

Higher and More Practical Christian Science Care
by James Shepherd, CS
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Thank you all for coming this afternoon to this meeting regarding Christian Science nursing, which is such an essential aspect of Christian Science care. I so appreciate what Canterbury Crest is doing and to have heard the update from the board today.

It's a real joy to be able to share this afternoon with you today and to talk with you about *'Higher and More Practical Christian Science Care'*.

Before we start, I'd just like to see a show of hands, how many of us consider ourselves to be involved in some aspect of Christian Science nursing?

It's probably fair to say that we all like practical things, right? I mean, you don't often hear, "I really like this appliance or that tool because it's so impractical." No, we like things that can be used. Things that work. And we want our Christian Science care to be practical, useful and effective as well.

Sometimes as Christian Scientists—I've probably done this as much as anyone—we say, 'I prayed about it and then took the practical steps.' And that's ok. I'm not trying to get too caught up in the wording. But we need to be clear that prayer **is** the most practical step, and then we may take whatever footsteps that are the result of that prayer.

Some time ago I had a good friend who was taking Christian Science nurse's training. Finally, after what seemed like years of training, I asked him, "How much training can you possibly do?" But he told me that most of the emphasis in Christian Science nurse's training wasn't on the physical aspect but on the metaphysical aspect of nursing. I've questioned other Christian Science nurses and the figure most often said is that 75-80% of the training is on the metaphysics behind Christian Science nursing.

So what separates Christian Science nursing from medical nursing? The metaphysics. Prayer is the Christian Science nurse's highest and most practical form of care for their patient. To be practical, nursing care must be raised higher; it must be based on improving the mental environment, not just the physical environment.

In preparing for this talk I asked Christian Science nurses and practitioners for examples of when CS nursing was especially helpful in a healing. I'll be sharing a few of those with you today.

It's very early in the morning. A Christian Science nurse is on the phone with a woman who's a Christian Scientist far across the country. The woman on the phone explains that her husband was traveling on business many miles from home—in the region where the Christian Science nurse lived.

The woman on the phone explained to the Christian Science nurse that the previous night her husband had said he wasn't feeling well and had stayed the night in a hotel. But she hadn't been able to get ahold of him either by cell phone or landline. The hotel employees said they couldn't go into the room to check on her husband. So the woman asked if that Christian Science nurse could please go and check on him.

The CS nurse agreed, quickly packed her bags and was ready to go within an hour. During that 2 1/2 hour drive to the hotel, she listened to that week's Bible Lesson over and over. The main thought that she kept holding to was that she could see only God's perfect man when she entered the room.

Meanwhile the wife called hotel, so they knew the Christian Science nurse was coming. The nurse picked up the key at the front desk and went to the room. She admits that, even though she had been praying, she still had to keep apprehension, worry, fear, out of her thought and she just keep trusting in God's goodness.

Inside the room she found the husband lying on the bed, unresponsive but breathing. She introduced herself and said that she was a Christian Science nurse and that his wife had sent her to take care of him. At this, she saw him smile faintly. This encouraged the Christian Science nurse as she realized that he could hear her.

The Christian Science nurse called the wife, and let her know what was happening. She contacted the practitioner who was on the case. She held the phone to the man's ear so the practitioner could share some truths with him. After assessing the situation, she went to the store to get supplies to care for the man.

For the next two days the nurse stayed in contact with the wife and the practitioner, and attended to the patient's physical needs such as keeping him clean. She quietly prayed, she read—sometimes out loud. And did a lot of singing of hymns. For two days.

On the morning of the third day the man became responsive and started talking to her. He started eating and drinking. He talked on the phone with his wife and the practitioner. And they decided it was time to go home. That day. There was no question that it was right. So an airplane ticket was purchased for him. The Christian Science nurse helped him get ready to go, drove him to airport and stayed with him until he boarded. The Christian Science nurse said that she felt strongly that the Christ was accompanying the man on his flight home. And she felt the presence of the Christ with her too.

That's just such a great example of a Christian Science nurse supporting the prayers of a Christian Science practitioner, bringing effective, practical Christian Science care. And it also shows the importance of having Christian Science nurses available and willing to nurse.

The title of today's talk is a modification of a passage by Mrs. Eddy on p. 242 of Science and Health: "A higher and more practical Christianity, demonstrating justice and meeting the needs of mortals in sickness and in health, stands at the door of this age, knocking for admission."

What is that ‘higher and more practical Christianity that Mrs. Eddy is referring to? It’s Christian Science, isn’t it? And Christian Science nursing is an essential part of this higher and more practical Christianity that has come to this age.

Sometimes the question comes up: How can a Christian Science nurse attend to the physical needs of someone while at the same time maintaining that God is all and there is no matter? That’s probably why 80% of nurse’s training is on the metaphysical: it’s not easy to do.

If this question comes to us, I think we need to be alert that this is really just mortal mind’s confusion as to what living as a Christian Scientist really is all about. And if we’re clear in our own thought on this, we will help the public become clearer about this as well. There’s no contradiction here: being involved in what seem to be physical activities—all the while knowing that God is all and there is no matter—isn’t this what we’re all doing as Christian Scientists as we go about our daily lives?

As we pray and hold to the facts of man’s oneness with Spirit, we get glimpses of the spiritual reality that is right here, right where there seems to be a material existence. And this understanding improves and enriches our human lives. And this is what a Christian Science nurse is doing as they go about their work, too: they’re bringing a higher and more practical Christian Science care to the human scene.

We don’t have to have a degree in Christian Science nursing or be Journal listed to care for others thru Christian Science nursing. Many times it takes only the slightest thought or word to raise the atmosphere of thought.

A friend of mine was working as a Christian Science nurse’s aide in a Christian Science facility. One day she went into the room of a patient to make the bed and straighten up. The sunlight was streaming in thru the window, and hymns were playing on the CD player. She felt the presence of the Christ. It was a quiet, holy moment for her. She said to the patient, “I feel the Christ’s presence right here and now”. She went on with her work and then left. Within the next few days the patient’s healing was complete. As she checked out at the front desk, the patient said that that simple thought, spoken by the aide—that the Christ was present right here and now—was an important factor in the healing. As this aide was doing the physical activity of making the bed, she was expressing a higher and more practical Christian Science care that helped in the healing of that patient.

As Christian Scientists we pretty well know what a Christian Science practitioner does, but what a Christian Science nurse does is sometimes fuzzier. So it was helpful today to hear about the scope of services of a Christian Science nurse. The duties of a Christian Science practitioner and that of a Christian Science nurse are distinct, and yet sometimes they overlap under the fuller context of Christian Science Care.

For example, when a practitioner prays for a patient, his prayer is in the absolute—or in other words, he examines the spiritual facts about the case, because that is where the healing power is. But for the full care of the patient, it’s sometimes helpful for the practitioner to talk to and

interact with the patient in relative, or human, terms. This human aspect can open the thought of a patient, allowing them to feel the love of Love, and making them more responsive to the activity of the Christ. I'm sure that every practitioner has been led to give a patient a big hug, or to encourage them or visit them; or to bring them a bowl of soup! This is an aspect of Christian Science nursing that a Christian Science practitioner might do.

On the other hand, what is something that a Christian Science nurse might do that is in line with a practitioner's work? A Christian Science nurse doesn't pray specifically for their nursing patient. However, their prayers and clear thought is in line with the Christian Science practitioner's prayers in the case.

What if we wanted to make a mathematical equation of Christian Science Care? We could maybe write something like Christian Science prayer + Christian Science nursing = Christian Science care. Sometimes the Christian Science nursing aspect is minimal, but whether it's supplied by a Christian Science nurse or by a Christian Science practitioner, there's usually some form of Christian Science nursing involved in Christian Science healing.

The teamwork in Christian Science Care can be especially valuable when there's a need to interface with family or friends who are not Christian Scientists; or when the medical community is involved. Sometimes non-Christian Science family members and the public need to see that 'something' is being done for that loved one under Christian Science care—in terms that they can understand. And, while you and I know that Christian Science prayer is doing 'something', others might not see it that way—sometimes even after the healing occurs. So to have a Christian Science nurse involved often helps reduce the concern and fears of non-Christian Scientists; as well as ease the burden of those family members who may be physically caring for the patient.

It seems to me that today, Christian Scientists interface with the medical field more than ever before. Rather than dreadfully anticipating our dealings with hospitals, doctors and medical nurses, shouldn't we be looking at this interaction as an opportunity to share the power of Truth? There's nothing to be afraid of here, and, as a movement, I think that we are losing the fear of interacting with those in the medical field.

A Christian Science couple had an experience that I'd like to share with you which highlights many of these points.

One day the wife found her husband on the floor. He wasn't lucid and she couldn't get him back up onto his bed. So she called a neighbor—a big, burly man—who gladly came over and helped her get him back into bed. A Christian Science practitioner and a Christian Science nurse were both on the case.

After a few days, the husband didn't seem to be improving. The wife felt increasing pressure from the family to have him taken to the hospital. The husband wasn't lucid enough to make the decision for himself, and the wife wanted to do the right thing. There came a point when it seemed clear to her that having him taken to the hospital was the right thing to do under the circumstances. It also came strongly to her that this was just a temporary aid in the healing.

So the husband was taken to the hospital. A physician did an emergency surgery. The Christian Science nurse and another friend from church stayed with the wife in the waiting room, supporting her and praying, and keeping the atmosphere uplifted. The wife later said how comforting and healing it was to have those fellow church members with her.

Post-surgery, this Christian Science nurse continued to visit him in the hospital nearly every day. Now, the hospital nurses were taking care of all of his physical needs, so what do you think she was doing there? Yes, keeping thought uplifted.

Over the following few days, the husband began to become more lucid. One day, the wife noticed the doctors hovering over him, asking him questions. She was grateful for their loving care and concern, and for the work that surgeon's fingers had done in the surgery. But she sensed that they were filling the atmosphere with their medical theories about his physical state. So she asked them to leave which they graciously did. She then spoke to him and shared the truths about the situation with him. There's that nursing quality—keeping the atmosphere pure.

As the days when by the husband continued to improve. The doctors recommended a couple of options for a second operation. But by this time the husband was far enough along in the healing that he was able to make decisions for himself. And he chose to refuse the surgery. And shortly thereafter he returned to his home.

He was put under a hospice program, which is for people who aren't expected to live. The couple said that they would agree to the hospice program under these two conditions: 1) that the term 'hospice' would not be used; and 2) that nobody could come in the door thinking of death; only of life. The hospice nurses readily agreed. And later they said that this home was their favorite visit of the day.

Rehab and physical therapy were recommended. However, he chose to rely entirely on Christian Science care for his recovery. The wife scheduled church members to come, and they, along with the wife and Christian Science nurse, did the Christian Science nurse's job of keeping the atmosphere uplifted.

Strength and control came back naturally and quickly. Within a couple weeks, the husband was up and walking around. Hospice said that their services were no longer needed—that he had “graduated”. Since then he has resumed his normal activities with no aftereffects.

Afterwards the husband and wife both concurred, “We just felt loved; the love of God; the love of the membership.”

Now this isn't some cookie cutter prescription for how Christian Scientists should handle this type of situation. Each case is different and unique and needs to be directed by deep and humble prayer. Being led to do our highest sense of right is a moment by moment demonstration for us all. I love how this healing shows the higher and more practical care that Christian Science provides through Christian Science practitioners, nurses, and fellow church members.

Are there any historians here? Does anyone know when Christian Science nursing first started? (This is a trick question!) Lets all go back... way back. Like maybe biblical times. Can anyone think of an instance in the Old Testament when aspects of Christian Science nursing were employed?

As I started to think about this, I found that in almost every Bible account there is some aspect of Christian Science nursing.

I tried to go back as far as I could. I got to Noah. He had a lot of animals that he had to care for and nurse! That may be stretching it a bit...

There's one particular account in the Old Testament that has always stood out to me as an example of motherhood or Christian Science nursing—the story of the Shunamite woman and Elisha.

The Shunamite woman is the woman who recognizes that Elisha is a man of God; then recognizes that he needs a place to stay; then has a place built for him. To me, that's Christian Science nursing right there!

She's barren, but Elisha tells her that she will have a child. And she does. Some years later her boy is brought to her, complaining of a severe headache. What does she do? She lays him on her lap. Doesn't that sound like Christian Science nursing? The Bible doesn't say what she's doing during this time, but certainly she's seen the power of God thru Elisha. So I'd like to think that maybe she was giving her son full Christian Science Care—as both a Christian Science nurse and a Christian Science practitioner, comforting her boy, meeting his physical needs, as well as praying for him.

The boy dies. But the woman doesn't give up. She lays him on Elisha's bed, a place where he will be accessible to Elisha, showing her faith.

She takes the journey up the mountain to visit Elisha, who sends his servant to her to ask if all is well with her, her husband and her son. She replies, "It is well." To me, that's the key point of the story. Despite the material picture, she has enough faith in God's healing power to be able to say 'It is well'. And, as you well know, so it proved when Elisha brings the boy back to life.

"All is well"-- that could be a motto for any Christian Scientist—and for the Christian Science nurse as well. No matter what the physical appearance, the Christian Science nurse is giving the most practical, useful, effective care they can for a patient—by actively knowing that all is well; that all is under the control of God, Mind, Love.

That's an example of Christian Science nursing from the Old Testament. What about the New Testament? Can anyone think of any?

What about our Exemplar: were there times when Jesus expressed aspects of a Christian Science nurse?

When I first thought of this, I thought No! Jesus didn't need a Christian Science nurse. He just immediately healed the situation. And yet, as I looked closely, I found that there are things that Jesus did that might be something a Christian Science nurse would do.

He tenderly touched lepers, showing them that they were touchable—that that they weren't bearers of some contagious disease; a human aspect to show them God's tender love for them.

After healing Lazarus, what did he tell the people? "Loose him and let him go".

Jesus fed the multitudes. That could be considered an act of CS nursing.

Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan, which is filled with Christian Science nursing.

What about the healing of Jairus' daughter?

He allows only his disciples and Jairus' father and mother to remain in the house. Why? Wasn't he clearing the thought surrounding the patient? Clearing out all those who saw a mortal, those that believed in death, or believed that life could ever be separated from God? That raised the atmosphere of thought surrounding the patient. Isn't that acting as a Christian Science nurse? It's acting as a Christian Science practitioner as well. Which, of course, he did by bringing back to life the young girl who had died.

And, after healing her, he puts his Christian Science nurse hat back on by saying, 'Give her something to eat'.

This story presents such a vivid picture and shows us how we are to visit someone—in their home or in the hospital. What thoughts are we allowing into our thinking, or into the mental environment? Before visiting someone who's ill, whether they're a Christian Scientist or not, I like to ask myself, "What am I expecting to see?" A mortal or an immortal? When we visit someone, are we going just to visit? or are we going to heal?

Where else can we find examples of aspects of Christian Science nursing? What about in the life of Mary Baker Eddy? Obviously she considered Christian Science nursing to be a vital activity, putting it in the *Church Manual*. She even uses the word 'practical' in this bylaw—though differently than I've been using it today. She lists three qualifications of a nurse: "...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." Think of her healings that you've read—where she's visited someone, sitting by the bed, lovingly comforting and encouraging them, and, of course, praying for them. You can just feel in those accounts her palpable love for them. Love is a practical attitude. It's a healing attitude. It's a Christian Science care attitude of both a Christian Science nurse and Christian Science practitioner.

Mrs. Eddy recognized the importance of the higher and more practical care that Christian Science nursing could give beyond the care of mere physical nursing. And, as you read your

Bible or pick up a biography and read about her, I suggest you look to find the times when the Christian Science nursing attitude is used.

The examples of Christian Science nursing that I've given today, including those from the Bible, and from Mrs. Eddy's life, help expand our sense of Christian Science care. And as it expands, we'll find more opportunities to fulfill our duty to give Christian Science care to others. And we'll be more inclined to remember to use Christian Science nursing ourselves when we need it.

I have a friend, a lifelong Christian Scientist, who contracted a severe case of poison oak. She was praying and had enlisted the help of a Christian Science practitioner. But even though her own mom was a Christian Science nurse, she didn't at first even think of using a Christian Science nurse to help her with the cleaning and bandaging of the blisters caused by the poison oak. Then one day the thought came to her that she could use more humility; and along with this, came the thought of using a Christian Science nurse. So she called one. The nurse's simple act of tenderly washing and re-bandaging the area, while also talking truth to her, shifted her whole perspective. For her this was a turning point in the healing. The healing happened quickly after this—both of the poison oak and of a relationship problem she was working on at the same time. So open that door wide when that angel knocks reminding you that Christian Science nursing is a part of the total Christian Science Care package.

Everyone here at some time has nursed someone, right?—a child or another family member, a neighbor or church member, or maybe a pet. With due respect and gratitude for the special talents and availability of full time Christian Science nurses, can't we all say that we're all involved in aspects of Christian Science nursing? And shouldn't we all be striving to improve this higher and more practical Christian Science care?

But some of us might be thinking that we don't really have a patient to nurse right now. But just as each of us is a Christian Science practitioner—which means that each of us has patients in the world to heal today. Each of us is also a Christian Science nurse—which means that each of us has patients in the world to nurse today.

Does everyone have a Christian Scientist nursing patient to mind? If not, may I suggest that each of us act as a higher and more practical Christian Science nurse for our church! We can take the human footsteps of Christian Science nursing the church by helping on house and grounds, in the Sunday school, ushering, being on the Care Committee. But if we're seeing church as a human institution, a material body, something in decline, we're not seeing church as it really is. We're not caring for church in a higher and more practical Christian Science way unless we see church as it's defined in *Science and Health*, "the structure of Truth and Love". Christian Science Nurse's training: 80% metaphysics. What if we spent 80% of our church work on the metaphysical aspect of church?

As we bring a metaphysical approach to our church work, we're bound to find more opportunities to act as a Christian Science nurse for others. We may find we're led to give someone a ride to church, or to be more friendly with others, or more patient in a business meeting, or to check up on someone that we haven't seen in a while, or,...

...here's an example of some folks who were alertly fulfilling this role of Christian Science nurse for their church:

One Wednesday evening a woman in the congregation slumped over, in obvious need of some care.

How did the Reader respond? He paused the service, and invited the congregation to sing a hymn. What a gracious, healing, act of Christian Science nursing! Another couple of folks in the congregation went over to attend to the woman. I'm sure everyone was praying during that hymn.

By the end of the hymn, the woman had revived and the Reader resumed the service. After the service, the congregants stayed with the woman, making sure she got into her car, and they watched her drive off for home. The woman was back in church the next service, and continued to attend thereafter.

Isn't that a great example of how we can be a Christian Science nurse for our church?

What is the impetus, the force or energy, behind Christian Science nursing? Isn't it divine Love, which 'meets every human need'? Love is the only power, so nothing can keep Christian Science nursing care from being fully and actively expressed. Nothing can keep Christian Science nursing from being available, effective and practical. And because each of us is an expression of divine Love, we can't help but express divine Love's highest and most practical Christian Science care.

You and I are dearly loved by God. We're infinitely loved! And this Love leads each of us to higher and more practical expressions of Love and of Love's care for each of Its ideas.