



The Christian Science Institutional Service Committee for the State of Oregon

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Today is Big with Blessings

In describing an inmate I'm working with, at first glance there is nothing remarkable about him other than his blue pants and blue shirt that all inmates wear. He was balding, with large glasses, quiet, and a bit older than my 63 years, and he loves to talk and share ideas. Yet I soon learned, here is a man with a daily mission. I had known him nearly four months before I realized from private visits to his prison what he was actually doing.

His purpose and daily goal is to bring harmony to his world of influence. He looks to see others through God's eyes. While he never mentions God to his fellow inmates yet that is exactly what he strives to do moment by moment. And like a magnet, inmates and guards alike are attracted to him and the peace he brings. As an unseen force, it is disarming and inclusive.

On one my recent visits, he shared some of his experiences with me. One of his stories stands out and demonstrates perfectly the effect his efforts are having to see the spiritual truths in each situation and in those around him. He was transferred to a new unit that had a reputation for conflict and fights on a weekly basis. These were usually the most volatile inmates to control. So his goal was to see man as harmonious since all were made in God's image and God is harmony. God was not in the drama. In one instance a fellow just out of segregation was assigned as his cellmate. Over the years his new cellmate had spent more time in solitary confinement than in the general population. His anger would not allow him to remain with others for very long.

This individual hardly spoke to him during the two weeks they were cellmates but his spiritual thoughts about his cellmate did begin to have a noticeable effect. He saw him as one of God's best ideas. All without any judgment. Soon they could talk of fishing as a shared and favorite pastime but little else did they seem to have in common. It appeared that his silent prayers for harmony were having some effect. However, due to some previous incident, his cellmate would be sent back to segregation for further punishment. When the news came down and he was saying goodbye, he gave his recent cellmate one piece of advice as he was leaving. "Get a copy of *Science and Health* and read it. You won't like what you read but read it anyway."

That was it; nothing more, and he never saw the man again. Later he learned that the man had been transferred yet again, however two years later he received a short letter from his former cellmate. He was surprised since he didn't think the fellow even knew



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his name. In the letter, he learned that he had indeed obtained a copy of Science and Health and yes indeed, he didn't like what he read. He explained what really bothered him; "I cannot believe that I am a child of God!". He was used to being called an s.o.b. and seeing himself as a bully and some other derogatory names but never had he considered the possibility of being a child of God. He closed his letter by explaining that he had now been out of segregation for more than a year and that was the longest he had ever remained without solitary confinement during his 15 years.

This letter was just one more piece of evidence that his prayers reaffirming the spiritual truths all around us do have a decided and marked impact on our lives and in the lives of those we come into contact. Stating what is real and true spiritually by observation has the effect of then being seen manifested materially in the world before us. An awareness of such cause & effect offers opportunities daily to impact the world we live in. This individual is very busy seeking the good in others and then watching Divine Love bless all. It just keeps unfolding for the benefit of all.

Can People Change?

When we arrived tonight one of the girls who has never expressed an interest in attending before was on a "time-out" at one of the little school desks. When we asked if she would like to join us for Bible Study she said "yes, I've got a lot of devils to get out of me." When she joined the group we began by asking what each wanted to pray about, she broke into sobs about her fears for her health because of bad medication combinations, cruelty by other girls there, family troubles and so on. She just sobbed and sobbed saying she has prayed and prayed for strength and doesn't know if she can take it any longer. One question that really seemed to concern her was "can people change?" We assured her yes they can. We explained the reason she can change for the better comes straight out of the first chapter of the Bible, and showed her that she is made in the image and likeness of God - what she wants to be is her real selfhood. We also affirmed that we all need to lean on God for strength and direction. Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing" and neither can we.

Seeing The Good

A released individual wrote his mentor that a few days ago I noticed I seemed to be recognizing people in a different way. Strangers I had never met looked familiar, as if we had met before and knew one another quite well. In fact when we started talking it was with a long time friendship that we understood in between the lines, laughed lots, and got on quite knowingly. Later in prayer, listening to God it occurred to me that I was seeing the God/Mind/Good in these people as they were seeing the same in me. What a treat!

The motive for undertaking this work is not to 'spread' Christian Science or enlarge church membership, but to respond to those reaching out for the truth that makes free, that reforms, heals, and uplifts. Our outreach programs have helped many inmates and patients to overcome physical, mental and spiritual challenges through application of the truths taught and proved by Christ Jesus.

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Wednesday Evening Healing Circle (Meeting)

My mentors husband picked me up two Wednesday's ago and introduced me to many in the congregation. As per my cultural etiquette of being introduced or sponsored I then felt comfortable to begin attending on my own, without being picked up. The church is a 20 minute bike ride and I've attended each Wednesday and Sunday sessions. I'm enjoying the readings, the people, the ride, the church, and being with God and what I call positive socialization. In other words I know Christian Science people like you, are helping me de-institutionalize. Perhaps I will say this at the next Wednesday night Christian Science session. This will probably break the ice more and is the Truth, hence Divine. We are a small congregation but very friendly, out going and struggling. I rode to the Church last Saturday to enjoy the ride and to acquaint myself with the library in the Church. But, the librarian did not show. So, I walked around the grounds. Prayed, meditated and felt like getting on my knees to pull some weeds. I enjoyed being with God. It means much and is a Divine help for me.

Comforting The Young

As we have heart-to-heart talks with young girls, we are reminded of Mrs. Eddy's quote from a poem in Retrospection & Introspection,

Ask God to give thee skill
In comfort's art:
That thou may'st consecrated be
And set apart
Unto a life of sympathy.
For heavy is the weight of ill
In every heart;
And comforters are needed much
Of Christlike touch. pg 95:4
A.E. Hamilton

With many of these girls, this is the work that we are learning to do, and are so grateful to be God's messengers of Love and comfort. Simple, healing truths about their inseparable relationship to God, Love are spoken and prayed as we talk with them.

Mothering

As often happens, many of the girls were dealing with the same issues. Tonight, many were dealing with hurt and worry about their mothers. We did lots of singing and discussing and marking Bible passages. One girl wanted to pray about her mother and sister because she didn't know where they were and hasn't heard from them in several weeks. We affirmed God knows where they are and is there for them. Another girl was downcast when we arrived and said her emotions were on a rollercoaster because of the way her mother is behaving toward her. She knows this is because her mother has her own issues, but still feels terribly hurt. We brought out that God is her Father Mother and is always there for her, and that she is very worthy of love, and if our mom's aren't up to the mothering we need, she can still be mothered by others and do some mothering too - divine love meets every need. We listed the synonyms for God and the qualities that belong to her as the image and likeness of God. Then she wanted to talk about how to know if a person was the right one to marry and how to find that person. We again went back to listing the qualities she wants to have in a husband and told her that she herself should express those qualities to others and this will attract them into her life. At one point another girl in the group expressed lots of self-loathing and this girl who had just been discussing mothering reached out to her in an encouraging and mother way. She also said that when we come she can often be feeling downcast, but coming to our Bible Study makes her feel joyful again and it's often the best part of her week, it was a sweet moment of fruitage.

Living Her Faith

One girl we are working with has applied for a program that she has been interested in and hopes to leave sooner than expected. She is still ostracized by many of the girls and some still try hard to get her to react and in trouble. She has continued to work on not reacting and is doing a better job of it each day. She is now working on not being so angry inside. This was a great week to work with the account of Jesus' temptations from the lesson. There are many girls she would like to help, but they are not receptive to religion, so she's not sure what to do. We talked about praying for the others and being a living example of Christliness. She has kept her commitment to be loving and helpful to the new girls. In this case the newcomer is a young woman who is "different" and made fun of by others. Although the appearance is that the new girl has learning disabilities, she finds her very intelligent to talk to. So she is living her faith under very trying circumstances and is becoming stronger. We talked about Hymn 15 "As gold by fire is tested, its purity shown forth, so cleansing fires of Truth may prove to man his native worth." She definitely sees this experience as being purified in a fiery trial. She wants to completely leave behind her running away and drug issues and says she owes it to her family to do so, but expressed fears about this. We talked about praying for herself daily, and embracing in thought each day her real selfhood as the image and likeness of God - to be clear that there are not two of her, but just the one God made.

A Note To My Volunteer

I'm on vacation from my work and enjoying the time for increased spiritual study and trips to the local University. I'm doing research about becoming a student again and have been signed up for an interview to return to college. This all started, the going back to college idea with one of the Sentinel articles you gave me about Christian Science education. It occurred to me that God had me at the facility you were serving to meet you and to enjoy our classes. Our meetings although an hour and a half at most, stick out as the most valuable of my time there. Last night I came across the article you gave me about publishing guidelines for Christian Science and I reread the interview with Marceil DeLacy. I realized the value of going beyond healing to see/sense more about the science in Christian Science. In other words, the process beyond healing which is always available. The bread and fish were not multiplied by Jesus, the food is always there. We just have to sense/believe/tap into/use what is already available. Which means again for me about being Mindful/Aligned. I believe this being attuned is happening more frequently for me. I have put down reading novels, news, etc. on this vacation. It seems more joyful to read Christian Science stuff, write, pray, to meditate, to ride my bike, to work out at the gym and to enjoy sensing peoples interactions without judging, interrupting, thinking-rather, just being present in the NOW. Also, they have not reinstated my pension but I have enough Social Security money to now buy the Bible Lesson which I thoroughly enjoy. I know that God is in charge, so I'm riding along and wondering about the journey more than the destination.

With respect and responsibility.