

A Christian Science lecture entitled:

## HOW DO YOU PRAY?

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Well, have you been doing some faithful praying for yourself today? That's the question I frequently ask those who come to me looking for help in Christian Science. Sometimes I get a good positive "Yes, I have." Sometimes I get a weak "I try." Many times it's "I don't know how to pray," or "I pray, but nothing happens." Well, I have news for you. Nothing does just happen when you pray. God doesn't just happen to answer prayers. Prayer is a two-way street. In order to get answers to prayers, you have to put something into them. Christ Jesus prayed. So, being Christians, let's see what he put into prayer. He put purity and a spiritual consistency into every thought and act. He didn't have to acquire these, he was endowed with them. But mortals have to attain that purity and spiritual consistency of thought and desire in order to pray as he did. This should be the goal of every Christian. How can we learn to pray as Christ Jesus did?

In the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, tells us how to pray aright. She says, "The prayer that reforms the sinner and heals the sick is an absolute faith that all things are possible to God, — a spiritual

understanding of Him, an unselfed love."<sup>1</sup> Note here that there are three requirements to this prayer: "absolute faith" in God, and Jesus had that; "a spiritual understanding of Him," and Jesus had that; and "unselfed love," and Jesus had that. All of this is what we're learning through Christian Science to put into prayer. Absolute faith in God comes through an understanding of Him that does away with any mystery about Him. Such an understanding isn't illusive but gainable through the study of Christian Science.

### Getting to Know God

In learning to pray successfully there is the necessity of gaining that understanding of God. Mrs. Eddy's great gift to the world was her discovery of the complete nature of the supreme creative power of the universe — named God.

When she defined the word, God, more of His fullness and meaning became understandable to us. Impelled by her deeply spiritual nature and love of God, she tirelessly searched the Bible for an understanding of the nature of the Supreme Being. There were names or terms for God contained in the Bible that were separately employed to designate Deity, but His wholeness, His all-power and

ever-presence were more fully revealed by Mrs. Eddy's terms for God. Her search led her to discover that all reality is included in God. In *Science and Health*, she asks the question, "What is God?" and she answers, "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love,"<sup>2</sup> and she further states that these terms are synonymous and that they refer to one absolute God.

One is not a Christian Scientist for long before he has this definition of God well established in his thought because it is so important to Christian Scientists. One can't think understandingly in terms of Christian Science without employing all of these terms or names for God. The study of the synonymous meanings of these terms brings an endless unfolding of the meaning of Life, for God is Life. It stimulates human thought to reason on the spiritual reality of all things and thus to understand the unreality of the mortal or fleshly concepts of life.

The basic teaching of the religion of Christian Science is that Spirit is all that's substantive, consequently things material or fleshly are insubstantial. As a Christian religion, Christian Science is on firm ground with this teaching. Christ Jesus said, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the

flesh profiteth nothing."<sup>3</sup> So you see it's really fundamental Christian teaching that only an understanding of the things of Spirit can enlighten us as to what is real and substantive. What better authority does the Christian need for these conclusions than Jesus' teachings? Christian Science proclaims Jesus' teachings as the truth, the truth the world has always sought to know, the truth Jesus said would make us free — free from the mortal and fleshly concepts of life.

### Prayer the Essential Way

Prayer is the Christian Scientist's method of knowing the truth, that is, of having the facts of Spirit's allness and the unreality of life in the flesh become understandable to him. From the first reading of *Science and Health* one can discern how to pray so that truth becomes established in the human consciousness. Simply stated, this way of praying is to *acknowledge* or *affirm* the facts of God's or Spirit's allness and man's relationship to Him as His image and likeness, and then to *deny* all materiality as being any part of real life. This prayer is systematic, meaningful, logical and purposeful. It spiritually educates; it stimulates desire for growth in grace; it livens spiritual

unfoldment and quickens realization. Above all, it's devout. It's not a mere recital of words, a formula, or an exercise of suggesting one's self into an improved mental attitude. Far from it. Its motivation is a fervent desire to know God, to understand man as God's likeness and a willingness to conform to that likeness — to be worthy of what we pray for.

This manner of prayer is also a reforming influence. It brings about a rebirth, a purification of the fleshly self. You recall the account in the Gospel of John where Jesus said to a man named Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."<sup>4</sup> Jesus was preaching reformation or redemption from the belief of life in the flesh. Being born again is becoming spiritually enlightened. How is that accomplished when the human mentality clings so tenaciously to all that is mortal and fleshly? It requires a persistent effort in a spiritual direction. It requires this systematic prayer I've already touched on with which to pry open the human mortal thought and let in the facts of spiritual reality. So through affirmation, denial, and pure desire, the light of spiritual understanding breaks through mortal belief and changes consciousness. Then the spiritual facts of life become solid conviction!

#### Reason Necessary in Prayer

Certainly it's natural to reason and listen while one prays. "Reason is the most active human faculty,"<sup>5</sup> says Mrs. Eddy. In a very real sense, prayer in Christian Science usually does include reasoning — reasoning from a spiritual basis.

For example, when affirming in our prayers what God is, as revealed through His synonymous names which describe the essence of His nature, we come to realize that because He is divine Principle, He is divine Love. Understanding the synonymous nature of these two names, we catch glorious glimpses of His all-inclusiveness and impartial nature. It says in the Bible, in the book Habakkuk, "Thou," referring to God, "art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Eddy says, "Reason, rightly directed, serves to correct the errors of corporeal sense."<sup>7</sup> So we reason spiritually and scientifically that, because God is the only cause and creator and is infinitely good and omnipresent, there can be no other creator nor an evil creation. Christian Science further teaches that because God is divine Mind, the source of true intelligence, He must be Spirit, the All-in-all of

substance, without a single material element. You can understand from these simple illustrations that there must be infinite possibilities, in this manner of prayer, of gaining a fuller understanding of God as you ponder the related meanings of His synonymous names. Mrs. Eddy found her authority for this procedure in prayer in the Scriptures.

There are many reminders in the Bible for us to "magnify the Lord," to "sing praises to God," to "bless His holy name," etc. That's praying. Certainly you wouldn't do that without some reasoning being given to it. So this is what Christian Scientists are doing when they are affirming God's allness in their prayers. They're thinking and reasoning from a spiritual basis. They're enlarging their understanding of God, and this understanding makes God more real to them. Remember, one of the essentials of prayer is a spiritual understanding of God. Rightly directed, then, reasoning aids the dawning of that understanding.

#### Man Wholly Spiritual

Whether one is religiously inclined or not, there must come a time in his mental development when he asks: "What am I made of?" The Bible tells us that man is the image and likeness of God. What other way could there be of learning what our substance is than to come to understand what it means to be the image and likeness of every aspect of God's nature. How is this understanding attained? Through a fervent desire for it, through systematic prayer. It comes as a dawning — as one reasons from a spiritual basis. For example: since man is the image and likeness of God, he must be the image and likeness of divine Mind, infinite intelligence. Then man's substance is Spirit, because Mind is Spirit, certainly not matter. So we reason that man is not a fleshly mortal; he is wholly spiritual, there being no element of matter in him. Further, man, being the likeness of Truth, is the image and expression of divine Love, for Love is Truth. When one affirms and reasons spiritually that man is the image and reflection of every aspect of God's nature as it is revealed by His synonymous names, the human consciousness is elevated above the mortal concept of man as sick, sinning and dying, and his wholly spiritual nature begins to become a reality to him.

Because the all-substance of Spirit and the insubstantial nature of matter are basic points in the teaching of Christian Science, Mrs. Eddy repeatedly instructs the reader of *Science and Health* to

deny the reality of matter — to deny all that it seems to be and include. These denials are also a necessary part of the Christian Scientist's method of prayer. When we deny the beliefs of mortal life, our prayers are strengthened by the denial of what matter seems to be. We comprehend that there is no matter intelligence because divine Mind is the only source of intelligence; there is no destructible matter substance in indestructible Spirit, the only substance; there is no matter consciousness opposed to spiritual consciousness, or Soul; no material cause or law opposed to divine Principle; no mortality opposed to eternal Life, God; no finite truth opposed to omniscient Truth, God; and no real love opposed to divine Love, God.

Through this manner of prayer, affirming the spiritual facts of Life and denying the reality of mortal existence, human thought comes into focus with spiritual reality. It also acts to eliminate the static of materiality that would interfere with the clear reception of God's grace that is constantly flowing to bless, heal and direct. As I said at the outset, you'll find what I've been saying about systematic prayer throughout *Science and Health*.

#### Method in Prayer

Why is method so helpful in prayer? Because the human mind seems to relinquish its ignorant, material concepts of life only step-by-step. The prophet, Isaiah, recognized this when he taught, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little."<sup>8</sup> It is true that the Lord's Prayer is precept upon precept. One gets the most out of praying it if he reasons spiritually and systematically as he prays. Such prayer stimulates spiritual awakening. The more one prays the Lord's Prayer, the more its purpose is understood and its healing power is felt.

As important as this method of prayer is at this period to stimulate spiritual reasoning and unfoldment, and it is vitally important, the ultimate of prayer isn't argument but pure realization. Mrs. Eddy says, "Remember that the letter and mental argument are only human auxiliaries to aid in bringing thought into accord with the spirit of Truth and Love, which heals the sick and sinner."<sup>9</sup>

But, I repeat, prayer by affirmation and denial is needed until one can prove by undoubted demonstration that he no longer needs to use the method of argument.

In her message of 1896 to The Mother Church, Mrs. Eddy writes, "One thing I have greatly desired, and again earnestly request, namely, that Christian Scientists, here and elsewhere, pray daily for themselves; not verbally, nor on bended knee, but mentally, meekly, and importunately."<sup>10</sup> And she concludes this part of her message by telling her followers that great growth in Christian Science will follow.

Daily prayer for oneself, we see here, is for spiritual growth, not just for the cure of an ailment or the solution of a human problem. Primarily it helps one to attain and maintain a spiritual altitude of thought where instantaneous healing will be more frequent. Faithful daily prayer builds confidence and steadfastness in those who pray. It gives them the assurance that their prayers will be adequate to meet their every human need.

I want to tell you of an outstanding healing that took place as the result of the "absolute faith" Mrs. Eddy tells us is essential to the healing of the sick. This healing came to a Christian Scientist who had frequent speaking engagements. On one occasion he was ill in a New York hotel and had an address to deliver that evening. In his delirium he seemed unable to think clearly or pray for himself as he usually did. Yet, there was an awareness that he had a talk he must give that evening. During moments when he would come out of the delirium all he seemed able to realize was that the talk must and could be given. Of course, back of this assurance, well established in his thought, were the spiritual facts of God's omnipotence and omnipresence, of man's perfection in God, and the total unreality of evil. The day wore on, and he seemed no better. Finally he became aware that he must get dressed for his engagement, but still he seemed no better nor was he when he arrived at the place of the lecture and was seated on the platform. But when his name was spoken, he was released from the fever, and he was free. He had been calling on his reserve of spiritual strength. You might say he had prayed without words. His prayer of realization had kept his thoughts in accord with the healing grace of God, and he was healed. Was he unwise to have gone forward as he did? Not for the one who has absolute faith in God.

We have seen now that prayer needs to be approached with a Christlike purity of thought and purpose, a deep hungering for truth, a longing to be better and holier, a willingness to surrender the human will to the divine. I repeat, that's what needs to go



into our prayers. That's unselfed love. I'm sure you'll agree that there are many ways to be unselfed, and we can always determine whether or not we are by questioning our motives in prayer. Are we always willing to be conformed to a fitness to have our prayers answered? Do we want to be that good? Are we willing to act worthy of what we seek in prayer? Those are searching questions. We all need to labor to be true followers of the master Christian and to understand the Christ-spirit. Christ Jesus showed us by his life example and teachings how to be worthy of what we ask for in prayer and how to conform to that worthiness. And, remember, Jesus prayed! He was never ill, but he prayed. He prayed his way through the crucifixion experience to the full realization of the aliveness of Spirit and the total unreality of life in the flesh. That was his ascension.

### The Causes of Physical Illness

People have always sought the cause of physical illness. Mrs. Eddy says, "The procuring cause and foundation of all sickness is fear, ignorance, or sin."<sup>11</sup> Certainly all of us have seen that constant fear can be sickness-producing. However, everyone is not so certain about how ignorance produces sickness, and I have encountered many who were absolutely sure that sin couldn't possibly be the cause of their illnesses.

I'm going to tell you about a healing of a severe illness I suffered that was caused by ignorance. At a time when I was under great stress, I became so ill I was nearly incapacitated. One day, while I was praying over my health and problems, the thought came to me, your problem is "like father, like son." I pondered this thoughtfully, and I realized that my father experienced headaches when he encountered difficult human relationship problems or when he was under stress. I then realized that I, too, had headaches when I had difficult encounters with people. I saw that in the light of Christian Science teachings I must claim my perfect heritage as a child of God and deny any humanly inherited weaknesses. I saw that I had to love and respect myself as a child of God, and equally important, I had to be willing to see the perfect man in those I thought had ill-treated me. This was Christianly scientific reasoning and prayer. It healed me of the illness I was suffering from at that time and, further, I never again had a headache. That was a double-header healing. It was an unquestionable spiritual healing — you might say, part of

my new birth. Interestingly enough, the two men I felt had never respected me became my good friends. They respected me because I respected myself as a child of God. I expressed some quality of thought they hadn't seen before. (Footnote: If you don't respect yourself as a child of God, others probably won't either.)

What about sin being the cause of illness? When Mrs. Eddy says that "the procuring cause and foundation of all sickness is fear, ignorance, or sin," it's not implied that man is a miserable sinner or that he was born to be one. Such false theological concepts are in direct conflict with the revealed Word that man is made in the image and likeness of God and is therefore spiritual, perfect, sinless. But, Mrs. Eddy says, "The belief of life in matter sins at every step."<sup>12</sup> As you think about this, her meaning becomes perfectly clear. Life is God, Spirit, and to contend that there is life in matter, the suppositious opposite of infinite Spirit, is to dishonor omnipresent, omnipotent God. That's sin. But it's not intentional or malicious sin. It's ignorant, but still it's sin.

However, there are many characteristics of mortal life which, when indulged, are sinful and seem to cling to all of us — like glue. They seem to be a part of the human nature. Let me illustrate this with a little story. Mrs. Jones dragged her husband to church. He went only to please her. After church, her husband sat reading the Sunday paper while she was preparing dinner. She asked, "Did you notice that ridiculous hat Mrs. Brown was wearing?"

He said, "No, dear, I didn't."

Then she said, "Well, you couldn't help noticing that dreadful outfit Mrs. Smith had on."

He said, "I really didn't, dear." "Oomph," grunted Mrs. Jones, "What good does it do to take you to church?"

Silly little story, eh? Yes, but it makes an important point. Would you say that kind of thinking, if you could call it thinking, would conform Mrs. Jones to a fitness to tune in to the grace of God and have her prayers answered? Someone might say, "That was really harmless talk." But was it? What good did it do Mrs. Jones or her friends?

Unwarranted criticism of others is less than beneficial to anyone and so belittling to the one engaging in it. It poisons the system, because it poisons the thought. It does seem to produce disease. Medical experiments made years ago proved that the metabolism of the human system changes from one emotional mood to another. Some

experiments made years ago at the University of Chicago revealed that the gastric juices drawn from the stomach of an intentionally angered dog contained arsenic. So, again, if one is to pray effectively he must be worthy of receiving God's healing grace. This is a very important point in spiritual healing. Being loving is one sure way of being worthy.

As one grows in the spiritual understanding of God and man and endeavors to be Christlike, he is able to detect and reject the sinful thoughts that make him sick.

### Leading a Life of Prayer

Mrs. Eddy prayed her way through all kinds of human problems throughout her earthly experience, and she taught her followers to do likewise. She prayed for all mankind — every day. She even prayed daily for an end to war.

How many Christians would you suppose are offering prayers for the peace of the world today? What a stupendous thing would result if all Christians world-wide would pray unselfishly and daily for the peace of the world. What really is Christendom's expectation of prayer? We in this room could start praying that the thought of atheistic nations could be opened to the compassion of the Christ — and that we not be tempted to hate their rulers. Mrs. Eddy teaches implicit faith in prayer to solve all human problems and strife. She says, "Regardless of what another may say or think on this subject, I speak from experience. Prayer, watching, and working, combined with self-immolation, are God's gracious means for accomplishing whatever has been successfully done for the Christianization and health of mankind."<sup>13</sup>

It takes unselfishness to pray for something other than one's self, but there is a reward in doing it. It helps to heal one of selfishness and advances him spiritually. It aids in making him a successful demonstrator of spiritual power.

Dedicated Christian Scientists don't pray only when they're sick. They pray daily for growth in grace. They pray in order to progress spiritually. Christian Science is truly a praying religion. It teaches prayer as one's constant companion. Christian Scientists consider it their duty as well as their privilege to pray daily for themselves. This is their Leader's request. Those who do become equipped to meet the dislocations and disruptions of changing times with God-inspired confidence.

Faithful systematic daily prayer helps them to be minutemen, keeping them spiritually prepared

to deal with the general mental upheavals that will always be occurring as mortals are struggling to overcome the limitations of their own ignorant beliefs. Prayer holds the Christian Scientist's thoughts in Christian perspective.

### The Great Religious Leader

In the early days of Christian Science when Mrs. Eddy was laboring to give her discovery to the world, prayer was what sustained her and enabled her to press forward. When angry cries went up against her from some in the pulpit, much of the press and numbers of medical doctors, defaming her and doing everything possible to spread false reports about her, she prayed and forgave and loved those who hated her. Most preposterous of all slanderous attacks against her was the assertion that she was prayerless. Perhaps because she taught a different approach to the subject of prayer than pleading with God as a personalized Deity, her attacker's views were challenged on a number of theological points. It was her theology that roused the traditionalists and offended their sense of the Trinity. Her teaching that Jesus was not God, but the Son of God, was sacrilege to many of the Christian community of Boston. Yet it was because of her enlarged understanding of Deity that she was able through prayer to do many healing works after the manner of Jesus and teach her followers the art of spiritual healing.

When she defined God as Mind, it was well said that she started a theological revolution. She also started a medical revolution when she healed undoubtedly with prayer. Perhaps most startling of all was her teaching that matter is unreal and substanceless. Long before the average citizen included the word atom in his vocabulary, she challenged the scientific world with this statement: "Atomic action is Mind, not matter. It is neither the energy of matter, the result of organization, nor the outcome of life infused into matter: it is infinite Spirit, Truth, Life, defiant of error or matter."<sup>14</sup> The world of physical science may be on the way to glimpsing a little something of what she said. Physical research appears to have just about reached the end of subdividing matter stuff into measurable quantities and still has not turned up the origin of matter.

Many writers have attempted to evaluate the worth and impact of Mrs. Eddy's life and work. Some have been friendly — some have not. Trying to assess her life from a human basis will never do her justice or show a comprehension

of the fact that her writings are an explication of the Science of Life. Only the lives of her followers, demonstrating the certainty of scientific Christian healing, will show the world her true worth and accomplishments.

Past attacks on Christian Science and The Mother Church, rightly discerned, were in fact attacks on Mrs. Eddy and her message of the revealed Christ, Truth. All such efforts eventually fade out because there is no truth to sustain them. Founded on the rock of Truth, the Church of Christ, Scientist, has stood and will stand unassailable. Mrs. Eddy is not only the loved Leader of the Church of Christ, Scientist, her stature as a world religious figure is securely established. This is even conceded by many who do not agree with her theology.

### Meeting Challenges of Today

Things may seem to be hard at this time for churches of all denominations, as gross materialism, selfishness, and greed appear intensified and people seem less interested in spiritual values. But the "leaven of Truth" is at work everywhere in the world, and as a hymn in the Christian Science Hymnal says, "...step by step, since time began, we see the steady gain of man."<sup>15</sup> Are these measured steps, time controlled? Indeed they're not! The dedicated Christian Scientist takes his example from his Leader and prays without ceasing, so as to speed the tempo of mankind's progress *Spiritward*. Anyone's prayer proclaiming the goodness of God and His almighty power is applicable to all human discords and is leaven to world consciousness, purifying and redeeming it.

What would interfere with anyone being fruitful in daily prayer for himself, his church, and the world? A divided interest between the unrewarding attractions of worldliness or materiality and the redeeming influence of spirituality. To overcome the constant pull of materiality requires love of God and self-immolation. It requires alert strong self-discipline to avoid being lured away from the use of this great working tool, *prayer*, that will open the gates of heaven for all.

Have you heard the story of the schoolteacher who asked her class, "How many of you want to go to heaven?" All raised their hands except one little boy.

"Why, Johnny, don't you want to go to heaven?" asked the teacher.

"Yessum," replied Johnny.

"Well, why didn't you raise your hand with the others?" asked

the teacher.

"Because I thought you were fixin' to send us right now, and I ain't ready to go."

Who desires to enter that heavenly state right now? It's never a tedious journey, but glorious when rightly valued. Faithful daily prayer will speed you there.

Faithful daily prayer is many things. It is a precious period of holy communion with God. It is spiritual food and drink. It is a hiding place from the storms of mortality's turmoil. It is a sanctuary where one learns to listen for the voice of God guiding one Spiritward. It is there where realization dawns, awakening you to your true being.

- 1 *Science and Health*, p. 1.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 465.
- 3 John 6:63.
- 4 John 3:7.
- 5 *Science and Health*, p. 327.
- 6 Habakkuk 1:13.
- 7 *Science and Health*, p. 494.
- 8 Isaiah 28:10, 13.
- 9 *Science and Health*, p. 454.
- 10 *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 127.
- 11 *Science and Health*, p. 411.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 542.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 14 *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 190.
- 15 *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 238-9.