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## How to prevent illness

By Elise L. Moore

It wasn't always so, but on this occasion I was patient and kind with my little brother. We were playing a board game, and I was encouraging him, helping him make better moves, and was sweet to him (as my mother would say). At the beginning of the game, I was developing symptoms of a cold. By the end of the game, the symptoms were entirely gone. My mother noticed the entire sequence of events. She pointed out to me that my expression of love had prevented the illness. Where divine Love is expressed, sickness has no foothold.

*Love* is a Scriptural name for God (see I John 4:8) that indicates God's protecting, saving nature. It was the power of divine Love that protected Paul from a viper's venomous bite (see Acts 28:3-5). Paul's immunity resulted from his Christianity and his expression of God as Love.

What an extraordinary concept—that physical illness can be prevented by letting divine Love uplift one's thought and be expressed. Usually, preventing disease is discussed in terms of diet and exercise. There's a magazine entitled *Prevention* that I've thumbed through at the grocery checkout in my city. Recipes, articles on medical checkups, and food recommendations abound throughout its pages. Positive attitude is also acknowledged as helpful, so long as physical steps are taken. However, the implication is that one prevents illness by following the latest physical health theories. The body is seen as a compound of chemicals. Logically, from this premise, only chemical substances would prevent illness, and consciousness would have little practical effect.

But my experience of preventing a cold defies chemical explanation. There was no physical intervention, yet the illness didn't develop. In a modest way, didn't I experience the same protecting power of divine Love that blessed Paul? The consciousness of Love expressed in compassion lifted me above the grasp of contagion and chemical reaction.

Divine Love is a tangible protecting power because the body is not primarily chemical; it is a compound of thought. During the mid-1800s, Mary Baker Glover (later Eddy) introduced the proposition that the body is composed exclusively of mental concepts. In her autobiography she wrote, "During twenty years prior to my discovery I had been trying to trace all physical effects to a mental cause; and in the latter part of 1866 I gained the scientific certainty that all causation was Mind, and every effect a mental phenomenon" (*Retrospection and Introspection*, p. 24). Her conviction in a mental cause for physical effects was heightened when she herself was healed of internal injuries without any physical or chemical intervention. This healing prompted her to abandon homeopathy and other quasi-metaphysical systems, which she had previously investigated. In rejecting those systems, she moved away from a view of the body as a mixture of mental and physical elements. Instead Mrs. Eddy began to pursue the radical proposition that "... Mind is All and matter is naught..." (*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, p. 109).

To Mrs. Eddy, *Mind* meant more than a limited or personal human mind. It was the Mind of Christ. This healing, saving, divine Mind is the loving God that Christ Jesus demonstrated. Mrs. Eddy used the term *immortal Mind* to distinguish between divine Mind, God, and the sinning mind of mortals, which she named *mortal mind*. This differentiation was vital, since divine Mind uplifts and heals humanity, whereas mortal mind makes people sick and sinful.

As she continued to delve into the mental and spiritual nature of health, Mrs. Eddy discovered not only that it was possible to heal the body through the power of divine Love, but also that it was possible to prevent disease from manifesting itself on the body. She discovered that disease is first an impression, or image, in thought before it is manifested on the body. Disease is an image of mortal mind, whereas true health is the expression of divine Mind. She then realized that if the thought of disease is removed from consciousness, it will not appear in the body. In other words, disease can be addressed and treated while it is still only a thought, instead of waiting for it to be physically visible. She explains: "I have discerned disease in the human mind, and recognized the patient's fear of it, months before the so-called disease made its appearance in the body. Disease being a belief, a latent illusion of mortal mind, the sensation would not appear if the error of belief was met and destroyed by truth" (*ibid.*, p. 168).

What an innovative method of health care. Instead of waiting for illness, one can prevent it by spiritualizing consciousness. What are some of the key factors in removing images of disease from consciousness?

Stop investigating disease and its symptoms. To prevent images of disease from forming in thought, it is reasonable and safe to cease reading about, listening to, or looking for information about disease. This is not ignoring illness; it is ceasing to promote it. Current medical thinking publicizes disease symptoms in an effort to prevent them. Such promotion has had the opposite effect, however, increasing rather than diminishing the incidence of highly publicized illnesses. In contrast, Mrs. Eddy discovered in her Christian healing practice that health was improved by keeping theories and descriptions of disease out of one's thought. If disease is primarily mental rather than physical, the benefit of excluding disease theories from thought is tangible.

Practice early detection and destruction of fears regarding sickness. Medical authorities promote early detection, through physical examination, as a means of preventing the development of illness. But the earliest detection of illness is actually in discerning the thoughts or fears regarding illness before they are ever manifested in the body. Detecting fears and false theories is not sufficient in itself, however. One must destroy these intruding beliefs with the health-giving, life-producing truths of God's power and supremacy. Fear is broken when one grasps even a little of the existence and presence of God's power. Feeling the power of divine Love destroys fear, which, in turn, renews and rejuvenates harmony and health. When a fear of illness is replaced with the realization that God is able to maintain perfect health, confidence in God is restored and fear eliminated.

Understand that disease is an error, without power, intelligence, or a creator. God doesn't send sickness to punish one for sin, nor does He issue wake-up calls through a tool of the devil, disease. As it says in Psalm 91, "No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways" (New King James Version 91:10, II). Increasing one's faith that God, good, fills all space helps one realize that God excludes sickness, never sends it.

Realize that divine Mind, not mortal mind, governs you. Divine Mind is the source of health, harmony, and longevity. As we turn to Mind for comfort, inspiration, and information, our thought will be filled with true images.

These images from God, divine Love, form the perfect concept, which is harmonious and healthy. When we persistently rely on divine Mind for true images of thought, our health will improve and illness will be prevented. Mrs. Eddy noted this phenomenon in her book *Miscellaneous Writings*, where she states, "Holding the *right* idea of man in my mind, I can improve my own, and other people's individuality, health, and morals; whereas, the opposite image of man, a sinner, kept constantly in mind, can no more improve health or morals, than holding in thought the form of a boa constrictor can aid an artist in painting a landscape" (p. 62). Spiritualizing our consciousness in this way replaces unhealthy images with the image and likeness of God, always healthy and harmonious.

For many people, symptoms of sickness are frightening. If they don't know what the problem is, or they think it might be serious, they may feel helpless to address it. Imagination may run rampant with negative speculation. But with divine Mind as your guide, you don't have to identify a problem in order to cure or prevent it.

When I was a child, I would become ill for no apparent reason. I'd feel terrible and stay in bed, reading the Bible and *Science and Health* by Mrs. Eddy, and praying to understand God's loving power and government of my being. After a day I'd feel better. This problem disappeared during my teens but returned years later. The annoying aspect of it was that it would occur with no warning. If I didn't know what caused me to feel bad, how could I prevent it?

While I was praying about this situation, the Christ inspiration came to me that I could prevent this illness by uplifting and spiritualizing the general level of my thought. Previously, I'd been searching for some specific mental error to correct. Now I realized that if I uplifted my whole mental outlook, I would rise above the reach of the problem, regardless of what it was. It was the difference between approaching a situation with a machete or a helicopter.

The machete method of prayer would take "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) and cut through all the mental arguments one by one. Advancing through the jungle of mortal mind beliefs, one reaches the destination (health). But if the path is unclear or the jungle seems impenetrable, it may be better to put down the machete and use the helicopter method. The helicopter is the Holy Spirit, which lifts one straight up. At first, it might

seem that we are not making any forward progress, yet as we continue rising above the jungle of mortal mind, we soon have a higher view. From this spiritual altitude of thought, one can clearly see the destination and go directly there. From the helicopter, vines and brambles virtually disappear. Rising above mortal mind to the atmosphere of immortal Mind, we lose sight of medical theories and experience the freedom of God-given health and dominion. Using the helicopter method is not ignoring a problem; it is refusing to be entangled by it.

So, I began to increase my systematic study of spiritual concepts as inspired by divine Mind. Thoughts of inability, vulnerability, and uncertainty faded as spiritual ideas became more tangible to me. I found a new spiritual altitude of thought, and the physical problem disappeared.

It's never too late to erase images of sickness, nor too late to prevent disease. If a problem has taken root in thought and is manifest in the body, uproot it from consciousness. The same steps that prevent disease also cure it, for illness, even when manifested physically, is still primarily mental, just as the body is still composed of mental concepts.

Dwelling in the consciousness of God's power, and being filled with holy faith and inspiration, make preventing illness a joy, not a job. What freedom comes from a tangible understanding of God's presence. We may start with small steps, erasing little thoughts of inharmony from consciousness. But each effort to address problems in their mental stage strengthens our conviction in the effectiveness of divine Mind. Mrs. Eddy summarizes her experience in preventing illness this way: "Eradicate the image of disease from the perturbed thought before it has taken tangible shape in conscious thought, *alias* the body, and you prevent the development of disease. This task becomes easy, if you understand that every disease is an error, and has no character nor type, except what mortal mind assigns to it. By lifting thought above error, or disease, and contending persistently for truth, you destroy error" (*Science and Health*, p. 400).