked to give more than we've been given, and I suddenly knew that I didn't need more patience. I didn't even need for things to get easier. All I needed to do was thank God for giving me not just what I thought I needed, but even more than I needed. I thanked God for being infinite, and for showing me that I express Him infinitely.

It was like turning on a faucet. I felt *flooded* with patience, grace, even joy.



I was so grateful to be able to help this person I love so much, and I was grateful to God for showing me that I had what it took to love her even more unselfishly.

It's a holy thing to experience God's qualities welling up in us and pouring out in a way that almost seems effortless. Feeling close to God this way strengthens us to meet the challenges and reminds us that even when life does seem hard, God has given us what we need to go forward. ●

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No more period pain

By AVANTIKA DEY

My school regularly holds lectures related to puberty for preteen and teenage students. During one of these lectures, they told us that pain is normal during menstrual cycles and also that our menstrual cycles might be irregular in the beginning.

After I attended those lectures, my periods became irregular and I began to experience pain each month.

I called a Christian Science practitioner and asked for her help. She said she would be happy to pray with me and pointed out the definition of *kingdom of heaven* from the Glossary in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. It says, “The reign of harmony in divine Science; the realm of unerring, eternal, and omnipotent Mind; the atmosphere of Spirit, where Soul is supreme” (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 590).

I understood immediately that since everything in God’s kingdom is harmonious, then I couldn’t experience inharmony related to my period or anything else. The pain completely vanished.

Because my period was still irregular, the practitioner and I continued to pray together. We talked frequently, and I shared the inspiration I’d gained from praying and from reading two chapters in *Science and Health*, which she’d suggested to me: “Prayer” and “Footsteps of Truth.” Each time we talked, I felt more and more certain of the reality of God and His law of consistent goodness, and of the powerlessness and unreality of any material belief.

At one point, the practitioner suggested that I look at another passage from *Science and Health*. It reads, “Hold thought steadfastly to the enduring, the good, and the true, and you will bring these into your experience proportionably to their occupancy of your thoughts” (p. 261).

This helped me understand that I could leave the wrong, painful beliefs behind and turn my thoughts completely to God. When I did, my periods became regular and have remained painless.

I thank God for this healing. And I thank Mary Baker Eddy for her wonderful book *Science and Health*. ●



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A first date that changed my life

By MARCI MARTIN

I didn't expect that getting a boyfriend would also mean becoming a Christian Scientist. But that's exactly what happened. On our first date, my boyfriend took me to church—the local branch Church of Christ, Scientist. And if you asked me why I'm a Christian Scientist today, I'd think back to myself as an 18-year-old, first-time Christian Science Sunday School student, and I'd give you one word: Truth.

I had been raised in another Christian denomination and was baptized into the church at the age of 12. But even though I attended services regularly, somehow the whole idea of religious teachings being applicable to my life didn't really register for me. Though I have fond memories of my church, my experience was more cultural than one of deep belief. Church was something that was part of my life on Sundays, but not so much during the rest of the week.

My dad left us when I was seven and my mother had to go out to work, so I had a lot of time to myself most days. I liked to go into our pear orchard and swing from branch to branch, making up stories. The problem was, sometimes those stories spilled over into real life—meaning that I got into a bad habit of lying. And even when I got into trouble for it, I still kept doing it.

So when I began attending the Christian Science Sunday School and found out that God was Truth—wow. That idea was amazing to me! Even more amazing was the fact that I had a relationship to this divine Truth. I was Truth's reflec-

tion, meaning I must be created as honest, truthful.

For the first time, I really got it. I knew that the lying I'd been doing all those years was wrong, and that I had to tell the truth from then on. And there was more. I realized that I wasn't *just now becoming* "Truth's honest child, / Of pure

and sinless heart" (Emily F. Seal, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 382). I had *always* been Truth's perfect, honest child—which meant I'd never been that awful person I thought I was. After that, honesty

came naturally, and I loved knowing that I was expressing Truth when I told the truth.

Attending the Christian Science Sunday School was a revelation. I could learn all these things about myself and God. Not just religious doctrine, but actual truth, because I realized that Christian Science explains the truth of being: what God is and what we are.

Christian Science grounded me in an understanding of my spiritual identity, and this was practical: It led to healing. Healings of indigestion, headaches, allergies, weak ankles, broken ribs, and many other problems. At first, I had no idea how I was being healed, but I loved what was happening to me.

I loved exploring Jesus' statement, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), because it offered such promise. Free from what? I wanted freedom from all my old habits and unproductive ways of thinking. And what was the truth that would set me free? The truth about God and

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man, which has infinite facets in Christian Science.

For example, I learned that God was my Father. Because my dad had left when I was so young, I never really felt like I'd had a father. So it was wonderful to realize that I'd actually never been without a father. My divine Father had always been there, and I'd always been fathered by God. My mother and I also hadn't been close, so finding out God was Mother was a great relief, too. I'd always been mothered by God, and so had my mother.

Becoming a Christian Scientist changed me: the way I thought about myself and everyone else. The way I

wanted to live my life. The way I wanted to behave in my relationships. And Christian Science connected me to the fact that I didn't just *do* right, but I *was* right. I was Truth's expression, so the good and right that I did, I did because it was what I was, not just because "it's what you do" or because "the rules say so."

So why am I a Christian Scientist? Because it unlocked the truth of my being, the truth of reality. And once you've seen the truth, you don't want anything else. ●

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Originally published in the May 22, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

An athlete prays

By JORDAN STRONG

I am an avid athlete who enjoys most sports—especially hockey, soccer, and track. Last fall, it was soccer season, and I was ready to work hard for my team and win some games. I was the captain of my team, and I felt like this was my year to start leading and to really make a difference on the soccer field.

The problem was, it seemed that whenever I would try to work especially hard, short bursts of pain would surge through one of my legs and greatly hinder my performance. When the pain first started, I tried to deal with it by taking it easy for the rest of practice and simply pushing through it. But every practice thereafter, it seemed as if I just couldn't escape the pain. And it only seemed to increase the more I played.

I was frustrated. The words, "Please, no!" "Why me?" and "Why now? Why this season?" rushed through my head whenever I felt this pain. I had been told most of my life just to "man up" and to "get over it," so that's exactly what I tried to do. I willfully tried to play no matter what. Meanwhile, I just couldn't figure out why the pain persisted.

One afternoon, frustrated yet again by pain, I walked hastily off the field and sat down on the bench. As I did, Christ Jesus' words from the Bible came to thought, calmly reminding me, "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). It was like the message wouldn't leave me alone, because it kept replaying over and over. Finally, I decided to look up what Mary Baker Eddy wrote about this idea. >

One passage that spoke to me says: “The law of Love saith, ‘Not my will, but Thine, be done,’ and Christian Science proves that human will is lost in the divine; ...” (*Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896*, p. 212).

I was so incredibly enlightened by what that statement revealed to me about my struggle with pain. I realized that all season long, I’d been trying to push through and do all these things through my own strength and abilities. It had never occurred to me that all I needed to do was turn to God and I would be healed. At that moment, my thought changed from feeling full of despair and frustration to overflowing with love and gratitude to God.

It had never occurred to me that all I needed to do was turn to God and I would be healed.

The physical healing followed immediately; I knew the pain was gone. Without any hesitation, I stood up and found myself back on the field, playing with more vigor and spirit than I ever had. And I went on to finish the season with no complications at all! I am still a very active athlete and have been completely free from pain since this thought shift.

This healing is evidence to me that instead of trying to “push through” when we face a problem, we can actually be leaning more on God. God’s will for us is pure good, and as we lose our own sense of will in the divine, we will always be victorious. ●

Originally published in the May 22, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Feeling loved—wherever you go

By MOLLY GLASCOCK

When I was a sophomore in college, I spent a semester abroad in Japan. One particular day it seemed that one good experience followed another. That morning, our group had met with a Japanese college professor, who'd shared insightful stories about the historical relationship between Japan and the United States. That afternoon, we spent time with Japanese college students, and I ended up having a very deep conversation with one of them about the cultural differences between Japan and the US.

When I returned to my host family that evening, my host mom excitedly announced that she had made one of my favorite desserts—pumpkin pie—because I had mentioned how much I liked it and she wanted me to feel at home. I was overwhelmed by her love and all the kindness I had experienced throughout the day.

While we were eating dinner, though, I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my stomach, and it quickly became very uncomfortable. Trying not to draw attention to the situation, I excused myself to the bathroom, where I sat down on the floor in distress. I couldn't contact my parents or a Christian Science practitioner for help because I didn't have a phone. My host family wouldn't know what to do with me, and I didn't want to make them uncomfortable. What was I going to do?

The pain continued to get worse, and I felt completely alone and helpless. As these thoughts threatened to take over, I realized I did have one option, and that was to turn to God as I had so many times before. To do this, I knew I needed to shut out the thoughts of fear and pain so I could hear the truthful thoughts from God, who is Truth itself, that would

bring healing. At that moment, I actually said aloud, "Stop! That's enough."

One of my favorite hymns from the *Christian Science Hymnal* came to thought, specifically this part of the second verse:

God could not make imperfect man
His model infinite;
Unhallowed thought He could not plan,
Love's work and Love must fit.
(Mary Alice Dayton, No. 51)

I realized that since God could not make imperfect man, that meant I was always perfect, because I was spiritual. No suggestion of pain could change this fact or cloud my view of my perfection. I also saw that pain was simply a distraction from the good of the day, which had truly felt like Love's work. I tried to keep my thoughts on Love and not be distracted by anything else.

Then I thought of something my mom used to do with my siblings and me when we weren't feeling well. She would have us play the "Who loves you?" game. We would think about all the people in our lives who loved us and focus on our gratitude for them and for their love. Feeling that love and that gratitude was healing because it pointed to the source of all love, God, and to God's ever-presence. And where God, good, is present, there's no place for anything that isn't good, like sickness.

When I was young, I scoffed at this game, finding it childish. But in that moment, far away from home, it was exactly what I needed. I sat there listing everyone I could think of and expressing gratitude for the love expressed to me that day and throughout the entire trip. I

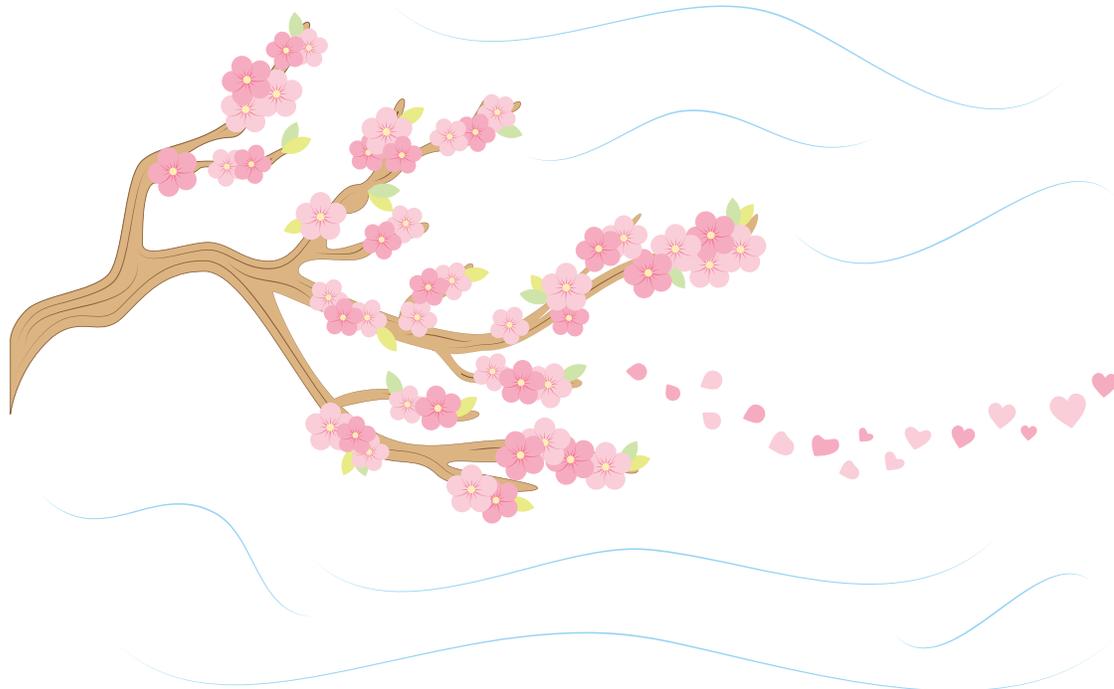
*I tried to keep my thoughts
on Love and not be distracted
by anything else.*

affirmed that I wasn't alone because God, divine Love, was with me. Even though it would have been nice to have my mom there, I knew that Love being there really was enough. It was healing.

The pain began to subside. Even before it was totally gone, I knew the healing had taken place because I felt totally peaceful. I joined my host family for desert and forgot all about the pain. By the time we were finished, I realized it was completely gone.

Throughout this trip, I'd been struggling pretty consistently with a sense of

loneliness and with feeling disconnected from love. But through this healing and other insights I had, I realized that Love was there and that was enough. I'd been waiting around expecting love to come to me in certain ways, and when it didn't, I equated that to my being unloved. But really, I had always been embraced in Love. As soon as I changed my perspective, all I saw was love being expressed, and I even found companionship. This trip taught me that I was loved then, and forever will be. ●



LISA ANDREWS—STAFF

Originally published in the June 5, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Into—and out of—the woods

By EMMA SCHAEFER

It was a week before my high school's performance of *Into the Woods*. There was a lot of talk among my fellow cast members about how people usually get run down and sick before performances. I didn't want to let this frighten me, but I was a bit worried. I was playing Cinderella, and we were not double casted, which meant there were no backup actors in the event that someone was unable to perform. Even though I wasn't sick, the thought and pressure of "I can't get sick right now" loomed over me like a dark cloud.

Then, four nights before the first performance, I woke up in the middle of the night and felt my throat scrape as I swallowed. Although it was difficult, I quickly shut out the thought of "What's gonna happen if I can't perform?" Instead of worrying, I thought about what I'd learned in the Christian Science Sunday School.

In Sunday School we'd been talking about the beginning of the book of Genesis and how there are two contradictory creation stories. We discussed the differences—how in the first story, in Genesis, chapter one, God makes man in His image and likeness and establishes everything in His creation as "very good," while in the second story man is made out of the dust of the ground. The first story explains the facts of spiritual creation,

while the second is the mistaken view of creation—a belief that everything is material and a mixture of good and evil.

As I lay there in bed, I thought about these two stories and how my spiritual identity is my true identity, created in God's image and likeness. The belief in a sore throat and the fear that I would get even sicker were second-creation-story thinking, and therefore untrue. As I trusted that no suggestion could trick me into believing I was material instead of spiritual, I started to feel better.

I woke up the next morning feeling completely well and so grateful for this quick healing. As the first performance approached, I held to the idea that I was going to accept only spiritual facts about my health—not second-creation-story suggestions.

Though I was feeling fine, the suggestions did keep coming. I kept remembering that in the past I'd get a sore throat and then for a week or so I'd have other symptoms. Instead of giving in to these thoughts, I battled them by sticking with the truth of my spiritual identity. In the past, I'd prayed for myself when I'd been dealing with a cold, but this was the first time I felt I was actually praying from the right standpoint. Instead of treating the sickness as something real that I had to make go away, this time I



I quickly shut out the thought of "What's gonna happen if I can't perform?"

started with the fact of my God-created spiritual perfection, and I rejoiced to witness the shift in my thinking and its effective outcome.

The performances were so fun, and I was able to support my fellow cast members, some of whom were dealing with cold symptoms. Everyone performed wonderfully.

After our last performance, one mom came up to me and asked me how

I'd been able to stay so healthy. I shared a little bit about how I'd kept my thoughts uplifted—focused on God.

This healing showed me that in a world where thoughts and suggestions of illness come to us so frequently, knowing the truth of our spiritual identity really is powerful. I'm grateful to God and Christian Science for this healing, and I now feel more confident to go deeper "into the woods" of my *spiritual* adventure. ●

Originally published in the June 19, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

A God-directed role

By NOAH FREDRICKSON

"Hey, guess what? You're Prince Charming."

Now that sounds like a line any guy would want to hear, right? Nope. That was actually the last thing I wanted to hear on that particular morning.

I'm an actor. I have been one since the seventh grade when I took a Shakespeare class just to try it out. Ever since, I've taken every possible opportunity to become better at acting.

Two years ago, I spent my third summer in a musical theater program at a camp for Christian Scientists. That year we were performing *Cinderella*, and I was one of the oldest guys in the program. However, I didn't want the lead role of Prince Charming because I felt my friend, who was a more experienced actor, should get the role. Plus, I wanted the funny role of the father. When the parts were assigned and I heard my counselor say, "Hey, guess what? You're

Prince Charming," I was terrified. I didn't know how to play this character. I had never dated a girl before. So I had no idea how to play someone in love.

I didn't know what to do. It felt like a mistake. I didn't think I deserved the role, but I knew no one would believe me. Even worse, I was told over and over that this would be one of the hardest roles I would perform in high school. I almost wanted to leave because I was scared I would mess up my lines or the dances.

My mom was one of the Christian Science practitioners at camp that session, and when we talked about how afraid I was, she shared the idea that this role was an opportunity to see what God was doing. In other words, since God is cause and we are God's effect, then every quality I needed to express in the show came from God. Acknowledging that would help take the burden of a perfect performance off me and instead allow

me to experience what God was expressing in me—qualities such as love, art, joy, and freedom.

I started to learn and grow. I became more open to the role and started to overcome my fear. I relied on God to point me in the right direction in each scene and each moment by listening for His guidance. I hung on to the idea of God being the one and only director. This allowed me to go through my days thinking more spiritually about the upcoming show.

My participation in the show changed from being all about fear to being all about love. As it says in the Bible, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth

out fear” (I John 4:18). I completely let go of fear and was able to do the dances and run my lines confidently. The love I felt for God and from God spilled over into my acting, and I was even able to play the part of someone “in love.” At the end of the show, many people came up to me saying how impressed they were by my performance.

To me, this experience was proof of what it says in the Bible: “For he [God] performeth the thing that is appointed for me” (Job 23:14). ●

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Originally published in the June 19, 2017, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

*I will sing of your might;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in
the morning.
For you have been a fortress for me
and a refuge in the day of my distress.
O my strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my fortress,
the God who shows me steadfast love.*

— Psalms 59:16, 17
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