



The value of learning about God-centered care

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During the past 15 years or so, some developing thinking in the health-care industry has changed the usual approach to caring for others. One idea that has emerged is to recognize the importance of respecting individuals and their choices. This particular change has resulted in new terminology emphasizing the patient's role at the center of care decisions, and "patient-centered care" and "person-centered care" have become common. There is no doubt that this approach is a step of progress in how individuals are treated, and we can recognize it as a foundational expression of respect in many cultures and religions. I'm aware of at least one prominent medical care organization that includes Christ Jesus' Golden Rule as a guiding principle of its work.

As a Christian Science nurse helping individuals who are relying on God for healing, I've thought a lot about the approach one should take. It is so clear that our own study and demonstration of Christian Science is essential in order to help others. Every healing in our own experience as a result of acknowledging and understanding God's omnipotence enables us to confidently assure others that they can be healed, too. Putting God at the center and seeing man as His reflection and the recipient of His tender, transforming love is a radical shift in thought, which changes our approach from patient- or person-centered care to God-centered care.

With this understanding of God at the center, applying the Golden Rule takes on new meaning. Treating someone else the way we would want to be treated means understanding that both the caregiver and the patient have all the good God bestows on His children, right now and always!

Mary Baker Eddy, author of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, thought deeply about the approach that should be taken when assisting individuals needing care, carefully considering the relationship of nurses, doctors, clergy, and Christian Science practitioners to those looking to them

for help. In the chapter of *Science and Health* titled “Christian Science Practice,” she shared ideas that illustrate the Golden Rule, as well as how to encourage a sense of peace, harmony, and healing, based on her own experiences.

One statement from the chapter is a real wake-up call: “Did the careless doctor, the nurse, the cook, and the brusque business visitor sympathetically know the thorns they plant in the pillow of the sick and the heavenly homesick looking away from earth,—Oh, did they know!—this knowledge would do much more towards healing the sick and preparing their helpers for the ‘midnight call,’ than all cries of ‘Lord, Lord!’ ” (pp. 364--365). This startling description makes us think more carefully about what we say and the attitudes we express when helping someone. It emphasizes the need for a special awareness of what helps and what hinders. Mrs. Eddy developed this idea further in this chapter on Christian Science practice, explaining more about how to support healing. It becomes clear that the best way to help is through loving, compassionate, encouraging, and helpful thoughts—not dire predictions, long stories about one’s own terrible experiences, or platitudes and well-meaning but empty reassurances.

A helpful description of what is really needed is found on page 367 of *Science and Health*: “The tender word and Christian encouragement of an invalid, pitiful patience with his fears and the removal of them, are better than hecatombs of gushing theories, stereotyped borrowed speeches, and the doling of arguments, which are but so many parodies on legitimate Christian Science, aflame with divine Love.”

No matter what role we are in—husband, daughter, grandmother, friend, fellow church member, Christian Science practitioner, or Christian Science nurse—being mindful of what kinds of thoughts we entertain and the words we share is key to being a supportive presence.

Taking this a bit further, although human kindness and respect are necessary qualities, Christian Science nurses recognize that they need to go deeper than just human benevolence. The Bible and the Christian Science textbook are great resources for learning more about the spiritual nature of love. Their lessons take us beyond just the human expression of it to a deeper premise on which care can be based—the premise of God’s omnipotent, all-encompassing love for man. Recognizing this foundation helps us gain a higher altitude of thinking and demonstrate the “legitimate Christian Science, aflame with divine Love,” that Mrs. Eddy speaks of.

Statements about this deeper expression of love are found on the walls of many Christian Science branch churches. For example, often the simple statement “God is love” (1 John 4:8) is used, as well as the following words from *Science and Health*, which give insight into the magnitude of God’s love: “Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need” (p. 494). Knowing that God’s love for man is powerful enough to meet every human need brings a major change in thought. Realizing that His love is enough to heal even the most feared diseases and disturbances gives us a new dimension to draw on when caring for another. And when leaning on God for help, we can provide care that is buoyed with the confident expectation of complete healing.

I had an experience once that illustrates the difference that God-centered care can make. A friend called in the middle of the night to ask if my husband and I could come over to provide support. Our friend’s wife was dealing with a wound on her hand and was working with a Christian Science practitioner, but it was felt that our visit would help, too.

When we arrived, he said that someone had told them earlier in the day that it appeared the wound was infected and could be life-threatening. This statement had initiated a lot of fear, and the symptoms seemed to worsen. I immediately turned wholeheartedly to God and listened for a loving, healing response. What came to mind was a passage from *Science and Health*, and I said, “You’ve received a ‘blundering despatch.’” It was a surprising thought!

We looked up the statement containing “blundering despatch” and read it aloud, then shared ideas about what it meant to us. The passage reads: “A blundering despatch, mistakenly announcing the death of a friend, occasions the same grief that the friend’s real death would bring. You think that your anguish is occasioned by your loss. Another despatch, correcting the mistake, heals your grief, and you learn that your suffering was merely the result of your belief. Thus it is with all sorrow, sickness, and death. You will learn at length that there is no cause for grief, and divine wisdom will then be understood” (p. 386).

We realized that the individual who had shared a fearful perception had been doing so from a sense of responsibility to warn my friend. But the message we read from *Science and Health* helped turn our thoughts to the facts of God’s perfect spiritual creation and the recognition that God’s loving protection was present and active right then, exposing the error of the fearful matter-based perception. Awakening to an understanding of the spiritual nature of man’s relation to God as His perfect idea, and recognizing the falsity of the opposite view, helped us realize there was nothing to fear.

We felt God's comforting presence. The mental environment changed from a fearful, heavy atmosphere to one with the promise and expectancy of healing. I was asked to cleanse and rebandage the wound, which I did, with my thought filled with the inspiring truths we had just shared. The Christian Science practitioner's prayerful work continued, and the result was complete healing.

The certainty of knowing that God's love for His idea, man, is ever present and unchangeable helps anyone caring for another to approach his or her work without timidity or fear. Reassuring patients with spiritual truths—accompanied not only by deep compassion but by a measure of spiritual understanding—brings hope and expectancy of healing into the mental atmosphere. This approach to care is a direct expression of the goodness that comes from God. It goes beyond person-centered care to God-centered care, which is most definitely “afame with divine Love.”

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