



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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The time for thinkers has come.

—Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. vii

A Collection for Teens: January–June 2021

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We look forward to hearing from you!

When my boss asked me to lie

Name Withheld

IS THIS REALLY WHO you want to be? That was the question echoing through my head when my boss asked me to do something dishonest. And I knew the answer: No. But I felt stuck.

I work in a warehouse that receives and stores expensive items valued well into the thousands of dollars, and we have a responsibility to be careful as we're handling these goods.

Recently, a new employee—who was still learning the ropes—was opening one of the most expensive types of items we receive and accidentally cut too far into the packaging, causing severe damage.

My manager was also out in the warehouse and saw what happened. He said that because it was such an expensive piece, we should rough it up some more to make it appear as though it was shipping damage.

As part of my job, I have to email clients to let them know if anything arrives damaged. Having to send an email about the item after my manager had further ruined it so we wouldn't have to take the blame made my skin crawl.

I was raised to be moral and to think for myself, and as a Christian Scientist, I've also always appreciated the idea that God is Principle. To me, Principle means rules, order, honesty, and discipline, so to feel close to God and guided by God to do what's right, I want to express those qualities always. But in this case, I felt like I hadn't been able to because of my boss's actions.

I called my dad during my lunch break, crying and feeling so confused and unsure of what to do. As we talked through the situation, Mary Baker Eddy's poem, "Feed my sheep," came to thought, and the last verse is what stood out to me:

So, when day grows dark and cold,
Tear or triumph harms,
Lead Thy lambkins to the fold,

Take them in Thine arms;
Feed the hungry, heal the heart,
Till the morning's beam;
White as wool, ere they depart,
Shepherd, wash them clean.

(*Poems*, p. 14)

I realized that sending the email had made me feel dirty. But I kept praying throughout the day, trusting that God would wash me clean and guide me to whatever I needed to do to help make things right.

Later that afternoon, I was getting a ride home from the owner of the company, and it felt right to ask him about what had happened. In the course of the conversation, he told me that because of the expense to our warehouse, it was easier just to have the original company send a replacement item.

Now my head was spinning! I know the owner and his family as moral and ethical and incredibly hardworking. But it was hard not to see them in a different light now. That night, as I struggled to figure out what to do, I prayed to see them correctly—as the expression of divine Principle, just as I am. I knew that seeing them this way could help bring out more of who they really are as honest and ethical, and that this could help rectify any bad decisions that had been made.

The next morning, it felt like the right thing to tell my manager that I wasn't willing to ever send



BETH GRIFFIN — STAFF

a dishonest email again. He said he would respect my wishes. Later, the owner let me know that he and my manager had talked and that he understood how I felt. I appreciated that, and I continued to pray and recognize that everyone is the expression of divine Principle.

Later, as the owner was leaving for the day, he came out to say goodbye and also mentioned that we were taking responsibility for the damaged item. They were doing the right thing! I've never smiled so widely at work. The joy I felt about

standing up for what was honest, even though it felt incredibly scary, was immense.

This experience reminded me of the story of Moses in the Bible, and the courage he expressed in facing the much bigger problem of a tyrant king and the assignment to lead the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. As Moses demonstrated, although running away from difficult things might seem easier or less scary, making the right decision always has the power and might of God backing every step. ●

Originally published in the January 11, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

Healed of mono

Gracie Sampson

I WAS SO EXCITED to spend the second half of my junior year at a school on the beautiful coast of Maine. But three days after my arrival, I found myself dealing with a fever and sore throat, which prevented me from participating in activities. This was one of the few times I'd been away from my parents among people who didn't know anything about Christian Science, and I felt very alone.

I knew it was time to turn to God for help, but while I did pray the way I'd learned in Christian Science Sunday School, it felt difficult to think clearly and stick to my prayers, because

I was able to feel God's presence, which dissolved my fear.

everyone around me was so afraid of getting sick. I was in touch with my parents by phone, and they contacted a Christian Science practitioner to pray for me as well. However, when I was still experiencing symptoms after a couple of days, my school required me to get tested at a local clinic.

Leading up to the tests, I was praying to calm my fear. This passage from the Bible helped: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). After praying with these ideas, I was able to feel God's presence, which dissolved my fear. I felt calm during the visit to the doctor, and by the next day, the symptoms were nearly gone, and I was able to go back to my classes.

Unfortunately, the tests came back positive for mononucleosis, and I was told that I couldn't participate in all the activities I wanted to, and also that I should expect to feel symptoms for six to eight weeks. After being somewhat frustrated with the school, I had another change in thought when I began focusing on being grateful rather than feeling resentful. I realized that I could be grateful for my ongoing freedom from any physical symptoms, in spite of the diagnosis, and that I could feel more kindness toward the nurses, who I knew were only doing what they thought was best for me and for the other students.

Each day over the next week, I read the weekly Bible Lesson (found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*) and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I also continued to pray both on my own and with my parents and the practitioner. Mentally, I had to consistently counteract others' expectations that I would feel sick for a certain amount of time, and this idea

This healing gave me a lot more confidence in my ability to pray for myself.

helped me do that: “That mortal mind claims to govern every organ of the mortal body, we have overwhelming proof. But this so-called mind is a myth, and must by its own consent yield to Truth. It would wield the sceptre of a monarch, but it is powerless” (*Science and Health*, pp. 151–52). I realized that only God, good, has power over me—and nothing else does.

The following week I was scheduled to go on a five-day, rigorous cross-country ski trip, and the nurses at my school were worried that I wouldn't be able to carry my pack or pull my sled. But I was eventually allowed to go on the trip, and I proved my freedom on the trail when I carried my backpack and the heaviest sled up the largest hill and when I led and broke trail one day. I completed these challenges with joy and was totally free of weakness or discomfort. That was the end of the issue, and when we returned, I was grateful to find that even the fears of those around me had faded away.

This healing proved to me the power of God's presence. It also gave me a lot more confidence in Christian Science and my ability to pray for myself. I realized that even though I didn't have any Christian Scientists with me, I really wasn't alone. God, divine Love, was there the whole time. And now I know that I also won't be alone no matter what challenge I face in the future. ●

Originally published in the February 1, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

How I've been praying during COVID-19

Gavin Kirn

WHEN I FIRST HEARD about the outbreak of the coronavirus, I didn't think much of it. A few weeks later, we were unexpectedly getting a week off from school, and at first, I was happy. It felt like another vacation. However, I quickly became disappointed, and even scared, as I saw my school and the rest of the country getting shut down. Like lots of people throughout the world, I went from living my normal life to being in lockdown almost instantly and without warning.

I felt lonely, confused, and fearful about the

future. Would my father's business have to close permanently because it might be shut down for too long? Would life ever go back to normal?

It was hard to look outside and see empty streets that were once full of people. To comfort myself, I began thinking about some of the things I'd learned in the Christian Science Sunday School. I remembered something Jesus said: “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). And I also thought about Bible passages that encourage us to trust God, like this one:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart” (Proverbs 3:5, New King James Version). To me, trusting God means letting God take care of me. God is Love, so God really does take care of us in every situation, and as we recognize divine Love’s care, fears begin to fade.

I prayed not only for myself but also for my dad’s business and for the rest of the country. I knew from other healings I’ve had that prayer is

I felt lonely, confused, and fearful about the future.

always helpful, because it shows you that God’s goodness is present and powerful, no matter what things look like on the surface. I felt more comforted as I prayed, and also less afraid.

As my trust in God grew, it was easier for me to recognize signs of progress in my community, including my father’s business reopening. But even though I’m grateful for the good things that have happened, I’m not done praying yet. I like reading the chapter “Fruitage” in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy to get inspiration for my prayers, because “Fruitage”



is full of people’s stories about how they were healed just by reading *Science and Health*. Some of these people were in desperate or very challenging circumstances, but all of them still found healing. Their experiences remind me that some situations take persistence, but God is always there to help us, to lead us forward, and to heal us. ●

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Healed of depression

Stephanie Summerlin

MOST DAYS DURING MY sophomore and junior years of high school I didn’t want to go to school, didn’t feel like engaging with friends, and was uncommunicative with my family. It seemed as though all was dark, and I felt fearful about almost everything. I was struggling with depression.

My parents tried their best to help me. My mother talked with me about passages from the Bible and from *Science and Health with Key to the*

Scriptures by Mary Baker Eddy. I’d grown up reading both of these books, and they had healed me in the past. I was also attending Christian Science Sunday School and would feel comforted as I listened to the teacher and other students talk about God and many inspiring Bible stories.

And yet, as quickly as the comfort would come, it would disappear. It felt as though I could never quite outrun the fearful and downward-



spiraling thoughts. I even contemplated suicide, thinking I would finally find peace.

Just before junior year, the mental and emotional struggle became more intense, and I found I couldn't sleep. My mom encouraged me to call a Christian Science practitioner for healing, but I was unresponsive, thinking a practitioner's prayers would be of no use. It seemed like no one—not my parents, my teachers, or my friends—knew how to help me.

It was then that a neighbor stepped in. This dear lady, who also happened to be a teacher in our Sunday School, very lovingly offered to talk with me whenever I needed support. I'm embarrassed to say that there were times when I woke her up in the middle of the night. Many evenings we would sit on her porch swing, and she would share powerful assurances of God's love for me.

Ever so slowly, I became aware that I wasn't just passively listening to these ideas anymore, but

I was beginning to understand that I could reject the dark thoughts and replace them with pure thoughts from God.

was asking more questions about God and thinking more deeply about what was real. I began to recognize that the times I found the most peace were when I was pondering the good and loving nature of God and what that meant for me.

I began to read and study the Bible and *Science and Health* regularly on my own. And little by little, I found that rather than needing my parents or neighbor in the middle of the night, I could rely on these two books to lift me out of whatever darkness I was facing. One night, as I was reading the Bible, the thought came that I wanted to devote my life to serving God and to eventually become a practitioner. It was like I'd finally begun to see the big picture of the mental struggles I'd been working through as a quest to understand God.

I realized I'd been burdened by a feeling that I had to figure everything out on my own. But when I read Christ Jesus' words "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30), I realized that I really couldn't do anything on my own, but could rely on God. From that moment forward, I felt a deep desire to acknowledge God and to turn to Him for guidance. And baby step by baby step, I did this.

Though I still sometimes struggled, I was beginning to understand that I could reject the dark thoughts—one thought at a time—and replace them with pure thoughts from God. This passage from *Science and Health* explains what I was learning to do: "Stand porter at the door of thought. Admitting only such conclusions as you wish realized in bodily results, you will control yourself harmoniously" (p. 392). I was talking back to—and rejecting—the evil thoughts that for so long had kept me down, and finding courage, confidence, and conviction as I allowed in only what God, good, was telling me.

At school, I was invited to be part of the yearbook staff, and instead of turning it down, I accepted. This activity led to even more activities and greater feelings of confidence and lightness of heart. By the end of my junior year, the emotional struggles and darkness had disappeared completely, and the following year I was elected senior class president. Through several months, I had been focused on keeping my thoughts filled with the light of God, and I believe this is what my classmates saw in me, and what propelled my progress.

For this permanent healing and so many others, I am deeply grateful. ●

Originally published in the March 1, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

Can prayer stop a bully?

Heidi Kleinsmith Salter

OH NO. THERE IT was again. As my friends and I left the cafeteria, the familiar name-calling started up behind us. The next thing we knew, we were being forcefully pushed out of the way by the group of girls who'd been bullying us all year. As we stumbled, they laughed and continued down the hall.

At the time, we were in eighth grade, and the adults in our school didn't seem to be aware of the well-timed taunts and shoves by this group of girls. And rather than telling on them, my friends and I just sort of put up with it.

Our parents, Sunday School teachers, and youth pastors assured us that it was OK to report these incidents, and I know if we'd been scared rather than just frustrated, they would have insisted on our reporting the problem and even gone with us to talk to school authorities. But my friends and I were way more annoyed, so what the adults in our lives really encouraged us to do was pray. The subject came up one day at lunch, and despite some initial eye-rolling, my friends and I agreed that prayer probably was the best solution.

In my prayer, I found this passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy especially helpful: "At all times and under all circumstances, overcome evil with good. Know thyself, and God will supply the wisdom and the occasion for a victory over evil. Clad in the panoply of Love, human hatred cannot reach you" (p. 571).

I reasoned that even when I see what looks like evil—anger, hatred, unkindness—I can perceive the presence of their opposites by understanding not only God but also His creation, which encompasses all of us, as completely good. This was my prayer—to see the genuine goodness in these girls rather than the ugly, hurtful stuff on the surface that seemed to be hiding that good.

I also considered Christ Jesus' words "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good

to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). Rather than retaliating with our own bullying behavior, my friends and I, through our prayers, were responding with the healing love Jesus taught.

I realized, too, that one important aspect of that loving was to remove the "bully" label I'd assigned to these girls and to recognize that they were included in God's good creation just as my friends and I were. The "victory over evil" wouldn't be a victory for one group or another, but a victory for good, which would benefit us all. And we all could be safe from having any part in hatred.

One day I overheard one of these girls talking with her friend about going to church. I have to admit that my first thought was, *How can you go to church and still be so mean?* But my second thought was that she must have some understanding of God, and therefore, of good. I started to move past the "us versus them" feeling and to know that it was natural for everyone to want good and to be good. Who wouldn't want peace, kindness, and happiness?

I was starting to feel more peaceful at school. Still, it wasn't long before one of my friends was once again pushed down hard in the hallway. I dropped my books in a nearby classroom and went



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to help her. Our other friends encouraged us to go to the principal's office, and they came with us.

There, we explained what had happened. Despite the unsettling scene in the hallway just moments before, the whole situation felt calm and under control. My friends and I were confident and articulate, and the principal was kind and understanding. I saw this as a result of our collective prayers.

When I returned to the classroom to collect my books, they were nowhere to be found, and I had the feeling another student had taken them. I was upset, but it wasn't the time to stop praying. I knew there had been progress that day, and I needed to continue to pray and bear witness to the real identities of these girls until there was complete healing.

The next day, one of the girls who had bullied us confessed to having taken my books, and

she apologized. I thanked her, but added that she needed to return them to me, which she then did. And that was it. While these girls had been called to the office many times before—for incidents with other students, too—the changes to their behavior this time were permanent. The bullying stopped. There were no further incidents and no more drama. It was just over.

In a situation like this, it might seem naive to think that prayer could stop a group of bullies, but that's exactly what happened. The power of good prevailed, not only for my friends and me but also for the other group of girls, and even for our school. I love thinking about the potential this suggests: If the prayers of a small group of eighth graders could peacefully settle a conflict, what wider healing effect could come from the unified prayers of all individuals who love good? ●

Originally published in the March 15, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

**What we most need is the prayer
of fervent desire for growth in grace,
expressed in patience, meekness, love,
and good deeds.**

—Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health
with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 4

When I felt depressed during lockdown

Olivia Scott

WHEN STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS IN our city first began, and there seemed to be no end in sight, my mental health took a turn for the worse. Unable to see friends and family, I became more and more unhappy and felt increasingly worried about the pandemic.

All the things that used to make me happy were now out of reach. Even something as simple as a trip to the grocery store was difficult. I spent most of my days indoors, hardly going out to exercise or even to feel the sun.

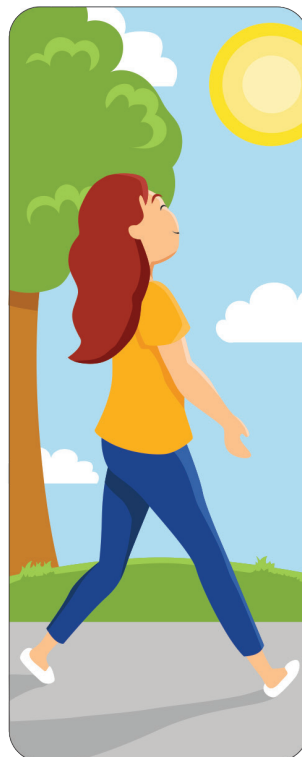
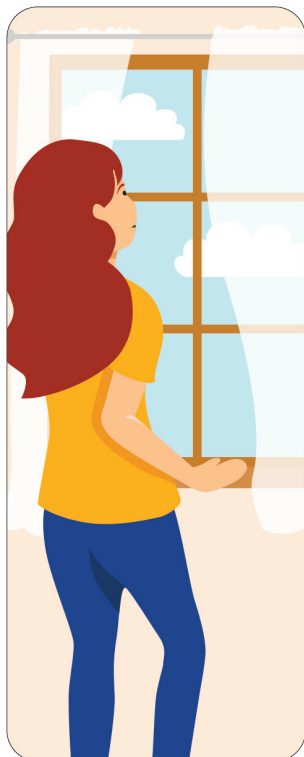
Family members encouraged me to try getting out of the house and to find new activities to keep me busy and in good spirits. But I felt unmotivated to do anything but the required schoolwork and spent most of my day sleeping.

It wasn't until my mom sat me down to talk about what was going on that I realized how I was letting these circumstances control me and my mental well-being. But still, I did feel unhappy, and I complained to her that nothing would change until I could once again do the things that brought me joy.

She was quiet for a moment before asking me, "Where does everything good come from?"

Having attended a Christian Science Sunday School since I was little, it was easy for me to reply, "God." I'd learned that God is good and the only creator, so the source of everything good must be God.

Then she asked, "So then, where does our happiness come from?"



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I could see that this answer was the same: from God.

With this in mind, she reasoned that if our happiness truly comes from God, how could my joy be taken away by the current circumstances? Since God is permanent, my happiness has to be, too. Since God is always present, happiness must always be present.

She also explained that relying on anything other than God to bring me happiness could never result in lasting joy, since—as I’d already experienced during lockdown—none of these other

ing this helped me reason this way: If happiness truly is spiritual, then it can’t be influenced by circumstances or anything else. Being joyful is our birthright. God never stops supplying us with everything we need and never takes good away from us. So if God hadn’t stopped supplying me with joy, how could I be feeling unhappy? I noticed that almost immediately after I finished reading the article and praying with the ideas I’d read, all the fearful and depressing thoughts were gone.

It was an instantaneous healing! But I continued to pray with these ideas and shared them with friends and family who were struggling with some of the same feelings I’d had. I even brought my newfound insights to a Zoom call, reminding everyone on the call of their true source of joy, God.

I am so grateful for this healing and the freedom it has given me—enabling me to remain joyful no matter what. In the months since this realization, I’ve faced more challenges, each of which seemed like another threat to my joy. But I was able to overcome these obstacles as well by knowing that my happiness is spiritual and remains untouched. I will forever be grateful for this wonderful healing. •

If God hadn’t stopped supplying me with joy, how could I be feeling unhappy?

“sources” of happiness are permanent or secure. My mom encouraged me to spend some time praying with these ideas and to read some Christian Science articles on this topic.

The very first article I read started off with this statement from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: “Happiness is spiritual, born of Truth and Love” (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 57). Read-

Originally published in the March 29, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

What intelligence really looks like

Fenna Corry

I WAS IN THE last semester of my senior year in college, taking a final exam for a math course. The class was for my major, so I was required to do well in it. But I’d been struggling all semester.

I’d been praying about the class the way I’d learned to in the Christian Science Sunday School—trying to understand more about God as the one, infinite, all-intelligent Mind and about myself as the expression of that supreme intel-

ligence. Well, I was about to see the fruition of those prayers in a very unusual way.

All the students were in one room, taking the exam on the honor system, while the professor was in his office. The exam consisted of just a few problems. But each had several parts, and it was important to tackle them all. One of the problems stumped me completely.

After struggling with it for a bit, I walked to

the professor's office to ask for some clarification.

"Draw a picture," he told me.

I was confused and tried to restate my question two more times before he asked, "Do you know the story of Naaman?"

Now I was even more confused. What did the story of Naaman in the Bible have to do with my question about a math problem?

He asked me yet again, so I briefly recounted Naaman's story, explaining that he was a commander of the army of Syria who was afflicted with leprosy. Naaman's wife had a young maid who suggested that Naaman visit the prophet Elisha for healing. Naaman did, but when Elisha told him to wash in the river Jordan, he was insulted, and thought there were nicer, cleaner rivers to wash in, rivers that fit his status better. So at first, he didn't do it. Naaman's servant urged him to listen to Elisha, which he eventually did—and was indeed healed (see II Kings 5:1–14).

I hadn't even gotten through the whole story when the light dawned: I realized that the professor was asking me to humbly be obedient to his suggestion, whether or not it made sense to me.

I walked back to my desk, drew a picture, and was able to understand how to approach the problem.

Now if I had been attending a religious school, this might not have seemed so strange. But I was at what was considered the most liberal university in the state, and it was highly unusual for this type of discussion to come up in a math class! How did the professor know I would even be receptive to this biblical prompt?

Maybe he knew, maybe he didn't. To me, the more significant lesson was the importance of listening. You might call it listening *spiritually*—with spiritual discernment. Not relying on our own sense of

things—even our best sense of things—but relying on Mind to show us what we *really* need to know.

So often we think about intelligence as relating to how much we know or are able to figure out on our own. But that exchange with my professor taught me that seeing ourselves as the expression of divine intelligence is actually about what God knows, what God is showing us. In this instance, the story of Naaman helped me see that I could follow the professor's directions, even if initially I couldn't figure out what they meant. And as I humbly listened to that insight, the path forward became clear.

I ended up doing well on the exam and passing the class. What has stayed with me, though, is the insight that real intelligence is a spiritual quality. And the more we listen to God, the more intelligence we'll find ourselves expressing in everything we do. ●



BETH GRIFFIN—STAFF

Originally published in the April 12, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

What comes next?

John Biggs

GRADUATION WAS JUST AROUND the corner, and I was feeling the pressure to figure out what I was going to do next.

Or rather, I was *aware* of the pressure to figure out what I was doing next. But was I really *feeling* it? Actually, not really. I'd been learning a lot about the importance of putting first things first, and I'd discovered that other people's expectations of me were not on my list of priorities.

Let me explain. The previous year, during a study abroad trip, I'd had an experience that left me deeply and forever convinced of God's perfect love for me (see John Biggs, "An always present love," *The Christian Science Journal*, September 2010). One of the many wonderful effects of that experience was a conviction that I didn't need to do something to deserve God's love. And this complete freedom and peace in the sense of God's love being right here, right now, helped me realize that my real priority was to devote time to knowing God better and to serving others as a way of honoring God and His love for me and all.

I didn't always do a perfect job of either. But I found that honoring God's presence and love each day in what I did and how I did it just didn't leave time for things that detracted from feeling loved by God and from truly loving others—things like the pressure to have a certain plan or timing for events in my life.

Well, graduation was getting closer, and while I had a few ideas for things I wanted to do further down the road, I still didn't know what my next step was going to be. So I prayed. What I mean is, I considered what it really meant to be in the presence of divine Love. And when I did, I came to the graceful conclusion that since Love, God, was indeed here and loving me perfectly, I didn't have to wait around to experience God's goodness at some point in the future; I must already have everything I need right at hand. This was

obviously a very different sense of things than what those around me were seeing about my life. But I'd learned that this spiritual perspective was actually the most accurate—and reliable—one. So I trusted it.

In this case, my prayers moved me to see what I had literally right at hand, which happened to be a copy of *The Christian Science Monitor*. I flipped through it and landed on an article about a wolf-dog sanctuary in New Hampshire. Right then, I felt a flash of sweet love for that sanctuary and decided to give them a call to see if there was anything I could do for them. Long story short, a few days after I graduated, they flew me out, and I got to spend three wonderful weeks helping to care for these amazing animals and their environment. The steps after that, such as working at an outdoor education center and helping my family begin to build a new home, all came together clearly and easily, without any forcing on my part.

And that was the crucial piece: not to force the "next." Because I didn't have to. None of us do. We do have to go forward, but that inevitably happens because of what God is doing for us and because of our ability to follow God's leadings.

The Bible records God as saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jer-



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emiah 31:3, New King James Version). So, since divine Love, the God of all, really does love all of us perfectly, our future must already be cared for. And while each step may not immediately feel easy

or clear, if we prioritize knowing, trusting, and following God's love, we can rest assured that we'll find our own perfectly tailored way forward—without stress or pressure. ●

Originally published in the April 26, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

Gaming addiction—gone!

Ainsley Gordon

THE TEACHER WAS TALKING, but what was I doing? I had my computer sitting open in front of me during English class and was trying to level up in my favorite game. I couldn't help playing; I was addicted.

At first it seemed fun. But soon my teachers caught on, and I started getting in trouble. That's when I realized something had to change.

From the time I was a little kid in the Christian Science Sunday School, I've learned I can

While it felt like I needed to game, I could actually challenge that feeling because I am spiritual—so I can't be affected by any impulses that are based in materialism or self-gratification.

always ask God for help with anything; I've also learned how to pray so that I get answers and find healing. But at first, the thought of praying about this addiction felt like a joke. It seemed so silly to pray about gaming.

As I thought about it more, though, I remembered Jesus' promise "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). I realized that what I was really praying about was freedom. Even though I felt like I enjoyed gaming,

when I reflected on it a little more, I got this picture in my head of myself as trapped. Like no matter what I tried to do, I couldn't break this habit. I thought about what the opposite of that would be, and I realized it was the freedom to experience the fact that because God is the only real power, gaming couldn't have any power over me.

I loved this idea of finding freedom, so I decided to look up what Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of Christian Science, says on the subject. One idea I really liked was, "Denial of the claims of matter is a great step towards the joys of Spirit, towards human freedom and the final triumph over the body" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 242). This passage helped me understand that while it felt like I needed to game, I could actually deny, or challenge, that feeling because I am spiritual—I can't be affected by any impulses, thoughts, or "claims" that are based in materialism or self-gratification. I also realized that challenging these impulses actually had a payoff: I would find more joy in loving God and feeling strong and free than I ever could when I was gaming.

I found another passage that helped me: "Ages pass, but this leaven of Truth is ever at work. It must destroy the entire mass of error, and so be eternally glorified in man's spiritual freedom" (*Science and Health*, p. 118). I knew the truth was that God did not make me with a need to be gaming constantly. And I was relieved to realize



that Truth’s power, not my own willpower, would destroy this destructive desire so I could feel my spiritual freedom.

As I prayed more and more about freedom, I got a deeper understanding that gaming didn’t need to have—and actually couldn’t have—any power over me. As this realization dawned, I felt the stress of having to earn the best score lift off my chest. It was a huge relief!

Although gaming seemed fun when I was doing it, it turned out to be short-term fun that

ended in negative consequences. The freedom I’ve found, though, has brought me more consistent happiness—happiness that isn’t controlled by a game.

Since this healing, I haven’t felt the need to game either in class or on my own time. I’m finding more time to do constructive things, and I feel a lot less stress. Now I know that understanding the truth about God and how He made all of us is the highest “level” I can ever achieve, and this has brought me so much peace and freedom. ●

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**God’s being is infinity, freedom,
harmony, and boundless bliss.**

—Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health
with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 481

Finding “my people” through prayer

Name Withheld

I FELT FRIENDLESS AND ALONE. It was the summer before my junior year in high school, and as September approached, I didn’t know whom I was going to sit with at lunch, talk to between classes, or call my friends.

Throughout my first two years of high school, I’d struggled to make solid and lasting friendships. I was friendly with many of my classmates but didn’t really connect with them or have contact with them outside of school. And several times when I had become good friends with other girls, the friendships ended up falling away because of our differing interests. During my sophomore year, one friend told me in the nicest way that I wasn’t “fun enough.” She wanted to go to parties, and she also knew that drinking wasn’t something I wanted to do. So she found other friends to hang out with.

I wanted a close-knit group of friends with whom I could be myself. I wanted to feel loved and not rejected.

I’d learned in Christian Science Sunday School that God is Love. To me this was a reminder that I was meant to feel loved, not lonely. So I made a decision to turn to prayer to find healing. I’ve always relied on prayer to find solutions, and I knew that by learning more about God and my relation to Love, I could heal any problem.

A family friend told us about an article in the *Sentinel* called “You are dearly loved” (Laura B. Haddock, September 1, 2013), that had helped her as a teen. It changed my life. I found comfort in its message that we are each always loved because God loves us. One thought that especially helped me was, “Christian Science has proved in countless instances that it is perfectly possible not only to look to God for the love we need but find it. God really does have infinite love for us.” It reassured me that I was never out of God’s care. Whenever I felt lost or unloved, I could know that



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God was loving me right at that moment and that I could experience God’s love in tangible ways in my life. I was also reassured by the author’s explanation that we can “insist upon [that love] until it improves . . . all our friendships” and that this understanding will wipe away “any feeling that we are unloved, unlovely, deserted, or alone.”

Soon, the ideas I’d been praying with felt solid in my thought—real to me. I genuinely began to feel God’s love.

Then, out of the blue, a girl in my grade texted and asked me to hang out. Within a few weeks, she’d introduced me to her friend group, and I’d found my people. They all played sports, didn’t drink, and cared a lot about school. I felt loved and appreciated.

When school started, it turned out that we were even placed in the same homeroom. They had asked the year before to be together, but I was placed there by what appeared to be chance. But I knew it was more proof that these friends were an expression of God’s love for me.

While it seemed like these new friendships had come out of nowhere, I knew that the love they represented had actually always been there because God is its source. I’d just needed to turn away from the lie that I was alone and unloved. I’d needed to actively claim that God’s love really is ever present. I now know I’ll never again have to worry about finding friends, because I can always insist and see that God’s love will forever be there.

Truly, we are all dearly loved and can prove it! ●

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Surviving lockdown— thanks to Sunday School

Avantika Dey

PANDEMIC LOCKDOWN CHANGED MY life completely. It changed my outlook on day-to-day activities. Every day seemed like a monotonous routine, and I began feeling tired and dull. I never thought that attending Christian Science Sunday School via teleconference would be the one thing that would get me through and help redeem my perspective.

Of course, going to Sunday School during lockdown was different. Every Saturday, students in my Sunday School would be sent a set of questions based on that week’s Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly*. We had never done this before, but I soon realized how helpful it was. These questions provided me with an opportunity to analyze the Lesson more thoroughly and apply it to my life. On Sundays, the questions were

the basis for our class discussion and gave us an opportunity to share our inspiration as well as ask any questions of our own.

As I answered the questions each week, I noticed how some things were changing for me. First, I began to feel more inspired. For example, one week the Bible Lesson included the story of Ruth, and students were asked, “Does the story in this week’s Lesson and its interpretation have any relevance in your life?” It made me think about Ruth in a new way, and from this story I learned that we can always trust God, divine Love, to lead us forward, no matter how difficult our circumstances. This was encouraging.

I also found that as my understanding of Christian Science was deepening, I was learning to pray more effectively. For instance, one Sunday



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during Sunday School, I felt a stinging sensation on my leg. When I checked, I saw a wasp sting on my leg and the wasp nearby on the bed. I didn't make any noise, as I didn't want to interrupt class, but I started to pray and remembered this passage from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "All of God's creatures, moving in the harmony

of Science, are harmless, useful, indestructible" (Mary Baker Eddy, p. 514).

I understood immediately that no animal or insect could harm me, because in reality we are all created to be in harmony with each other. I quietly got up from my bed, washed the stung area, then picked up the wasp with some paper and took it out to the balcony, where it eventually flew away. When Sunday School ended, I looked at my leg, and the sting mark was completely gone. I'd been healed.

This healing is just one of many blessings I've received from attending Sunday School during lockdown. I find that I'm now feeling more grateful, I'm getting more out of the Lesson, and I feel a sense of purpose in attending our class each week and sharing my ideas with other students. Sunday School has always meant a lot to me, but now, more than ever, I want to encourage everyone to go. It's a place where you can find answers to your fears about what's going on in the world and learn how to pray for yourself and the world in a way that really heals. ●

Originally published in the June 7, 2021, issue of the Christian Science Sentinel.

Finding my real Mother

Nancy Mullen

I WAS ABOUT TO move out and start my first real job after college. This step was the fulfillment of a dream, and I was really looking forward to it. Yet my heart felt heavy as I packed.

My mom and I had just had another bitter argument—the latest during several rocky years in our relationship. These disagreements usually started over something small and then escalated into angry criticism of each other. Now it looked as though I'd be leaving home on bad terms with my mom.

One stumbling block between us was my deepening faith in God. My mom had not grown up attending church and was inclined to view religion with skepticism. So, whenever I tried to share even a little about what I was learning in Christian Science, she would dismiss it impatiently. It hurt to have her belittle the thing that was most important to me.

I so longed for a loving, supportive relationship with my mom and was trying hard to do my part, but it never seemed to be enough. In anguish, I turned to God for help.

The thought that came to me next was totally unexpected: *You can't get blood from a turnip*. I'd heard this saying before but had never thought about what it meant. At that moment, though, I realized it was God's way of telling me that I was looking for love in the wrong place.

It might seem that love comes to us from other people. But I'd been learning in Christian Science that "God is love" (I John 4:8). That God, divine Love, is the only real source of love. God, who is our true Father and Mother, is always pouring forth unlimited love to each of us—and nothing can stand in the way of our receiving it. And we, as God's children, reflect the entire spectrum of Love's qualities, including purity, tenderness, grace, respect, selflessness, kindness, and affection.

Caring relationships with others are the expression of divine Love, not the source. When we get things backward and look to other people to

“It hurt to have my mom belittle the thing that was most important to me.

supply the love we long for, the result can be pretty frustrating—like trying to get blood from a turnip.

Once I saw this, I stopped expecting my mom to meet a need that only infinite Love could fill. Trusting that God was mothering us both, I no longer worried about whether my mom was meeting my expectations, or I hers. I knew that each of us would be satisfied by Love.

I continued packing with a lighter heart, and by the time I left a few days later, my mom and I were on better terms. This was a welcome relief, and I was grateful. But it wasn't the end of the story. What unfolded over the next few months far surpassed anything I could have imagined.

When I started my new job, I discovered that my supervisor was a woman fifteen years older than I. She took me under her wing and became



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a kind and supportive mentor as well as a close friend. A shining expression of God's mothering love, she taught me so much about humility, generosity, and nurturing care for others. And because she was a divorced mother with two children, I also learned a lot from her about the challenges of being a single parent. This gave me both a better understanding of my mom's point of view and more compassion for her.

Meanwhile, my mom was forming close friendships with two young women in her office, one of whom was a devoted Christian. What she learned about their lives gave her a fresh perspective on the hopes and challenges of women my age. She was even interested in hearing how her young Christian friend prayed about the things going on in her life. This gave my mom a new appreciation of the value of faith in God. Her attitude toward Christianity began to soften.

Over the next few years, my mom and I grew closer. With more respect for each other and less tendency to criticize, we communicated more often and expressed genuine affection. No longer trying to get something from the relationship, we got together regularly just to enjoy each other's company. Eventually we became the best of friends—and I finally had the loving, supportive relationship with my mom that I had yearned for.

God's mothering love really is there for all of us. It might be expressed in the form of a caring friend, a supportive teacher or coach, or a kind church member. But whatever our need, we can trust that it will be met if we start by looking for love in the right place—in God, our real Mother. ●

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Boston, MA 02115 USA

Letters to the editor:

sentinel@cspcs.com

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