



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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I have chosen the way of Truth.

—Psalms 119:30

A Collection for Teens: July–December 2021

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We look forward to hearing from you!

Searching for direction?

Fenna Corry

I HAD WHAT I thought was a good idea. I wanted to work on a Master’s degree, so I started attending classes at a local branch of our state university. Everything about this plan made sense, or so I thought. But after only a few classes, I began to wonder if this might not have been the best idea after all.

Where do you turn when you don’t know what to do? Maybe to a parent or a friend? Someone who knows more than you do? I knew I needed some advice or guidance, so I decided to have a chat with the head of the department where I was studying. I poured out my story and my concerns, wanting him to tell me about my options and my future. He listened thoughtfully, but instead of offering advice, he asked if I knew the hymn “Lead kindly light.”

This was surprising for a couple of reasons. First, I didn’t know that he was religious, and he didn’t know that I was. And second, I wasn’t asking for a hymn; I was asking him for his wisdom.

I admitted I wasn’t familiar with the hymn, so he shared the words with me. I’d never sung it in church, but later I discovered that it is in the *Christian Science Hymnal*—and it’s now become one of my favorites. The first verse says:

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.
(John Henry Newman, No. 169)

Well, that’s when I got it. I didn’t need advice from another person, no matter how intelligent or well-meaning they were. The best direction I could get was from God, the all-knowing, all-wise Mind. This direction would be precise and loving—exactly what I needed.

Here’s something else that the hymn helped



HAYLEY BALL — STAFF

me understand. So many times when we don't see the path forward, we want to get one big, all-encompassing answer. We want to see everything from start to finish and know how it's all going to

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turn out. But that hymn reassured me that one step at a time would be enough. God wasn't going to lead me forward for a step or two and then abandon me. Mind would guide me every step of the way.

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After praying about it and really listening to God with an open heart, I felt led to abandon that program. And I was peaceful about the decision, which I've discovered is a good indication that I'm following God's direction rather than my own sense of things.

But that's not the end of the story. It actually wasn't until several *decades* later that I returned to working on a Master's degree, and it was in an entirely different field. But it was a perfect fit, with meaningful classes. And even though my path was hardly traditional, it was God-directed.

I learned from this experience that letting God lead us may not always take us where we expect to go, but because God is good, it will always lead us somewhere good. We can trust that. ●

“I started running faster and faster”

Steve Creighton

IN HIGH SCHOOL, I ran a lot of laps around the track. For me running was—and still is—a proving ground for Christian Science. I have experienced many healings while running and competing.

During the spring of my senior year, my coaches decided to enter me in three events for the state qualifying meet: the 800-meter, the 1600-meter, and the 4-x-800-meter relay. While I'd had plenty of practice running the relay and the 1600, this meet would mark only my third or fourth time competing in the open 800-meter run.

I attended a high school for Christian Scientists, and one of the ways our coaches supported us was by drawing upon some of the foundational ideas of Christian Science as they related to running. For example, God is infinite, and we are

individual expressions of God. So our team would often talk about how it was actually natural for each of us to express qualities of God—such as infinite energy, endurance, poise, grace, strength, and so on—rather than to be limited by personal abilities. Our coaches made these ideas practical by sharing stories of former runners who overcame limitations through their understanding of God.

As it turned out, I was able to qualify for the state championship in all three races. The state meet was scheduled in such a way that the 1600-meter and the 800-meter races took place within an hour of each other. The 1600-meter race happened first, and I ran very well—well enough to win. But I didn't have a lot of time to recover before running the 800.



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Throughout my years of running, I have turned frequently to a passage from the Bible that says, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). No matter how many times I’ve prayed with it, this verse has always provided fresh inspiration, and that day was no different. Despite my limited rest between races, I knew that I could rely on God for my strength. This verse isn’t just a nice idea; it is a divine law that I had seen in operation many times.

Halfway through the 800-meter race, I found myself in first place. But with one lap to go, I quickly ran out of steam. During the next 250 meters, I went from first place to ninth, and I felt exhausted. There were certainly human reasons why I felt so tired, but I knew I had to turn my thoughts away from those and toward God, my infinite source. With a little more than 100 meters

to go, this message came to me loud and clear: “God didn’t bring you here to be mediocre.”

I’d always loved the idea that God, infinite good, must be expressed in excellence—limitlessness and freedom. And with that fresh inspiration, I started running faster and faster. I wasn’t focused on beating any of the other runners; the front runners were 30 to 40 meters ahead. I just wanted to express God—and I knew that I could.

A few meters before the finish line, I passed the first-place runner and ended up winning the race. I got down on my knees, thanked God, and said, “What cannot God do?” (Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 135).

That meet was one of the clearest examples I’ve ever had that our strength really is infinite because our source is infinite. And each one of us, as the expression of God, can demonstrate excellence, perfection, strength, poise, and persistence. We can’t help it; it’s who we truly are in every endeavor. ●

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Mind’s infinite ideas run and disport themselves. In humility they climb the heights of holiness.

—Mary Baker Eddy,
Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, p. 514

How forgiveness helped my family

Name Withheld

LIKE MANY TEENAGE SIBLINGS, my sister and I fought. We loved each other, but there was definitely a lot of bickering. Still, it caught me by surprise when one time, out of nowhere, she threatened me. I was shocked because this was so uncharacteristic of her, and shaken because of what she'd done. So, the next day I decided to pretend to do the same to her.

I had no intention of harming her. I just wanted to get back at her—maybe scare her enough so she'd never threaten me again. Only this time, my father saw what was happening, and he didn't realize I was just fooling around. Neither did

I was so inspired by Jesus' example that I saw that I could forgive, too.

my sister, who ran away from me and hid under her bed. My dad was upset and sent me to my room, telling me that if I stayed there, he wouldn't mention to my mother what had happened.

After having a long cry over what felt like a great injustice, I turned to my Bible, as I had done so many times before. I opened to the scene of the crucifixion, in which Jesus asks God to forgive his crucifiers, "for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). While I knew my injustice paled in comparison to the crucifixion, I'd learned in Christian Science Sunday School that each Bible story and passage has relevance to our lives when we pray with it and understand its deeper meaning. So, that's what I did.

As I prayed with this idea, I was so inspired by Jesus' example that I saw that I could forgive, too. And I felt compassion for my father, because he hadn't understood what was going on. Through



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my prayers, I grasped to some degree the goodness and innocence of each of us as God's children. I felt a shift of thought away from feelings of hurt and injustice and toward love and forgiveness. And with that, I let go of the whole ordeal and felt so at peace that I fell asleep.

A little while later, I was awakened by a knocking on my door. When I emerged from my room, my mom was waiting for me at the end of the hallway. My heart sank; my dad had told her what had happened after all.

Even worse, when she said something to me firmly, I must have responded in a way that my dad didn't like, because suddenly he raised his hand to hit me. The few seconds that followed felt like minutes. Time slowed down, and in that moment I felt God, divine Love, stir my thoughts. I found myself thinking, "Father, forgive him, for he knows not what he does."

What followed was amazing. It felt like I'd been struck by a pillow, even though the force of the blow was enough to send me to the floor a couple of feet from where I had been standing. I was so in awe of how protected I had been that I was only half aware of my dad telling me to say, "Yes, sir." Though I promptly did.

After that, things calmed down a bit, and I was able to tell him my side of the story. (I had tried earlier, but apparently he hadn't really heard me.) When I explained what my sister had originally done to me, my father said that she would have to be punished. I heard my sister shriek with terror from her bedroom. But before he could do any-

thing, I told my father I forgave her. He then told my sister that since I'd forgiven her, there was no need for her to be punished.

Not only did I have this complete feeling of forgiveness, but when I looked in the mirror not long afterward, there was no mark on my cheek, even though I had been slapped forcefully. I'd been completely protected.

After this experience, I was never again intimidated by my father, in spite of his short temper. And things in our family went back to normal—between my parents and me, and between my

sister and me. Also, my dad never struck either of us again.

This healing taught me just how powerful genuine forgiveness is. When my dad raised his hand to hit me, I didn't pray to protect myself, nor did I know the outcome would be protection. I simply felt love for my father, and that love naturally impelled me to ask God for help in forgiving him. The ripple effect of these prayers left a big impression on me, and I've been able to trust more in the power of Love to harmonize my relationships, including those with my family, ever since. ●

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Conquering the waves of fear

Grace Blackwell

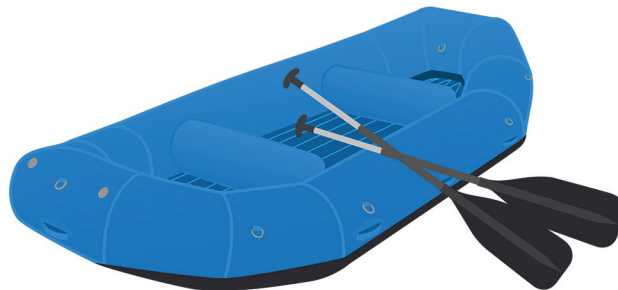
LIKE MANY TEENAGE SIBLINGS, my sister and I fought. We loved each other, but there was definitely a lot of bickering. Still, it caught me by surprise when one time, out of nowhere, she threatened me. I was shocked because this was so uncharacteristic of her, and shaken because of what she'd done. So, the next day I decided to pretend to do the same to her.

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The power to push back

Hilary Harper-Wilcoxon

PUSH BACK. I WAS alone in my car when I heard the words.

Push back. Could they have been an answer to prayer? After all, I had been praying. But I didn't really know what those words meant, so I asked God to help me understand why they were important.

I found myself thinking about when I lived in New York City and rode some very crowded subways. If you let the other riders push you when you're standing in those moving subway trains, you might fall over. You have to stand your ground and gently push back—enough so that you won't be pushed around.

But what was I supposed to push back against now?

Then I remembered a healing I'd had a few years earlier. As usual, I had started my day by

reading the weekly Bible Lesson found in the *Christian Science Quarterly* and praying for myself. Later, when I was walking to my office, I suddenly had intense pain in my stomach. It was overwhelming and scary. It was so severe I had to stop walking. As I stood there, wondering what was happening, this phrase came to mind: "aggressive mental suggestion."

My first reaction was that this sure didn't feel like something that was mental. It felt like something was physically very wrong. But I knew those words hadn't come from nowhere. I'd read them before in Mary Baker Eddy's writings (*Manual of The Mother Church*, p. 42). And now they had come in answer to my prayer for guidance and relief—from God, divine Mind. So, mentally, I pushed back against the pain and fear, taking this phrase one word at a time:

Aggressive. Yes, these feelings were very aggressive, and felt overwhelming. But in considering this word, I suddenly understood that aggressiveness was a bullying tactic. How else would it get my attention?

Mental. Even though this problem sure felt like it was physical, I knew from studying Christian Science that everything we deal with is actually thought. To say it in a very simple way, in every situation we're either responding to a good thought from God, or we're needing to push back against a bad thought that's trying to challenge God's goodness and power. So, recognizing that this pain was actually mental—a negative thought that could be challenged—gave me back some choices, some control. While I might not appear to be able to fix a problem with my body, I did know how to change my thought. And that word *mental* told me that was all I needed to do.

It was with the third word, *suggestion*, that it all clicked. I thought, "If this is really only a suggestion, then I don't have to listen to it, even though it is



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aggressively telling me something is very wrong with my body.”

I reached out to God with all my strength and faith and trust and said, “I know You didn’t cause this pain, so let’s see it go. Now. After all, suggestions aren’t final.” And the pain did go. Just like that, I was able to straighten up and walk. The pain never returned, and I learned an important lesson about pushing back against aggressive mental suggestions.

So what about the thought to push back that I had in the car? After reflecting on my earlier healing, I realized I’d been accepting all sorts of aggressive mental suggestions about myself and others that morning. Suggestions that seemed very real until I got the message from God to challenge them. So, I pushed back on them with all the authority of Truth, with full trust in good, and realized that they were in fact just that: suggestions. And I watched as, one by one, they dissolved

in the light of the good I knew was actually true—and present—instead.

One of the things I love about being a Christian Scientist is the strength Christian Science has given me to challenge every thought that isn’t right or good. To know that I don’t have to accept these suggestions as real or authoritative—that none of us do. Whether a suggestion comes disguised as self-hatred or discouragement or even sickness, as we push back on anything that doesn’t originate in God, it will “flee from you” (James 4:7). Just like the pain did for me. Just like those negative thoughts in the car that morning.

Like I learned riding the subway, we need to both stand our ground and push back against anything that would push us around—and we have the steadiness and strength from God to do so. And when we do, we’ll find that the outcome is that thing we all want: healing. ●

Originally published in the August 30, 2021, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

God really was with me

Fredrick Higgins

I WAS THE KID who sometimes caused trouble in the Christian Science Sunday School I attended—like once when I brought a frog in my pocket. There were also times when I struggled to pay attention, even though I really did try to listen. Then I had a dramatic experience that showed me that what I was learning in Sunday School was practical. It saved my life!

During a vacation in the mountains in Canada with my sister when I was in my early teens, I was fooling around, jumping from one rock to another on the edge of an overlook, when suddenly the rocks under me gave way, and I found myself falling straight down toward the river

below. Desperately, I scabbled at the side of the mountain as it rushed by, looking for anything solid to grab on to. But all I came away with was handfuls of sand. It seemed like there was nothing to stop my fall.

Then I realized that there was only one thing bigger than this horrifying situation. It was God. And I knew then that there was help at hand—spiritual help.

In a flash, I remembered a story that my Sunday School teacher had told me about a soldier during World War II who fell off the back of a ship. The situation looked pretty hopeless, but as he prayed, he realized that God was everywhere and

was protecting him. He was rescued and lived to tell the story.

The story went through my mind in a split second. In that moment, I also felt God's presence and protection, and I knew God was with me every minute, everywhere. It's hard to describe, but instead of feeling helpless and alone, I felt God was watching over me, so I didn't need to be afraid.

Suddenly, a long root about the size of a handrail appeared, running right to left across the face of the mountain. My hands grabbed on to it, and below me, my feet felt unexpectedly secure on a thin rock ledge. I was able to follow the root and ledge to stable ground, where some small trees were growing. Below me, the rock I had been jumping on up on the overlook plunged the rest of the way down the mountain (about forty feet), smashing into pieces.

I was able to make my way back to the parking lot, feeling as though I had just witnessed a miracle. But I knew from Sunday School that it hadn't been a miracle; it had been proof of God's saving presence and power.

I couldn't help but believe in God after that. And I've experienced God's care in many other situations since then, including being protected from a serious motorcycle accident.

I'm so grateful for the understanding I gained in Sunday School that God really is "a very present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1). •

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BETH GRIFFIN — STAFF

Why I gave my boyfriend *Science and Health*

Julia Schuck



BETH GRIFFIN — STAFF

I'VE ALWAYS FELT UNCOMFORTABLE sharing Christian Science. My religious beliefs feel very personal to me because I'm only just beginning to understand them. Also, I've never wanted people to think I was trying to convert them.

In the past, when I'd shared Christian Science with a boyfriend in order to explain how I approach life and difficult situations, either he was unsupportive, or he got combative, arguing that the Bible and God weren't real. This made me feel even less motivated to share my beliefs and explain them to those I felt close to.

Then there were the uncomfortable questions. When friends had been curious about Christian Science, they'd asked me questions like "What happens if you . . . ?" followed by an extreme situation in which most people would rely on medical treatment. I'd always felt embarrassed because I didn't know what to say. And when I did respond, I never felt satisfied with my answers.

When a relationship started to develop with my current boyfriend, I knew that religion was going to come up at some point. It was important to me to have a boyfriend who supported my decision to rely on Christian Science in tough situations, regardless of his religious affiliation. So I began to pray about how to tell him about Christian Science.

As I did, it came to me that sharing a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy was a good idea. I knew I might not know how to answer his questions about Christian Science. I also recognized that when I have questions about aspects of Christian Science that I don't understand, I turn to *Science and Health*. Why wouldn't that also help others who had similar questions?

But I still felt unsure about giving him the book. I didn't want him to think I was trying to convert him or that I was expecting him to read a book he didn't want to read. I wanted to be sure that sharing *Science and Health* really was the answer.

As I continued to pray, I remembered something Mrs. Eddy wrote in *Science and Health* that helped me: "Love for God and man is the true incentive in both healing and teaching. Love inspires, illumines, designates, and leads the way. Right motives give pinions to thought, and strength and freedom to speech and action" (p. 454).

I realized that because the motive behind giving my boyfriend a copy of *Science and Health* was a loving one, it couldn't be misconstrued as something negative. All I wanted was to give my boyfriend the opportunity to understand my beliefs so he could better support me, which was a loving thing. And I realized that in being respectful about how I approached this, I was also supporting my boyfriend and his beliefs.

One night, after we finished watching a movie, it seemed like it might be a good time to give him the book. The problem was, when I get really nervous, all words leave my head. I was stumbling in my attempts to say the right thing and to segue into the conversation in a casual way. I ended up saying something awkward like, "By the way, I have something for you."

As I gave him the book, I could tell he was taken aback and nervous. I did my best to explain that I had no intention of converting him but simply wanted him to understand that sometimes he might have questions about my approach to challenges, because it's different from the way he approaches things. I told him I wouldn't always be able to answer his questions, because I'm still

learning, but he could look for answers in the book, just as I have.

“I’m not expecting you to read it,” I told him. “I’m giving this to you because I care about where this relationship is going.”

He was still a little skeptical, but when he realized I didn’t expect a big reaction, he willingly took the copy of *Science and Health*. I could also tell he realized that this was important to me, so he was supportive.

Since then, I feel that we understand each other better, and I’ve felt supported by him when

I’ve needed to turn to prayer to address something in my life.

This experience taught me that prayer, combined with loving motives, always leads to practical answers and opens the way to a harmonious experience of sharing. I also learned that there’s no one way to share Christian Science, because every relationship is different. But that’s OK because everyone hears God—not just me. Everyone has the capacity to hear God and understand why we’re sharing this book that means so much to us. ●

Originally published in the September 27, 2021, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

How can I stop feeling like a nobody?

Jan Keeler Vincent

Q: HOW CAN I stop feeling like a nobody?

A: I FELT LIKE I was a nobody at my job. When I shared an idea, it seemed like no one listened—like my thoughts and opinions didn’t matter. Like no one cared.

I was the youngest one there, and to me everyone else seemed smarter, funnier, more experienced. I felt they were all better than I was, and I imagined they were even laughing at me behind my back.

I’d been studying Christian Science for a couple of years—after a friend had introduced me to it when I was in high school—and I’d learned that any situation or thought that made me feel bad about myself was one I could challenge with prayer. I wasn’t praying to become as good as everyone else, but I thought that by turning to the books that had been helping me—the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy’s writings—I could get a more spiritual view of my circumstances. And at the very least, I might feel a little better if I did.

One passage from Mrs. Eddy’s writings really helped me. She wrote, “Each individual must fill

his own niche in time and eternity” (*Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 70). This “niche” is a special position or role in which we can enjoy and share our unique interests and talents. And I was encouraged by that because I had learned that Mrs. Eddy spoke from experience.

During her life, she’d often been dismissed or ignored, not only because she was a woman, divorced, and sometimes homeless but also because of her ideas. As she read the Bible, she began to see all of reality differently. Mrs. Eddy discovered that what’s real and true about each of us is that we aren’t just human beings, with limitations and flaws. We are God’s own likeness or expression—the likeness of all that is good.

Mrs. Eddy eventually wrote a now-famous book called *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*; healed hundreds of people; taught Christian healing; and founded a worldwide church, several magazines, and an international daily newspaper. She learned and proved that everyone is a “somebody” in God’s, divine Love’s, universe. We are

Love’s own ideas! Every single one of us has something special to give. It is our unique reflection of spiritual qualities that identifies us and establishes our unchangeable worth.

Believe it or not, thinking about math was also a huge help. Let’s say someone said to the number four, “You are insignificant. You don’t matter. Let’s just throw you out of the entire system.”

“God is the source of everyone’s goodness, so there was nothing to feel jealous about or intimidated by.”

What would happen? The whole system would collapse without the number four. That’s how essential each number is.

In the same way, each of God’s ideas is needed to make His entire creation complete, whole. God’s entire universe would collapse without you or me. That’s how needed each of us is.

This must have been why Jesus respected the worth of each person, including those who were oppressed, belittled, rejected, and abused. His understanding of everyone as God’s daughter or son helped those who thought they were nobody see themselves differently. Jesus even made special efforts to reach out to and enjoy meals with

Samaritans, who were often treated disrespectfully and thought of as nobodies.

Seeing myself as a valued, distinct, spiritual idea existing in Love—instead of as a mortal limited by age, personality, and human circumstances—was a turning point for me. I began to understand that divine Love, my Father-Mother, knows me and everyone, delights in me and everyone, and approves of me and everyone. I am made of Love’s qualities, which are meant to be shared.

I realized that though my coworkers were brilliant, I could bring love, kindness, and joy to our office, which were also needed. And I began to see that the brilliance I appreciated in my coworkers came from God, too. God is the source of everyone’s goodness, so there was nothing to feel jealous about or intimidated by. From the morning I realized this, I no longer felt that I needed to compete with anyone. And my coworkers began to consider my ideas and appreciate me, too. We were able to work together with mutual respect.

This experience convinced me that being a “somebody” isn’t about having a special set of skills or being better than everyone else. Your worth, my worth, everyone’s worth, is already an established fact, because God made us to express all His wonderful qualities. And that’s why we are all somebodies—and can know it. ●

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BETH GRIFFIN — STAFF

Who I really am

Dana Dorman

I FELT LIKE I was on top of the world. It was the beginning of my senior year in high school, and I had great friendships, an amazing boyfriend who saw me for who I truly am, parents who loved me, and teachers at school who supported me.

But one day when looking in the mirror, I started noticing all my “flaws” and picking myself apart. I wished I looked like other girls.

For some reason, after that day I couldn’t get out of that mind-set. I wasn’t acting like myself. I focused more on my looks than my grades. I watched videos on how to make myself look better, and I overworked my body to try to match the standard of beauty I saw on social media.

My friends told me I was acting different. I was picking fights with my family and friends, and I didn’t want to be around my boyfriend, because I thought I wasn’t good enough. I started to compare myself to his ex-girlfriend. I cared

too much about what others thought about me. I felt lost.

One day, I was in a class at school, and I didn’t really care about being there. I knew I should’ve been doing my class work, but instead I had an idea to look in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I wasn’t exactly sure what I was looking for, but in the past when I’ve needed help, I’ve been able to turn to *Science and Health* and find answers.

I came across a helpful passage where the author writes, “The loss of man’s identity through the understanding which Science confers is impossible; and the notion of such a possibility is more absurd than to conclude that individual musical tones are lost in the origin of harmony” (p. 217).

This idea really stood out to me because I felt I had lost my identity and wasn’t acting or feeling



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like myself. But I could see from this passage that I couldn't lose my individuality because I reflect God, the source of each person's identity. This identity isn't a bunch of physical features; it's good qualities like joy, intelligence, and kindness that always make up what we are.

I thought back to when I was pushing away my boyfriend and arguing with my friends and family, and I realized that I was fighting with the people

The truth is that I was already good because I reflect God, who is only good.

who love me no matter what. In spite of how I was acting, they still knew who I really am. They would always see my true, spiritual identity as loving, thoughtful, respectful, hardworking, gracious, and so much more.

This was a big learning experience for me, because I'd been in a funk, not knowing what to do with myself. I had thought that in order to be OK, I needed to change. But the truth is, I was already good because I reflect God, who is only good, and God loves me.

This realization changed me. I was able to bring my grades back up; my connection with my boyfriend grew stronger; and I argued a lot less with my friends and family. I started seeing the good in my life—and in me. And today when I look in a mirror, I see that I'm already perfect. Not that I am physically "perfect," but that who I am spiritually can't help but express God's perfection.

I'm learning a little more each day about something else Mrs. Eddy wrote about identity in *Science and Health*: "Identity is the reflection of Spirit, the reflection in multifarious forms of the living Principle, Love" (p. 477). We are each God's reflection, and we are loved exactly as we are. ●

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If you're feeling homesick

Lusho Hambiliki

WHEN MY MUM YELLS someone's name, either they're in trouble or it's good news. On this Saturday morning, it was good news. I'd just been accepted into a boarding school for Christian Scientists in America. I was very excited, though I didn't know what to expect. Initially, I didn't think about what I was leaving behind and the things I was going to miss about my home in Zambia.

When I arrived in America, everything was totally different than I'd imagined. It was so hot and humid. The air felt so thick I could barely breathe. Also, when my mum and I got to campus, everyone was so friendly and welcoming. That was

the opposite of the way people had been at my old school, so it made me feel uncomfortable.

After two days, it was time for my mum to leave. *I'm ready to leave now, too*, I thought to myself. I missed my friends and family, and I couldn't believe I was really going to stay at this school—8,600 miles from home.

Three weeks into the school term was when it all really hit me. I felt so far from home. I didn't want to go to my classes that day. I was sobbing on my bed when a friend passing by my room asked what was wrong. When I told her why I was sad, she reminded me that home isn't a physical location or even where a certain person is.



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Her comments made me think of this statement about home from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy: “Home is the dearest spot on earth, and it should be the centre, though not the boundary, of the affections” (p. 58).

As I began to think about that idea, I realized that home isn’t a place you go to find love. That would be too limited. God is Love, so love is

Love is everywhere because God is everywhere. So I could find love anywhere I went, including in America and at my new school.

everywhere because God is everywhere. So I could find love anywhere I went, including America and

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my new school. This idea helped me overcome the fear that I couldn’t feel loved if I wasn’t in the country or building I call my physical home.

I realized that missing home had been causing me to push away people, leaving me miserable. But as I started to recognize that Love was with me, I discovered I could give love, too. I began to be more openhearted—to talk to more people and make friends. As I gave love, I felt loved, and the homesickness started to disappear.

God also helped me see the bigger picture about why I came to America in the first place. I started to feel grateful for all the opportunities I had at my new school, including a good education. This helped me stop focusing on the things I missed and instead pay attention to all God’s goodness that was surrounding me.

Even though I’d been really homesick, this spiritual perspective helped turn my thoughts around so quickly. I was really grateful for this, because I’ve discovered so much love at my new school, and the homesickness is gone. I’m glad I learned that prayer can help us see things in a new way no matter what we’re facing. ●

Saying grace

Jenny Sawyer

ON THANKSGIVING MORNING, MY cousin confronted our grandmother in the kitchen and told her she was going to hell.

Happy Thanksgiving, I thought—while he stood there, smug and holier-than-thou. I definitely thought some other things about my cousin and his super-religious family—and they were not exactly thoughts of gratitude that these relatives were going to be joining us for the day’s festivities.

Only one person seemed unperturbed by the confrontation: the person who was, apparently, going to hell. Our grandmother, who’d raised seven children and grandmothers 22, looked at my cousin with pure love. And though I don’t remember how she responded—or if she responded at all—I do remember one thought that penetrated my fog of anger: This was a woman who knew all about grace.

I didn't know about grace on that Thanksgiving—not really, anyway. And I wasn't interested in being merciful. I wanted my cousin to know he was wrong about our grandmother and her beliefs. Better yet, *why* he was wrong. Honestly? I thought I was smarter than he was, and I was sure I could out-argue him during our post-turkey-dinner Bible debate.

But it was an unsatisfying victory. I returned to college feeling like I'd let someone down. My grandmother, maybe, but also myself. I kept thinking about her demeanor that morning—the effortless mercy that wrapped my cousin in love and wouldn't let go.

Could I do the same? Could I redeem my Thanksgiving? Better yet, could I extend the blessing I'd received from my grandmother's example into the rest of my year?

Yes, I thought. I could. I had to. I've always thought of Thanksgiving as a day about giving—not just giving thanks but also sharing the bounty

Nothing compared to the power I felt when I was able to forgive and love.

of God's goodness with strangers and family alike. But I knew that year I'd come up short. I'd been charitable with everyone, except maybe the person who'd needed my kindness the most.

What saved me as I set out to redeem my Thanksgiving was a simple message that came as I wrestled with my feelings about my cousin: Grace, like every other good quality, has its source in God, not in us. The Bible puts it this way: "We love [God], because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). In other words, I didn't have to create mercy. I didn't have to muster up the necessary love and charity. I love because God loves everyone. I express grace because of the amazing grace I've already been given.

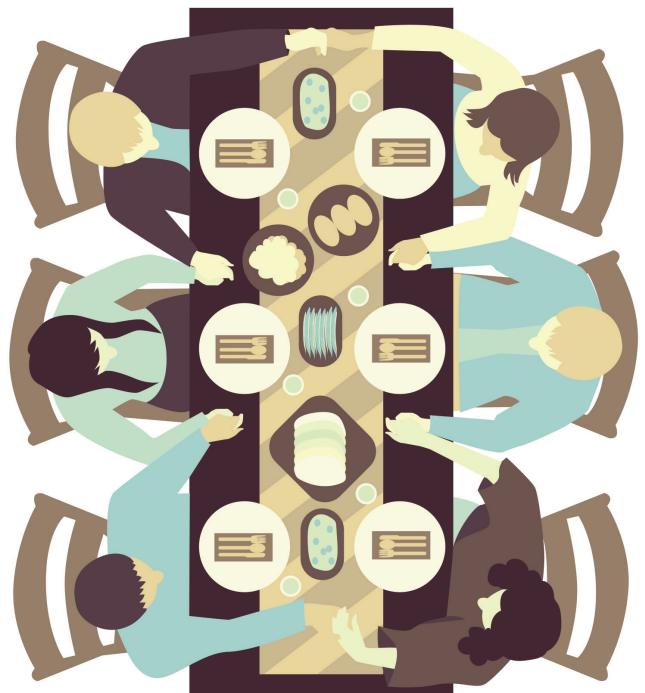
As I embraced grace more fully in my thoughts and actions over the next few months, I stopped caring about making my cousin see how wrong

he'd been. I was too busy continuing to celebrate Thanksgiving: the bounty of God's grace that renews and transforms every heart. I found I was being kinder to myself and more charitable to others.

And I discovered something I'd never known before. There was power in grace. I'd thought that being right—and making sure others knew it—was powerful. But nothing compared to the power I felt when I was able to forgive and love, when I was able to let go of my own strongly held opinions and embrace a divine perspective.

As it turned out, that Thanksgiving feeling lasted the whole year. I felt some sharp edges to my character being softened. I became less inclined to react and more inclined to be tender—to love. And I gained a better understanding of this statement by Mary Baker Eddy: "What we most need is the prayer of fervent desire for growth in grace, expressed in patience, meekness, love, and good deeds" (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 4).

That's a prayer that has marked my holidays, and every other day, since then. And I have my grandmother—and my cousin—to thank. ●



BETH GRIFFIN — STAFF

Originally published in the Month 00, 2021, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

How I got out of a toxic relationship

Kendall Tuchkova

HE WAS BRITISH, LIVING in Paris. I was an American living there, too. We met at the cafe where I was waitressing. He was funny, friendly, and easy to talk to, and he invited me to visit the aquarium where he worked. He seemed a bit of a flirt, so I was apprehensive but also intrigued; I'd never had a boyfriend before.

Then, less than three months into our relationship, I found out he was cheating on me. When I confronted him, he denied it. I believed him, and we stayed together. But the cycle continued. I'd find evidence of cheating and confront

I'd never been in love before, and I was afraid to lose him.

him. He'd deny it, tell me he loved me, and I'd believe him. I'd never been in love before, and I was afraid to lose him. I also naively thought I could help make him into the man I was sure he could be.

But after about three more months of this, I was an emotional wreck. I was also struggling to find a more permanent job and a steady place to live, so I decided to fly home while we worked things out.

After returning to the United States, I moved back in with my parents. I felt terribly lonely, depressed, and unloved. I really missed traveling, but the real cause of my unhappiness was this long-distance relationship that wasn't going well.

On the surface, things seemed fine. My boyfriend and I talked frequently. He told me he loved me and showered me with compliments about my intelligence, compassion, and kindness. But about two months after I'd moved home, one of our conversations led me to believe that he had moved in with the woman he'd denied cheating on me with. I asked him

if this was true. He said yes, but tried to convince me that it was out of necessity and didn't mean anything. I hung up the phone and burst into tears. My heart felt like it had been ripped to pieces, and I was so confused. How could this be love?

Later that day, my mom came into my room to ask me a question. I spoke to her sharply—something I didn't remember having ever done before. We'd always had a very respectful and loving relationship. After she walked out, I felt awful. I realized my attitude needed to change, but I wasn't sure what to do. I wanted to pray but was steeped in self-pity. It was like a darkness had overwhelmed my thoughts. That night, as I lay in bed, I silently and tearfully pleaded, "Please, God, help me."

Having attended a Christian Science Sunday School, I had been taught that God is good and "a very present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1). But I never expected the response that came that night. Immediately after my cry for help, my consciousness was filled with light. It was a light so pure and bright that it filled the room. The most astonishing thing about this light was that



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it was both intangible and tangible at the same time. It had no physical source, but I could feel it and see it. Its warmth embraced me, and I felt deeply and genuinely loved. This love was so fulfilling that all feelings of sadness, loneliness, and depression disintegrated. I knew that this love was really divine Love, another name for God. In that moment, I felt “the unspeakable peace which comes from an all-absorbing spiritual love,” as Mary Baker Eddy put it in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (p. 264).

I fell asleep and woke the next morning a new person. I was joyful! Not only did I sincerely apologize to my mom, but I also had the confidence to end things with my boyfriend without any regret or drama. In that moment of light, I’d realized that my identity was not based on my relationship with him; I was complete and whole, because that’s the

way God made me. I’d also realized that the love I was looking for didn’t include lying or cheating; it was spiritual, pure, and something I already possessed as God’s child.

When my former boyfriend continued to try to text or call me, I firmly asked him to stop, and he soon did. I also found a new job, moved to a new country, and made that transition with ease.

Before this healing, I’d always prayed when I’d needed help. But I’d never felt so clearly or tangibly that God was there for me. In what was one of my darkest hours, my simple cry for help was answered. And I have never forgotten what it felt like to be so aware of God’s presence and to feel so deeply His tender love for me. I know now that this relation to divine Love is each individual’s primary relationship, so we can never truly be unloved or alone. ●

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Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ...

I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—Romans 8:35, 38, 39

Scared to fly?

Luc Savoye

I LOVE TRAVELING. THE thrill of going to a new place, seeing new things, and meeting new people—I love every second of it.

In the summer of 2021, I was all set to go to Colorado, where I would be a staff member at a youth adventure camp for Christian Scientists. I was very excited, except for one thing: To get to Colorado, I had to get on an airplane . . . and planes aren't my cup of tea.

The plane ride began, and takeoff wasn't too bad. I watched some Monty Python comedy shows in an attempt to de-stress and forget that I was on a plane. But it wasn't long before we hit some turbulence, and I started to freak out. I clutched my

I clutched my armrest and pulled down the shade on my window so I wouldn't have to see the storm we were flying through.

armrest and pulled down the shade on my window so I wouldn't have to see the storm we were flying through.

Here's the part where you might expect me to say, "I instantly prayed and had a fantastic healing, and now everything is all right." Unfortunately, instead my first thought was "I'm gonna die." Looking back, I know that wasn't a helpful thought, but in the moment, my fear felt too intense to think differently.

I was actually shaking in my seat when I suddenly noticed that the gentleman in the aisle seat next to me was fast asleep. And I mean a deep sleep. Neck pillow, drooling, snoring. I was absolutely dumbfounded by this, but it also changed my perspective completely. If this man could be that calm when the plane felt to me like it was doing barrel rolls in the sky, then I could certainly take a hint from him and calm down. But how?

I realized I could pray. The reason prayer came to mind as a solution was that I was heading to this camp for Christian Scientists, and in my application for the camp, they'd asked me to share a healing I'd had. I'd used one of my healings from fifth or sixth grade, which had made me think about my lack of experience in healing since then. So in that moment in the air, I realized this was an opportunity to have another healing experience by praying. While I'd known others who had been healed through prayer, nothing is quite like having the experience yourself.

What came to me as I prayed was something I'd learned from attending Christian Science Sunday School: I could think about God and the different names for God inspired by the Bible, as well as related divine qualities—Love, Truth, kindness, comfort, and so on. Thinking about God and God's qualities can help you get through difficult situations by reminding you of the goodness and peace that are present right now, right where you are, even when it seems otherwise.

I thought of seven synonyms for God I'd learned in Sunday School. I couldn't remember all of them, but I did know that one of them is



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

Truth. Truth tells us what's true—like the fact that God is governing everyone and everything, on the ground and in the sky, all the time. Truth assured me that the plane would land and that everyone on board would be safe and sound. I felt comforted knowing that God was in control of the situation. My heart stopped racing; my goose bumps faded; and I felt calm and reassured, even though the plane continued to bump around. Once I felt this embracing comfort, I was able to enjoy the flight, because I knew I was safe.

About five minutes later, the captain's voice came over the intercom telling us that the turbulence was ending and we'd cleared the storm.

I opened my window shade to see the fields, greenery, and mountains below without a single dark cloud in sight. I was calm for the rest of the flight, and we landed safely.

I would certainly say that planes still aren't my cup of tea. But I'm grateful to have had the realization that, instead of giving in to fear while I'm in the air, I can trust God and use the time to enjoy the beauty of the sky or marvel at the cool engineering I'm sitting in!

This experience helped remove my doubts about healing and strengthen my faith, enabling me to become the Christian Scientist I am today. ●

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*I climb, with joy, the heights of Mind,
To soar o'er time and space;
I yet shall know as I am known
And see Thee face to face.
Till time and space and fear are naught
My quest shall never cease,
Thy presence ever goes with me
And Thou dost give me peace.*

—Violet Hay, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 136, © CSBD

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