



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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God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us.

—Psalms 67:1

A Collection for Teens: January–June 2023

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SENTINEL

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They took my phone, but I prayed

Reagan Kabuluku

ONE DAY AFTER SCHOOL, I went to the library to prepare for a test we had the next day. What I didn't realize was that there was some sort of curfew in our neighborhood.

I stayed at the library until it closed at 8:30 p.m. When I started walking home, I noticed that there were very few people out on the street. Everything was quiet.

Soon, three police officers came toward me. They stopped me and asked for my ID card, which I didn't have on me. I told them I was a student and that I was coming from the library. It was obvious that the officers were drunk.

Unfortunately, in my city, it's not uncommon to see police officers drunk while on duty. And very often, in a situation like the one I found myself in, the officers tend to extort everything the person has before letting them go. At this

Three police officers came toward me.

point, I became concerned about the phone I had with me, because I thought they might try to take it.

I started to pray as I'd learned to in Christian Science Sunday School. My prayer was to see these officers as they really are—to see them through God's eyes—no matter how they were acting. I tried to listen to God rather than focus on their disturbing behavior.

As the interrogation continued, the officers made it clear that they were looking for drug dealers. I wasn't one, so I stayed calm. They searched



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

me and asked me to take off my shoes. They took everything, including my phone.

At that moment, the last line of “the scientific statement of being” from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy came to mind: “Therefore man is not material; he is spiritual” (p. 468). I'd been praying to see these men as God created them rather than as defined by their actions, and this passage was exactly the idea I needed. I knew right away that these officers, being spiritual, could do nothing besides what God, Spirit, was causing them to do. I saw that they each expressed only infinite God, good.

Suddenly, one of the officers told the one holding my phone to give it back to me. Then he asked me to gather my things and start running. When it became clear that they were not following me, the whole situation turned into a fun activity, running barefoot from that place to our house, which was a few blocks away. Later, when I told my friends what had happened, they were all very surprised that the officers had given me back my phone.

This experience taught me that prayer can change the outcome of a scary situation when we see others as God created them—spiritual and completely good. ●

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I was able to play soccer again

Lincoln Benson

SOCCER IS A SANCTUARY for me. It's where I feel free, and it gives me a break from all of the stressful things in my life. I love soccer so much that even after my outdoor season is over, I still go to Sunday pickup games with friends and teammates. Last year, I played two to three times a week, either on my own time or in an organized game.

During one of the pickup games, I was involved in a play that caused me to shoot the ball at a strange angle and pull a groin muscle. At first, it didn't seem like a big deal, so I continued playing. In fact, I continued playing the rest of the month. But over time, the muscle started to hurt so much that I had to take a break. I really missed playing soccer, and I also felt behind on my training and fitness.

As I thought about what to do, I realized I could seek a spiritual solution. I attend a Christian Science Sunday School, where we learn to turn to

because God can't be injured. God is Spirit, and how could Spirit ever be hurt? The same goes for me, since I'm spiritual.

What a revelation: God can't be injured, and neither can I! These ideas made perfect sense, and I was able to start training and playing soccer again. The pain went away, and I was sure that if I hadn't turned to God and prayed, the recovery process would have taken much longer.

It felt so good to be back playing soccer. This experience taught me that God is with me every step of the way—on and off the field. ●

“What a revelation: God can't be injured, and neither can I! These ideas made perfect sense, and I was able to start training and playing soccer again.”

God when we're hurt or have a problem. This is because when we learn more about God and our relationship to Him, we're able to find comfort and healing through His love and care.

I started praying for myself, and I also called my grandma, who is a Christian Science practitioner, and asked for her help. She told me that as God's perfect reflection, I can't be injured,



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

Originally published in the January 30, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

A gift for my community

Christi Whitehead

I'M A CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST, but there aren't many branch Churches of Christ, Scientist, near where my family lives. So when I was thinking about a service project to help my community, the mobile Reading Room that my dad built came to mind.

A Christian Science Reading Room is a place open to the public that contains literature to help people learn more about or study Christian Science. I thought it would be wonderful to provide my community members access to the Bible, to *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy, and to other resources that are available through the church's publishing arm. These books and magazines have helped me in so many ways that I wanted everyone to be able to benefit from them and be healed by the ideas they contain, the way I have. Various churches in the area donated Christian Science literature, Bibles, and other resources for us to give away; we agreed not to sell anything.

My dad and brother felt the same way I did about bringing Christian Science to our neighbors, so they offered to go with me. We've found it helpful to pray before everything we do, so praying

I thought it would be wonderful to provide my community members access to the Bible and to *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy.

before we took the Reading Room out felt natural. I liked the idea that we were "the light of the world" as Jesus said (Matthew 5:14) and that we were being led by God.



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The first place we decided to take the Reading Room was an outdoor space called the National Mall, which is in Washington, DC, near the White House. We spent almost five hours there, and a lot of people walked by every hour. A mother and daughter from England stopped and said that the Christian Science church in their community had closed, and they didn't have access to a Reading Room, so they were glad to find us. Another person was grateful to see the Reading Room and to find out what resources were available.

On another day, when we took the Reading Room to West Virginia, we talked with a woman who asked us to pray with her for inspiration and guidance, as she was close to losing her home. In addition to praying with her, my dad found helpful and relatable articles from the Christian Science periodicals, which he gave to her to read. I handed out literature to other passersby and got to explain what Christian Science is, because some people who stopped to talk hadn't heard of it before. I liked to share the ideas that God is Love and that there are laws of God that govern us—and that since He is Love, all those spiritual laws, like health, safety, and harmony, are based in Love.

We went out many more times to a variety of local places. It wasn't always easy to find a place to

park, but my dad helped us understand that Love would provide whatever we needed. We found a place every time, even in some hard-to-park areas, and always ended up having great conversations with whomever we met, because Love was guiding everything that we were doing.

I was surprised by how positively the community responded to us. Even if they didn't stop, people would honk their horns and give us a thumbs-up to let us know they were happy we were there.

From this experience I learned that I don't need to be afraid to share Christian Science. I'm normally a quiet person, so sitting in a mobile Christian

Science Reading Room with hundreds of people walking by seemed scary, and I was worried that my answers wouldn't be good enough for those I talked to. But I found that when I let God lead the way in conversation, it wasn't hard. Even if I was nervous about my response, I could always see that the ideas were helping people and that God was speaking to them, just like He was speaking to me.

This experience has helped me feel more confident about explaining Christian Science and praying for the world. I love Christian Science and have benefited from it so much that I was really grateful to be able to share the gift of Christian Science with my community. ●

Originally published in the February 13, 2023, issue of the *Christian Science Sentinel*.

Who am I really?

Inge Schmidt

IT WAS MY FIRST year of college. I'd gone home for a holiday break, and now it was almost over. I adored college, and yet, the night before I left, I crawled in next to my mom, who was reading in bed, and cried because I didn't want to go back. It just didn't feel like home yet.

I didn't know it at the time, but that feeling was sparked by something deeper than a few months spent surrounded by unfamiliar people and places. I'd also found myself in new social

I was feeling uncomfortable in my own skin, literally and figuratively.

environments and was beginning to question why I believed what I did as a Christian Scientist. Drinking? Hookups? Who was I, and what did

I really think? In my quest to figure out what I believed and valued—rather than simply accepting what others had told me I should believe—I'd begun to experiment with different choices.

Most people would probably look at what I was doing and think it was pretty tame. Still, I didn't feel like myself. That feeling peaked one weekend night a few weeks after the break when a group of friends and I took the bus to attend a fraternity party at a nearby university. It felt like our first "real" night of college, and everyone was excited to go. But as soon as we arrived at the party, I panicked. I couldn't pretend any longer; it just wasn't my scene. I left, along with several friends, and went back to our campus feeling stupid and embarrassed. The next day, I woke up with a rash around my neck.

As a lifelong Christian Scientist, in the past I'd relied on prayer for healing. And I'd seen on many occasions that what appears to be a physical

problem is often related to a deeper spiritual hunger. When that need is met, the physical challenge typically dissipates. In this case, the issue seemed pretty obvious: I was feeling uncomfortable in my own skin, literally and figuratively.

For the first time since I'd arrived at college, I began to approach the question of "Who am I?" from a spiritual perspective. To me, this meant getting a better understanding of God and everything God made in order to learn who I really am and my individual place in God's creation.

A turning point in my prayers was the realization that I was created to express God in a unique way. There is no one else who can express the spiritual qualities that I do in exactly the same way that I express them.

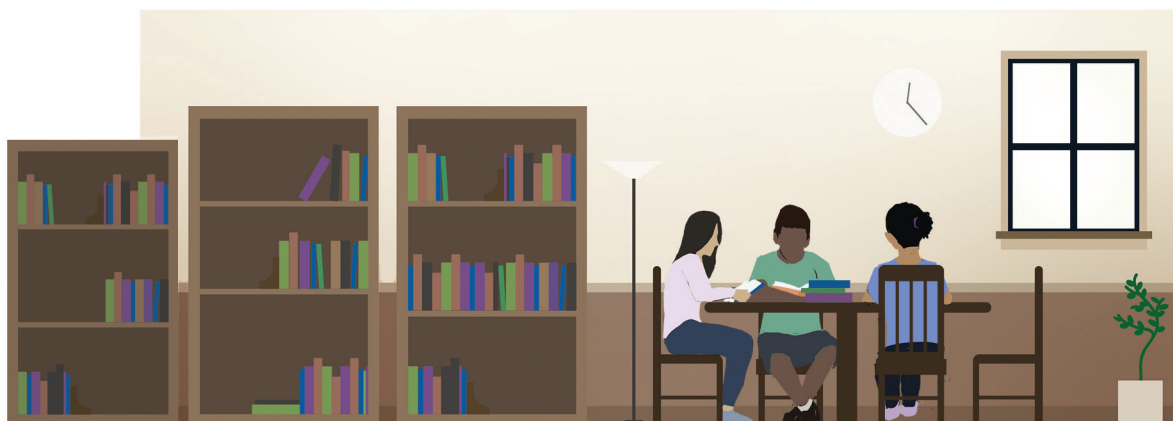
I also discovered that being a Christian Scientist—living my life in a way that honored God's goodness and valued my relationship to God, good, above all else—wasn't something I did because someone told me to. I did it because I loved God, and feeling close to God brought me joy. That didn't mean that I was holier or better than my friends; they were on their own journeys of spiritual growth, whether they realized it

or not. I could value the spiritual qualities they expressed without comparing or questioning my own worth.

Looking back, I can see what a pivotal moment that was for me. Not only did the rash on my neck clear up, but I found a self-confidence that I had never experienced before. After that, I was more acutely aware of God's "still small voice" (I Kings 19:12) directing my steps and giving me a sense of purpose in my day-to-day life. And I felt comfortable being true to myself and the values I'd discovered. They were important to me.

People even stopped asking why I wasn't drinking alcohol. I formed friendships that were meaningful and mutually supportive. We had the best time having fun together, regardless of whether they were drinking or not.

I can't say that I've never felt insecure again. All of us are at times faced with the pressure to conform, and that can sometimes be not so easy to resist. But as we cultivate the practice of looking to God to tell us who we are—for assurance that we are loved and irreplaceable—we find the confidence to be true to ourselves, and we discover the lasting joy of doing so. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

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My healing of a bad burn

Favour Odenyi

“FAVOUR,” MY MOM SAID, “please take the pot of boiling water off the stove and bring it into the dining room.”

As I carried the pot, I called for my sister to open the door for me. But when she didn’t come immediately, I gently placed the pot on the floor and reached for the door. I opened it without realizing how close the pot was, and as the door jostled the pot, I felt hot water splash onto my leg and ankle. The pain was shocking, and all I could think about in that moment was how bad my ankle would look and how long it would take to heal. I was also frustrated and upset with my sister.

When I looked at my ankle, I saw that my skin didn’t look or feel right. I told my mom what had happened, and she comforted me and helped me

I knew it wasn’t a bandage or time that had healed me; I was healed by keeping my thoughts aligned with God and His goodness.

by covering the burn with a bandage. Remembering all the healings our family has had in the past, we knew we could pray right away.

My mom reminded me of a Bible passage that says: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (I Corinthians 6:19, 20, New Revised Standard Version).

This Bible passage helped calm me down because it reminded me that since God made me, I could never really be harmed. I also realized I didn’t need to hold on to the blame I felt toward

my sister, because if I wanted to feel close to Love, God, that meant expressing love rather than blame.

I began praying with the idea that since I am the expression of God, good, I must be good—and so must my sister. My frustration with her started to decrease. The next thought that came to me helped me address the painful burn. I thought, I’m made in the image and likeness of God. Did God experience a terrible burn? Of course the answer was no because God is Spirit and all good. I saw that I couldn’t be harmed either; I’m spiritual, and since my oneness with God can’t be disturbed, I can’t suffer. I was so grateful for this helpful prayer, which began to shift my thoughts toward healing.

However, I started to feel impatient when the pain didn’t go away immediately and I wasn’t able to walk without limping. It was difficult for me to focus on my initial inspiration, fueling my impatience even more. Still, I did expect that I could be healed, so I decided to keep praying.

My next breakthrough happened one day when I’d been lying in bed listening to a few hymns from the *Christian Science Hymnal*. One line from “Feed My Sheep” by Mary Baker Eddy stood out to me: “I will listen for Thy voice,/Lest my footsteps



stray” (*Poems*, p. 14). Realizing that God’s presence really was all around me helped me to turn away from doubts about my progress and tune in to the truth, or what God was telling me. Listening to God changed my perspective on the healing not happening right away, which is what had made me impatient. I realized that patience isn’t about waiting for the pain to go away; it’s about hearing God’s voice and knowing that healing doesn’t come from me pushing for it to happen but through understanding God.

As I continued to pray with these ideas, the pain stopped. I was able to walk freely, and all the discomfort was gone. I knew it wasn’t a bandage or time that had healed me; I was healed by keeping my thoughts aligned with God and His goodness. Today, my ankle is fine, and you can’t even tell anything happened.

This experience taught me that receptivity and patience are catalysts for healing. It also gave me more trust in God and helped me understand that nothing can separate me or anyone else from God’s love. ●

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When I was doubting myself

Logan Cadey

THREE THINGS IN MY LIFE that are really important to me are being a good son, a good boyfriend, and a good baseball player. About a year ago, I felt I wasn’t living up to my own expectations in those three areas. After coming off a strong previous year, I was going through a really poor stretch in my baseball season. On top of that, I was struggling in my relationships and felt I couldn’t make anyone happy. Because of this, I didn’t feel like a good boyfriend or son. It seemed like I was always letting someone down.

Everything started to feel overwhelming and burdensome. My days lacked motivation and were

“My days lacked motivation and were full of both fatigue and confusion about who I was.”

full of both fatigue and confusion about who I was. These fundamental parts of my identity no longer made sense to me.

Because of how I was feeling, I stopped attending Christian Science Sunday School. I knew that it was a safe place and that people there loved and accepted me, but I was scared that their view of me had changed, since my view of myself had. I also knew that my feelings would most likely come up during Sunday School class, and because it’s hard for me to ask for support, it was easier to avoid going than to face a wave of emotion.

Despite my concerns, one Sunday I finally decided to go. While I was there, my Sunday School teacher—who has been a role model for me my entire life—asked if I was OK. I’m not sure if it was his familiar voice or his genuine care for me, but I immediately broke down into tears. I explained what I’d been feeling and how confused I was about myself and my future. After my teary-eyed explanation, he was quiet for a minute before asking a simple question: “Are you?”

While I was growing up, he’d asked me this same question every Sunday. The question is



really asking, “Are you a child of God?” Little Logan always knew that the answer was “Yes, I’m a child of God.”

That I’m a child of God is one of the most comforting facts that I’ve learned as a Christian Scientist. It’s very special to understand that God is my divine Parent and how that makes me His son. We think of kids as being who they are, at least in part, because of who their parents are. So, as God’s child, I must express all of God’s qualities, including goodness, love, and wholeness.

It’s easy to see ourselves in this pure way when we’re little kids but then to stray from that as we get older. But I’d learned that it’s important to remind ourselves of this spiritual identity even when we feel the furthest from it, because knowing who we really are takes off the pressure. Knowing that I am God’s child,

His perfect reflection, negates the feelings that said I wasn’t ever good enough in some aspects of my life.

So, when my teacher asked me if I was a child of God, I replied the way little Logan would have: “I am.”

I left Sunday School that day

feeling like I had a good foundation for how to pray about everything I’d been struggling with. As the summer progressed, I continued to pray with this idea of being God’s child, and I found I was starting to let go of feeling that my life was falling apart. I had so much childlike fun with my coworkers at the camp where I was working that I looked forward to each day and every laugh. Rather than focusing on where I wasn’t measuring up, I started to focus on gratitude for the good in my life—like my parents, my girlfriend, and baseball. I also stopped thinking of myself as being defined by my achievements or relationships and instead worked on deepening my understanding of my relationship with God.

That summer was the most fruitful summer I’ve ever experienced. Everything I was so worried about before I left got resolved, and my relationships are intact.

Most importantly, I now know so clearly that I’m as much of a child of God today as I was when I was that little kid answering my Sunday School teacher with “I am.” I know that God is guiding me as His forever child. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

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Feeling jealous?

Nancy Lavender Bryan

Q: HOW CAN I stop being jealous of my friends’ relationship?

A. When I was a sophomore in college, I met this really cool guy I’ll call Joe. He was smart and good-looking, with a quirky sense of humor. We had the same major and friends in common, so I thought we’d make a great couple. Unfortunately,

the same thought didn’t occur to Joe. He started dating a girl in my dorm I’ll call Katie. I wasn’t just disappointed—I was jealous! How could Joe prefer Katie to me? She was just a freshman. And an immature and silly one, I thought.

After feeling miserable for a while, I realized that my only way out of these feelings was going

to be through prayer. I'd grown up attending a Christian Science Sunday School, and I was learning how to pray for myself and that I could expect solutions to my problems.

One day, I reached out to God in prayer. This was the message I heard in my thoughts: "If you really care about Joe—if this isn't just all about you—you'll want him to have whatever makes him happy. Even if it's Katie."

That definitely wasn't the answer I wanted! But I knew it was the right answer because it came from God, and God is Love. God was telling me that the way to get rid of jealousy was to be unselfish enough to want the best for Joe and Katie. To me, it was a way of obeying the Golden Rule of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Wouldn't I want someone who cared about me to be happy for me if I were in a relationship? Of course! Even though it was hard, I had an opportunity to express love by doing the same for Joe and Katie.

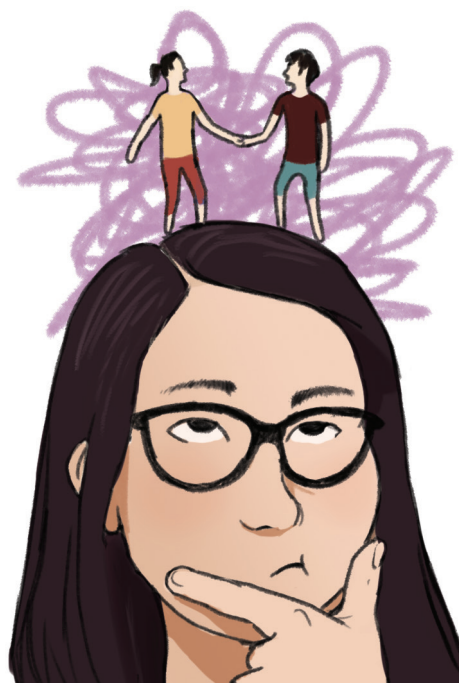
The Golden Rule also made me think about something that the Discoverer of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy, wrote in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*: "Jealousy is the grave of affection" (p. 68). That meant to me that you can't genuinely love someone and be jealous at the same time.

While love and jealousy may seem to go hand in hand, they're actually opposite emotions. Jealousy is a negative human emotion that has nothing

“I wasn't just disappointed—I was jealous! How could Joe prefer Katie to me?”

to do with God. It can even keep us from having healthy and long-lasting relationships. By contrast, real love comes from God, who is Love itself. When we feel this spiritually based love, we naturally want the best for the person we care about.

As I started to understand these spiritual facts, I knew I wanted to love unselfishly and stop being



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jealous, and I could even see how that was possible. Soon, I was able to let go of wanting Joe to be my boyfriend and to accept his relationship with Katie.

But that wasn't the end of the story. To be totally honest, even though I felt at peace with my answer from God, I still felt that they'd gotten what they wanted and that I was missing out. I imagined them eventually marrying and living happily ever after, while I was left alone. But that wasn't what happened—and what did happen surprised me.

Joe and Katie dated casually for a while, then broke up. I remained friends with Joe and, as I got to know him better, realized we were different enough that we wouldn't make a good couple. Friendship had been the right relationship for us all along. I also got to know Katie better and discovered how very likable she was. She became my friend, too. I loved the way God had surprised me. When I listened to God and let go of my jealous feelings, instead of losing something, I gained two good friends.

Sometimes it can be really hard seeing happy couples around, especially if you're feeling lonely. But not only does God help us feel less alone through His unchanging love for us, but He also provides us with companionship—sometimes in ways we don't expect. ●

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No more menstrual cramps

Mabel Matteson

I WAS GETTING READY to leave for a trip with my mom to visit a college when I started experiencing painful menstrual cramps. My period had started the day before, but normally I never get cramps, which is why I was so surprised by the pain. Because I've grown up going to Christian Science Sunday School, I'm usually pretty quick to pray about things that need resolution. But this time I was too focused on the discomfort to think about praying. My mom asked me what was wrong and then suggested I call a Christian Science practitioner to pray with me.

As the practitioner and I spoke on the phone, the pain eased up a lot. I'd been scared that the cramps would ruin my day and the trip, but these

I was too focused on the discomfort to think about praying.

fears went away as I listened to what she was saying. She shared a hymn for me to think about, which happens to be one of my favorites. It's Hymn 148 in the *Christian Science Hymnal* and begins, "In heavenly Love abiding,/No change my heart shall fear." Another line that I love says this: "My Shepherd is beside me,/And nothing can I lack" (Anna L. Waring).

I realized that I couldn't be lacking in health or wholeness, since God is always with me and caring

for me as omnipresent Love. I'd learned in Sunday School that our relation to divine Love means that God loves us and maintains us and that as the expression of Love we always embody God's qualities, like wholeness and joy.

I continued praying with this hymn as we left for our trip. I thought about each line of the hymn and how the ideas apply to me. During the drive, the pain returned, so I texted the practitioner again, and she provided more ideas for me to think about. One of my favorite ideas was that I'm a child of God, so I can never be separated from God, Love. And because I can't be separated from God, I can never be separated from harmony and spiritual perfection. As I was thinking about these ideas, I started to feel peaceful, and I ended up falling asleep.

When I woke up, the pain was completely gone, and I knew I had been healed. My mom and I had a wonderful trip, and I enjoyed visiting the college feeling completely like myself.

I'm so grateful that I haven't had to deal with menstrual cramps again. ●



AARON CRANFORD — STAFF

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Overcoming adversity

Natalia Darling

Originally published in Spanish

IT WAS TIME TO begin applying to high schools. During the last year of middle school, every student in the New York City public school system has to go through this process.

I had excellent grades, and I chose to apply to some competitive high schools, but my guidance counselor decided not to submit my application to any of those schools. In fact, he took it upon himself to submit an application to a local vocational high school. I didn't find this out until I learned that several students with much lower test scores than mine had been accepted into some of the schools I had wanted to attend. By then the deadline had passed for me to apply to any of my top schools.

When I asked the guidance counselor why he had done this, he said that little girls should never go far from where they belong. I was very petite, a person of color, and a first-generation

“It seemed that everyone expected so little of people who looked like me.

immigrant. Our family had left El Salvador for the United States when I was three or four. I thought the man's comment was misogynistic and racist. It seemed that everyone expected so little of people who looked like me.

What I was learning about God in the Christian Science Sunday School helped me through so many challenges like this in my middle and high school years. I had been going to a Christian Science Sunday School since the age of seven, when a neighbor invited our family to a Church of Christ, Scientist. Our family had visited many churches

since coming to the US, but I didn't feel as though I was taken seriously at any of them. For instance, at one church, prayer books were passed out, but none was given to me. At another, I asked for a hymn book and was told it was only for adults. In each case, I felt overlooked and disrespected as a good reader and thinker.

But the Christian Science Sunday School was interactive. I got to read from the Bible and from a book called *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy that explained what God was, and I got to learn big words like *incorporeal*. But I was mostly struck by the beautiful synonyms *Science and Health* gives for God: divine Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love (see p. 465). God was becoming more tangible to me. I think that's what I loved. It became clear that God loves me. I was not insignificant; I was precious. Because God loved me, I could count on His protection, strength, power, and gentleness. I learned I could pray and listen to God whenever I felt insecure or frightened. I could pray anywhere and at any time. This prayer would bless my family and give us a life worth living. I knew this with certainty.

So as I questioned God about my circumstances and the bad position I thought the guidance counselor had put me in, I began reflecting on the meaning of God in my life. I asked myself, “If God is all-powerful, how could someone have the power to harm me? And if we are all created spiritually, in God's image and likeness, how could someone not see me as spiritual, as God sees me, instead of through the lens of physical and social stereotypes?”

I turned to the Bible and saw this verse in Acts: “Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of

persons” (10:34). I understood this to mean that color, culture, gender, social status, are not held against me, because God, the only creator, recognizes all of us as His beautiful children, as being individual and equally valuable. I loved knowing that God does not discriminate among His children, and that what matters in life is not our appearance or socioeconomic status but that we love, and are obedient to, the one God.

I also loved the following Bible passage: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet” (Psalms 8:4–6). This made me appreciate that we each have such potential for good. It made me feel simultaneously beloved and empowered.

On the first day of vocational high school, everything was scary, and it seemed so much worse because I felt that I didn’t belong there. We talked about this in my Sunday School class a few days later. I realized that since God is with me, guarding and guiding me always, my attendance at

my local vocational high school could only be an opportunity for blessings.

I ended up majoring in computer technology. Nothing else at the school interested me. But I found the right people, the right teachers, the right advisors. I felt loved, I felt cared for, and I felt I was receiving the attention I deserved. That prayer from Sunday School proved true—this school was not just a place I settled into and accepted; it was a blessing in every way. I did not think this was a coincidence, and I associated it with my daily prayer to God.

In my senior year of high school, I was accepted at a private engineering college. We had a new high school principal that year, and when my peers told him I had been accepted to the college, he said, “Well, these colleges have admission quotas, so they have to accept a certain number of women and minorities.” Clearly, the man hadn’t looked at my scores! More importantly, he was missing out on that wonderful verse in Psalm 8. We all stand to benefit from seeing everyone around us as “a little lower than the angels.” I was not discouraged.

My educational and professional career continued to be characterized by prayer and trust in God every step of the way, enabling me to obtain scholarships for undergraduate engineering school and to complete graduate studies at an Ivy League college without any debt. I found jobs in research and telephony and in technology for the financial industry, and then became a mathematics professor. Each transition was guided by my Father-Mother God, which I find is critical to a life worth living.

My early experiences taught me that we are not promised an easy path in life. But we are promised that regardless of the difficulties we face, we are always in God’s presence, and with divine Love’s help we can overcome any adversity. ●

AARON CRANFORD — STAFF



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When I lost someone I loved

Dyllan McClain

MY CHRISTIAN SCIENCE SUNDAY SCHOOL

teacher was one of the most important people in my life. She took me under her wing—tutoring me in school and giving me insight into how I could grow as a student of Christian Science. Then she passed away. I didn't know how to grieve; I'd never lost someone before, especially someone so close to my heart.

I was so deeply depressed that I couldn't find a reason to go back to church. I felt so angry and lost, and her passing shook my understanding of God. I kept thinking, How could God take away something so good, someone so special to me and to others?

I knew that avoiding church would only make me feel further away from God and my Sunday School teacher. I also knew that going back would be hard. Still, I thought it would be a way to feel close to her, so I found my way to a Wednesday night testimony meeting.

The group at the church was intimate, and everyone had a testimony or some gratitude to share. During the meeting, I felt an overwhelming sense of love, and it filled my heart with so much gratitude to God for giving me the gift of knowing and loving my Sunday School teacher. I felt comfort from being at the meeting, and even though they didn't know it, the attendees' testimonies had made me feel safe and at peace. After that, I knew for sure that there was nothing that could stop me from loving God and Christian Science.

I went home wondering what I could do to feel close to God again. Right away, I saw my copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. I hadn't touched it in months, but there it was. I turned to a random page because my Sunday School teacher had taught me

that *Science and Health* is full of messages from God just for me. As I flipped to a page, I landed in the chapter called "Footsteps of Truth" where it says, "We are prone to believe either in more than one Supreme Ruler or in some power less than God. We imagine that Mind can be imprisoned in a sensuous body. When the material body has gone to ruin, when evil has overtaxed the belief of life in matter and destroyed it, then mortals believe that the deathless Principle, or Soul, escapes from matter and lives on; but this is not true. Death is not a stepping-stone to Life, immortality, and bliss" (p. 203). This passage meant so much to me because it's one that my teacher had shared with us in Sunday School. I had this overwhelming feeling of love.

I realized that I'd felt so imprisoned by the thought of death and loss that I hadn't been able to see the God-given good and love that were always with me. I saw that this loss did not come from God, because God is Love and the source of all love. And Love doesn't take anything away; Love is a constant. Sometimes, when I feel like I don't fully understand Christian Science, that is the one thing that I do know and truly understand.

I started to cry. I felt God right there with me, and I knew that the love I'd felt from my Sunday School teacher would always be with me, too. Nothing—not anger, not sadness—could touch me. Only the love that I was feeling at that moment was real. God truly is Love, and He showed me that Love will always be with me and that I will always be with Love.

My grief is completely healed, and I am forever grateful for the freedom that Christian Science brought me during one of the hardest times of my life. ●

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If you're struggling with perfectionism

Shayla Kelley

I FELT OVERWHELMED by all the things I had to do. I had a lot of homework, several deadlines for big projects, and some issues with friends I'd been worrying about.

One night, it all became too much. My mom asked what was bothering me, and when I told her, I also mentioned that I didn't want to pray about it because that just seemed like another task and a lot of work.

My mom agreed that if I were dealing with a long list of problems, that really could be overwhelming. But then she shared an idea I hadn't thought of. Maybe it seemed on the surface like a lot of problems, she said, but underneath, perhaps the issue was the same for all of them. She explained that when we're able to get to the root of a problem, it becomes much simpler to deal with. And we can also pray more effectively because then we're dealing with the underlying issue rather than whatever is appearing on the surface.

So, I thought about what might be going on deep down, and one thing stood out to me. For a lot of my life, I'd struggled with self-confidence, and it

I wanted to be recognized as “perfect” by my peers, because I thought people would like me more if I didn't have flaws.

was hard to just be myself at school. I'd constantly worried about everything I was doing and how it might affect what others thought of me. I realized I had been striving for human perfection, which meant I was putting a lot of pressure on myself about my academics and friendships. I also wanted to be recognized as “perfect” by my peers, because



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I thought people would like me more if I didn't have flaws.

One thing that my mom and I talked about was that Jesus is a great example of how to think about perfection. He lived love and didn't worry about what the world thought of him. Jesus was concerned only with doing what God had given him to do. He had confidence in his spiritual individuality because he knew so clearly that it came from God.

Jesus even fearlessly broke some of the rules of that time period; he healed on the Sabbath day and helped people whom no one wanted to be associated with—outcasts who were shunned by society. If Jesus had the highest standards, why would he associate with these people? It's because he saw the good qualities in them—who they really were as God had made them—and their desire to be healed. If Jesus had been worried about how his actions would affect his image, he wouldn't have healed these people. On the other hand, the people seen as “perfect” by many in society were church officials, yet they were often arrogant and hypocritical.

This helped me see that showy achievements, popularity, and status don't equal perfection. Jesus' example showed me that perfection is con-

nected to reflection—specifically, to being God’s reflection. Mary Baker Eddy describes the nature of this reflection in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* as “perfect God and perfect man” (p. 259). I know that’s who I already am, even if I don’t recognize it in myself 100 percent of the time. But I can always do my best to know and express my God-given individuality.

This is why it’s important to follow God’s guidance and to know that God is the source of our identity, inspiration, and actions. By not focusing so much on the image we think others have of us and focusing instead on all the ways we’re reflecting God, we can shift from human perfec-

tionism to living Christlike perfection, which will leave us feeling satisfied and fulfilled.

These insights brought such a change for me in relation to all the things I was struggling with. I’m not trying to be the best at everything anymore. Instead, I understand better that everyone, including me, is an individual expression of God with different gifts that I can recognize and appreciate.

Now I’m not as worried about what people think of me, and I’m more focused on being a good example of God’s qualities. Instead of trying to perfect myself humanly, I’m focusing on my spiritual growth, because that’s what’s most fulfilling. ●

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My healing of asthma

Peachy V. Sarmiento-Booker

I SUFFERED FROM ASTHMA when I was a kid. My parents were always supporting me—praying, singing hymns, and knowing God’s care for me—but at that time there weren’t any Christian Science practitioners in the Philippines to call for Christian Science treatment. My family kept praying based on what we’d learned through studying Christian Science, and the asthma symptoms would go away.

But one time, my uncle, who is a doctor, became aware of my breathing issue and said I should go to a local clinic to receive medical treatment. I did. But while my symptoms were temporarily relieved, the doctors there said that there was no cure for the condition itself.

I’d been attending Christian Science Sunday School since I was little, and I’d learned that God’s love is always with me no matter where I am, because God, divine Love, is ever present. So it was natural for me to pray and think about

God when I was afraid. This helped me feel calmer.

During this time, I thought a lot about the Bible story of David and Goliath, which I knew by heart. I loved that David, a shepherd who was only a kid, had so much faith in God and knew that he wasn’t facing his challenges alone. He knew God was bigger than the lions and bears that threatened his sheep. So he also had confidence that God would help him defeat Goliath, a fierce warrior from the Philistine army, who was a big bully.

I realized I could face the challenge of asthma just like David, who showed true humility and trust in God. He also had the courage to yield to God’s guidance when facing Goliath, which is how he defeated him once and for all.

What I learned from this story is that no matter how big a bully looks, God is always bigger. No matter how scary the situation appears to be,

God is always the real power. This story, along with Hymn 53 from the *Christian Science Hymnal*, reminded me that we can lean on God no matter what we're up against. Here's what the hymn says:

Everlasting arms of Love
Are beneath, around, above;
God it is who bears us on,
His the arm we lean upon.

He our ever-present guide
Faithful is, whate'er betide;
Gladly then we journey on,
With His arm to lean upon.

From earth's fears and vain alarms
Safe in His encircling arms,
He will keep us all the way,
God, our refuge, strength and stay.

(John R. Macduff,
adapt. © CSBD)

This hymn helped me understand that, as God's child, I could never be outside of His love, because I'm always safe in His tender care. I didn't

I realized I could face the challenge of asthma just like David in the story of David and Goliath.

know how it would happen, but I expected healing. And little by little I did see some progress.

Then one day there was a turning point. By this time we had moved to the United States. Once again, I was having trouble breathing, but now we



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were able to call a Christian Science practitioner for Christian Science treatment.

The practitioner prayed for me, and she also invited me to grab my bike to go get ice cream with her, along with my siblings and cousins. At first I was really surprised. I didn't know how I was supposed to go biking. But the practitioner really knew that God had already made me well. So I did go biking, and I felt free! I wasn't struggling to breathe at all. I pedaled along, feeling the fresh spring breeze. That was the end of the asthma.

This healing impacted me in a big way. Not only did I learn how to rely on God for healing but I also grew in my understanding of God. I understand so much more deeply now that God really is always present and that His love for me is the real power. I can always turn to God and lean on God for healing. I am so grateful. ●

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