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A CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSING FACILITY

## Christian Science Nursing and You: Heeding the Still, Small Voice

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It's great to see all of you here today. I've always enjoyed attending Wide Horizon's annual meeting, so it's a real honor to be speaking here this year.

In preparing for this talk today on the still, small voice, I remembered an incident from my high school days that made me laugh. I attended a very small, rural high school in Western Nebraska. When I was a senior, I took a trigonometry class with just three or four other students. It was pretty relaxed, as you can imagine. One day, the teacher stepped out of the classroom and went down the hallway to the office. Of course, while he was gone, we were all talking and laughing. When he came back he said that *I* was too loud and he could hear *me* talking all the way down the hall! I was slightly embarrassed and protested saying that we were all talking. He told me he realized that, but *my* voice carried, so I had to be quieter than everyone else. It proved to be a difficult year for me in that class!

Of course, today, we're not talking about loud or soft human voices. No matter how far a person's voice carries—down a long hallway, or across a crowded room—it will never measure up to the power of the “still, small voice of Truth.”

The voice of Truth isn't bounded by the strength or weakness of vocal chords or lung capacity. It isn't limited by the inner workings of the ear. The still, small voice of Truth isn't dependent on phone lines or internet access. In fact, the voice of infinite Truth, or scientific thought, has nothing to do with material conditions, and everything to do with Truth's, or God's infinite and ever-present nature.

For instance, if you were trudging along in the middle of a seemingly endless desert, with sand as far as the eye could see; or scaling a mountain so high the top wasn't even visible above the clouds; or adventuring in one of the vast oceans, so deep no one had ever reached the bottom; or even exploring a planet, light years away, the still, small voice of Truth would be right there. In fact, it *is* already there, and here, and everywhere in the omnipresence of God.

The still, small voice, or the Christ message, may or may not be audible to the material senses. But it perpetually makes itself known. The human consciousness, with its fully functioning spiritual sense, is able to perceive the Christ continually. In our textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy describes this aspect of the Christ as, “the true idea voicing good, the divine message from God to men speaking to the human consciousness” (p. 332).

The Truth voices good. It tells you about the powerful presence of God and speaks to the listening thought about your dominion, and your eternal place in that divine presence. No one is left out. Everyone is within the range of the Christ.

We can definitely count on the Christ message—this still, small voice of Truth—to reach every dark place of pain, discouragement, doubt, or danger that may seem to be lurking in thought. The Christ overpowers this broadcast error, or fake news, with the fact that God’s message of healing, perfection, and peace is omnipotent, supreme, and sustainable.

A favorite psalm says, “The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted” (Psalms 46). God’s voice whispers in our ear, assuring us that whatever would try to oppress us has no legitimate presence. No matter what challenge we seem to be up against, or how loud that challenge yells for attention, the Christ message is louder, because in reality— or the eternal state of affairs—it’s the only voice that exists. The healing power of God’s voice reaches every nook and cranny of the globe.

The still, small voice of Truth, instructs, guides, and ultimately leads us to the correct view of God and ourselves, which heals.

Today, we’ll be considering that still, small voice of Truth and the importance of heeding it; how that voice calls each one of us to play our part in Christian Science nursing; and finally, how the still, small voice is the basis of sustainability.

So, let’s think a little more specifically about the still, small voice.

Mrs. Eddy heard this voice. Her first memory of it was from when she was around eight years old. She tells about that time in her life in her autobiography, *Retrospection and Introspection* (pgs. 8-9). She wrote, “For some twelve months, when I was about eight years old, I repeatedly heard a voice, calling me distinctly by name, three times, in an ascending scale.” She thought it was her mother’s voice. But every time she ran to her mother to ask her what she wanted, it turned out that her mother had not called her. “This continued until I grew discouraged, and my mother was perplexed and anxious.” One day, Mary’s cousin, Mehitable was over for a visit and the voice calling Mary was so loud that her cousin heard it, too. She told Mary to go see what her mother wanted. Mary declined, knowing it would turn out like every other time. When her cousin insisted, Mary went to her mother and told her that her cousin had heard the voice calling her, too. That night, Mary’s mom read her the story of the little boy Samuel in the Bible. Mary’s mother told her that when she heard the voice again, she should answer in the same way that Samuel had, “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.” But, when Mary did hear the voice again, she was too scared to answer. She wrote, “Afterward I wept, and prayed that God would forgive me, resolving to do, next time, as my mother had bidden me. When the call came again I did answer in the words of Samuel, but never again to the material senses was that mysterious call repeated.”

The material senses may not have heard that same call repeated, but we all know that Mrs. Eddy continued to hear the still, small voice or we probably wouldn’t know this precious Science today. She knew that voice as the Christ, speaking directly to her in the way she could understand and act on.

I noticed a small reference to Mrs. Eddy’s willingness to hear and respond to the Christ message in a reminiscence I recently ordered from the Mary Baker Eddy Library in Boston. The reminiscence is from William Curtis Coffman, a student of Victoria Sargent, the sister of Laura Sargent, Mrs. Eddy’s loyal helper. Mr. Coffman wrote, “Mrs. Sargent said when our Leader would go to God for guidance sometimes the answer would come immediately; other times it might be hours, or days. Sometimes

members of the household would say: ‘Mother, how do you know that God is speaking to you?’ Mrs. Eddy would reply: ‘I know the voice.’”

Speaking of the way Mrs. Eddy would respond to the voice, Mr. Coffman went on to say, “Mrs. Eddy always had a quiet, humble attitude, but whenever God directed her in any new project or undertaking she seemed to assume the air of a general and directed every detail of that project with authority until it was finished. Then she would retire again into her quietude.” (Mary Baker Eddy Library for the Betterment of Humanity, *Reminiscence of William Curtis Coffman*, p. 51).

Isn’t Mrs. Eddy such a great example of hearing the still, small voice, and also heeding it? It’s obvious from her childhood account of hearing the voice that she had been honing the skill of listening to God for many years. Her purity, innocence, and willingness to hear and heed Truth’s voice allowed her to continue to be receptive to it.

OK, some of you may be thinking, “Well, that was Mrs. Eddy. Of course, she could hear the voice of Truth.” But perhaps you feel like you don’t hear that voice, even though you’d like to. Or maybe you do hear God’s voice, but not as often as you’d like. Well, that hissing in your ear that suggests you aren’t tuned in to the still, small voice—that you just aren’t receptive enough—is what we’d call animal magnetism. It isn’t a real voice; it is nothing more than a suggestion that you could be separate in some way from the very Mind that is thinking you. We are ideas perfectly at one with our Mind, God. Everything we need to hear that voice comes from Mind and is sustained by Mind.

The Christ does speak to us in the same way it spoke to Mrs. Eddy—in a way we can understand and act on. And the same Christlike qualities of receptivity, innocence, and clarity that Mrs. Eddy demonstrated so well are present in each one of us, right now, perpetually.

To heed the still, small voice, we can start by knowing that God is causing us to hear it. And what God causes has to have an effect. Sometimes we have to demand our inspiration. That’s not using human will, but standing up for the absolute certainty that God’s will is for us to hear Him, and whatever speaks against our unity with God has no legitimate voice.

Each one of us can hear the Christ message, feel it with our spiritual sense, and act on it, by mentally consenting to what it tells us. The Christ message always leads us into the recognition of our dominion as the loved creation of omnipotent Truth.

The Bible is full of examples of men and women who have heard the Christ, the still, small voice of Truth, and heeded it. Probably the one most specific on our topic today is the story of Elijah. This story is found in the Bible in First Kings, chapter 19. As you remember, Elijah had just slain the prophets of Baal and was fleeing from Jezebel, wife of Ahab, king of Israel, who threatened his life. He fled to Beersheba, left his servant there, and went another day’s journey into the wilderness.

If you’ve ever really been afraid, you can kind of understand what Elijah is going through. He’s not doing a lot of listening to God, although the angels are waking him and telling him to eat and drink of the food and water that’s provided for him. What he’s mostly doing is sleeping under some bushes worrying—and wishing he could just die and get out of a difficult situation.

I had an experience sort of like that when I was getting serious about coming back into the study of Christian Science. I’d been brought up in a Christian Science Sunday School, but when I hit my junior year of high school, I got a job, worked on Sundays, and stopped attending. After that, I went to college,

moved to another state, and although the thought of God was never too far away, I would not have called myself a practicing Christian Scientist.

A few years later, I was married, had two little girls, and a bad case of recurring tonsillitis. Although, no one was threatening to kill me, like Jezebel threatened Elijah, I was miserable, afraid, and just wanted the situation to go away. But I didn't do much listening to God at first. I went to the doctor and was prescribed antibiotics, which didn't prove to be very effective. Frustrated, I would call a Christian Science practitioner and work with her for a few days, also with little effect. Back and forth between the doctor and the Christian Science practitioner I fearfully went.

In the story of Elijah, he was also caught up in fear. But finally, the voice of God breaks through the fear, and speaks to him right there in a remote cave in the wilderness. The voice comes in the form of a question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

That question isn't like one person would ask another person: "What are you doing here?" To me, it's more a questioning of life-purpose, dominion, obedience. An all-knowing God isn't asking the humanistic question, what led you here? But: Why are you fleeing in fear instead of being about My business? Of course, Elijah doesn't hear it that way. He tells God why he's there—Jezebel wants to take his life, and he's afraid.

So, God asks Elijah to come out of the cave onto the mountaintop. We all know what happens next: "And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice." Isn't it comforting to know that God isn't found in loud destruction, or fear, but is found quietly and powerfully present in our spiritual sense of things?

God spoke to Elijah in that cave in the wilderness. And God also spoke to me in that dark place of sickness and fear. He provided me with a message I could hear right through the fear, indecision, helplessness, and confusion. It was that I didn't need to take one more antibiotic, or have my tonsils removed, but that I could dedicate myself to what I knew about God and myself as Mind and Mind's idea. What a relief!

I called the Christian Science practitioner back, told her everything (she was so kind to me), and I committed to working with her to be healed...permanently. The comforting and guiding voice, giving me that direction, was definitely inaudible, but I felt it with all of my heart. It spoke to my spiritual sense and said, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:21). By heeding that calm voice, I took the first steps in understanding that the sickness which had seemed so persistent, had no staying power.

So, Elijah and I both recognized that the still, small voice of Truth is heard with our spiritual sense, which is much louder to the human mind than any fear of death or illness, vulnerability, chaos, or indecision.

Elijah continued to heed God's voice, found Elisha, and anointed him a prophet. Elisha also heeded the still, small voice and was willing to follow Elijah, and as we know, they both went on to do great things.

I also heeded God's voice in my work with the Christian Science practitioner. I consented moment by moment to the fact that I was completely spiritual, right then, and very shortly, I was healed

permanently. It was the turning point in my commitment to this Science and I haven't looked back. What happened in this case is what Mrs. Eddy describes on page 559 of *Science and Health*. "The inaudible voice of Truth is, to the human mind, 'as when a lion roareth.' It is heard in the desert and in dark places of fear. It arouses the 'seven thunders' of evil, and stirs their latent forces to utter the full diapason of secret tones. Then is the power of Truth demonstrated, — made manifest in the destruction of error."

I would venture to say that each one of you here today has felt the spiritual sense of things that has come from the Christ, the still, small voice of Truth, and has spoken louder than any difficult situation that has screamed for attention in your life. And I know that every resident here at Wide Horizon has also made the commitment to be healed, quickly and permanently, just like I did.

I also know that every one of the loving Christian Science nurses and every one of the administration and staff who work here with such dedication, and with an understanding of God's goodness and man's relation to that goodness, hears that still, small voice continually.

Have you ever heard anyone say, or even said it yourself, that we are all Christian Science practitioners, even if we're not advertising as a practitioner in *The Christian Science Journal*? Well, I'm convinced that we all have an active role in Christian Science nursing, even if we aren't advertising as a Christian Science nurse in the *Journal*.

In her book, *First Church of Christ Scientist and Miscellany*, in a little article called, "Admonition and Counsel," Mrs. Eddy writes, "This church is impartial. Its rules apply not to one member only, but to one and all equally. Of this I am sure, that each Rule and By-law in this Manual will increase the spirituality of him who obeys it, invigorate his capacity to heal the sick, to comfort such as mourn, and to awaken the sinner" (p. 230). Considering that statement, shouldn't the *Manual* by-law for Christian Science nurses play a part in the lives of each one of us? After all, who wouldn't want to invigorate his or her ability to heal, to comfort, and to awaken himself or herself, and others, from sin?

As Christian Scientists who love Mrs. Eddy's mission for the world, we can support that *Manual* by-law for Christian Science nurses. It requires spiritualizing our concept of it, listening with our spiritual sense to understand how it applies to us, and then heeding it by taking action in the way that seems most right. We can do all of that even if we're not advertising in the *Journal* as a Christian Science nurse.

Just in case you haven't looked at it in a while, let's review that by-law. It's on page 49, Article 8 section 31 of the *Manual of The Mother Church*. Mrs. Eddy writes, "Christian Science Nurse. A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick."

I like how the *Manual* by-law says that a Christian Science nurse has "a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice." That sounds like something we are all striving to fine tune every day.

That demonstrable knowledge must start with a correct understanding of what God is, and of what man is as His likeness. This automatically includes a realization of what God isn't and therefore what man, His loved likeness, could never be.

In her book *Miscellaneous Writings*, Mrs. Eddy says, "Man is free born: he is neither the slave of sense, nor a silly ambler to the so-called pleasures and pains of self-conscious matter. Man is God's image and

likeness: whatever is possible to God, is possible to man *as God's reflection*" (*Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, p. 183). And whenever I read or think about, "whatever is possible to God is possible to man *as God's reflection*" I usually add...and whatever is NOT possible to God is NOT possible to man *as God's reflection*.

What a great, brief description of how to demonstrate Christian Science. It is to know that since God is infinite Spirit, man, His likeness, must be completely spiritual. And that also includes the fact that since God is not material, man, His likeness, or image, cannot include any material element, and cannot be subject to any material condition.

That means everyone—nurse, patient, practitioner, family member, friend, neighbor, stranger, local, foreigner, woman, man, child—as God's likeness is spiritual. And because they are, they are free. They aren't slaves of sense, pain, pleasure, matter in any form. They have the ability to hear God's voice telling them of their perfection as His reflection, and to move and to act as the expression of Love.

That is what a Christian Science nurse does. He or she recognizes the true nature of man through his or her spiritual sense, and demonstrates this law of health and well-being. And the nurse also witnesses the effect of this demonstration in himself or herself, and in those around him or her. Christian Science nurses do that, and we all do that. We are all sharing the healing results of exercising a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice. |

The next part of that by-law may seem to apply more specifically to someone who has a career as a Christian Science nurse, but it still can apply to each one of us. This part says, "who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick."

Many years ago, I joined a branch Church of Christ, Scientist. You might know what I mean when I say that there were many "strong personalities" on the committees. One member in particular was a real challenge for me. I'd go home from board meetings in tears.

A couple of years went by and I didn't handle the situation very well. I was newly back to my study of Christian Science, and I found it easier to avoid her than to really heal the situation. During that time, her husband passed on, she was no longer driving, and since I was the church member who lived closest to her, I picked her up for church twice a week—every Sunday morning and every Wednesday evening. That sounds like a loving thing to do, doesn't it? But I did it with clenched teeth.

One day she called and again said something hurtful. I was so exasperated! I hung up, closed my eyes and thought, "God, please tell me what You see in her, because I just don't get it!"

Before I could even finish the thought, I heard, "I delight in her!" I sat down right where I was and let that sink in. You delight in her! It was so clear that the thought had come from God. It certainly hadn't come from me! In fact, when I think of it all these years later, it still moves me. It occurred to me that if she was God's delight, I needed to love her a lot more than I was!

My practical opportunity to act on the second part of that *Manual* by-law for nursing came shortly after that incident. She needed some daily bandaging done on her feet and legs. The nearest Christian Science nurse was too far away to come every day, so the woman asked me if I'd be willing to come help her with the daily bandaging. When she asked, I felt like most of us might feel: I love and respect Christian Science nurses and all they do, but I didn't feel like it was my calling.

But, knowing that God delighted in her, it seemed a natural way to love God and to love her. A dedicated Christian Science nurse made the long drive to my friend’s house and showed me “the practical wisdom” that was necessary in this case, and also the steps of proper care for my friend.

I went over every day, really striving to see her as God did, and to provide practical care—just as it is described in the *Manual* by-law for Christian Science nursing.

Then one day after I’d been doing this for a while, I didn’t feel like going over at all. But I found myself there anyway, sitting on the floor, washing her legs before bandaging. I thought of Jesus, washing the feet of each disciple and loving each one for their individuality as he was doing it. I was overcome with the humble nature of this loving task. I could feel God delighting in my friend and in me in that moment. After that, it became easier to tend to her practical needs, and to be able to enjoy knowing her, as God told me He did.

My friend has since passed on, but those hours I spent with her, listening to her tell me about her upbringing and her early days of parenting, her love of Christian Science and the ways she had served the movement over the years, really opened my eyes to some of her gentler qualities. I’m thankful for this humble lesson of listening to the still, small voice, and, in this case, heeding it by washing someone’s feet. It has helped to shape other relationships I’ve had in church work and in other avenues of my life.

For me, participating in Christian Science nursing was an example of living this passage from *Science and Health*: “The effects of Christian Science are not so much seen as felt. It is the ‘still, small voice’ of Truth uttering itself. We are either turning away from this utterance, or we are listening to it and going up higher” (p. 323).

In both the healing of tonsillitis and the opportunity to perform the role of Christian Science nurse for my friend, it was the still, small voice of Truth that healed and sustained me. Mrs. Eddy says works like these “are the sign of Immanuel, or ‘God with us,’—a divine influence ever present in human consciousness and repeating itself, coming now as was promised aforetime,

To preach deliverance to the captives [of sense],  
And recovering of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty them that are bruised” (*Science and Health*, p. xi).

How valuable it is to listen to and heed the still small voice, and thereby invigorate our practice of Christian Science by better understanding how the *Manual* by-law for a Christian Science nurse applies uniquely to each one of us.

Not only is the Christ the source of quick and permanent healing, but it’s also the basis of sustainability. We heard earlier of Wide Horizon’s new five-year campaign called *Wide Appeal for Sustainability* and how the campaign will “help perpetuate and sustain the good works of Christian Science nursing in our community, for the Cause, and for mankind” (from Wide Horizon’s “Wide Appeal for Sustainability” campaign brochure).

It might be helpful, as we all get behind that campaign, to think a little more about how the still, small voice of Truth and sustainability are related.

To do this, let's go back to the life of Elijah. Before God spoke to Elijah on the mountaintop, He spoke to him in a time of drought. This story is in First Kings, chapter 17.

God directs Elijah to go to Zarephath and find a widow woman there who will sustain him. Elijah finds her, but when he asks her for a drink and a little food, she tells the prophet that she is just getting ready to make cakes of the last of her meal and the last of her oil so she and her son can eat them and then resign themselves to starvation.

Obviously, her concept of sustainability is non-existent. The mortal mind with its material sense of things is always focused on limitation—there's only this much and then it's gone. It can't see the continuity and sustainability of supply because those are God's qualities. Sustainability can only be recognized by listening with our spiritual sense, and consenting to the fact that good is infinite, and therefore, it fills all space and is unlimited.

Even though the widow woman shared this dire scene with Elijah, he chose to trust God's voice, which had told him that this widow woman would sustain him. He knew that her report of not enough food for her household, or for him, had to be a false one. It didn't line up with what God had told him would happen. He didn't let the woman's limited concept keep him from heeding the still, small voice. With God's promise of sustainability clearly in thought, Elijah told her not to be afraid and to make him food first, then to prepare something for herself and her son.

Consenting to his instruction was such a leap of faith on her part. Just words from someone, even a prophet, couldn't alone make her give up her last handful of meal meant to feed her child one last time. Elijah's words had to have been much more to her than human reassurance. It was the voice, the Christ message underlying his words, that was right there—telling her that her true supply was tangibly ever-present and therefore, could be trusted to endure.

She listened to the Christ, heeded it by feeding Elijah first, and the result was that “she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.” The barrel of meal didn't run out. The cruse of oil didn't fail. Before Jesus even walked the globe, the widow woman was living proof of his words, “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (Matthew 6:8).

How does this Bible story apply to us today? The resources in the *Manual of The Mother Church*, including Christian Science nursing, are for the salvation of mankind. These right ideas are self-sustained because they are self-contained in infinite Mind. *The Manual of The Mother Church*, and all it contains, is permanent. Therefore, Christian Science nursing has the capacity to endure. It is sustainable.

What could speak better about this sustainability than the Christ, which as you'll remember, is ever present and repeats itself? The action of the Christ includes the qualities of replenishment, restoration, and renewal. Anything a right idea needs is already present, right here in Mind. God sustains His ideas, and the Christ, the still, small voice of Truth, constantly reports to the human consciousness that anything good is sustainable. A right idea cannot lack, decline, or disappear.



In *Retrospection and Introspection*, Mrs. Eddy speaks about sustainability and God’s law when she says, “Our reliance upon material things must be transferred to a perception of and dependence on spiritual things...Purity, self-renunciation, faith, and understanding must reduce all things real to their own mental denomination, Mind, which divides, subdivides, increases, diminishes, constitutes, and sustains, according to the law of God” (p. 28).

Without a doubt, sustainability is supported by God’s law. The motive to provide Christian Science nursing care in an enduring way in this community is pure, and this purity invokes God’s law. This law is the substance of the campaign for sustainability and leads those involved to be generous, to use resources in the very best way, and to witness Mind’s action in increasing and sustaining all the good Wide Horizon includes.

Supporting this Christian Science nursing facility is an opportunity to understand more deeply that God’s goodness is ever-present and everlasting. God’s inexhaustible resources are the foundation and source of all good. They are infinite, so they are sustainable. The still, small voice of Truth, or sustaining infinite, is constantly repeating to each one of us that “to-day is big with blessings” (*Science and Health*, p. xi).

So, I encourage you all to keep your ears open, so to speak. The ever-present Christ, the still, small voice of Truth is speaking to you. It’s speaking your language in just the way you can understand and act on. That calm voice carries—down every high school hallway, to sandy deserts, snowy mountaintops, and murky ocean depths; to every star-studded galaxy in the universe, and to every dark and dismal place of fear. In the infinitude of ever-present Life, the Christ is heralding the good news of man’s perfection as God’s reflection. Each one of you can feel it, heed it, be healed by it, and trust and experience its sustainable nature.

Thank you for being here today!

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