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Prayer: an effective resource for health and healing

Live audio chat with Elise Moore

The transcribed text has been edited for clarity. Scroll to the end of the page for audio links.

What is the starting point for healing prayer? Why do some healings seem to happen more quickly than others? How can we pray to overcome long- and short-term challenges to health?

In this chat, Elise Moore, a teacher and practitioner of Christian Science, discusses these questions and explains how a fresh sense of God's presence can bring peace and healing.

Using examples from her own life and Christian Science practice, Elise explores how to "tune out the static" of fearful, negative thoughts in order to be more receptive to God, and answers questions from site visitors on heart disease, hereditary illness, and how to use spiritual facts to transform thought.

spirituality.com host: Hello, everyone! Welcome to another spirituality.com live question and answer audio event. Today we're going to be talking about "Prayer: an effective resource for health and healing" with Elise Moore, who is from Nashville, Tennessee. Elise has been in the fulltime healing ministry of Christian Science since 1985 and is also a teacher of Christian Science.

Probably all of us have read about the interest in nonmedical forms of healing that has been building for well over a decade. For even longer than that, well over 125 years, Christian Scientists have relied on prayer to heal physical conditions, including severe ones like heart disease, cancer, and depression, as well as to resolve many other problems. What they've found is that prayer gives them not just physical healing, but also a deeper understanding of God as their, and everyone's, Father-Mother.

So if you've been wondering about spiritual healing—if it works and how it works—you've come to the right place. Elise, do you have some comments to get us started?

Elise Moore: It's delightful to be with everyone, and I hope that you do take time to send in your questions. You know, when you were doing your introduction, I thought about heart disease. My grandmother came into Christian Science because she was diagnosed with a heart

condition that the physician said would be fatal within six months.

My grandmother had three children, the youngest of which was my dad, who at that time was only six years old. She was talking to a neighbor and telling her about this diagnosis and prognosis, and really bemoaning the fact that she had waited a long time to have a son, and she wouldn't be there to raise him.

The neighbor told her about Christian Science and gave her a copy of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. My grandmother began reading that book, and my grandmother was completely healed of that heart condition. In fact, I knew my grandmother; she lived into her advanced 80s.

spirituality.com host: Wow, that's an indication that healing took place there, isn't it?

Elise: It certainly is.

spirituality.com host: We have a lot of people online with questions about healing, so if it's okay with you, we could get started.

Elise: Let's start in.

spirituality.com host: Stewart from Topeka, Kansas, says, "I know prayer is supposed to be useful for healing illness, but how can we use it for everyday health? Are we supposed to pray specifically for our health on a daily basis?" That's a good question.

Elise: That *is* a good question. And the first thing that occurs to me is when we're praying on a daily basis, we want to make sure that we're starting our prayer with God, with thinking about God, not with thinking about a problem or potential health problem and then praying out from that standpoint. This makes a big difference in the effectiveness of our prayer.

When we start with God and with thinking about the nature of God as divine Life, as divine Spirit, as divine Love, and then come out from that basis of the all-power and presence of divine Love and of Truth and of good with us, this forms a solid foundation for scientific, spiritual prayer that really has a healing effect and also prevents problems.

Scientific prayer starting with God prevents problems by moving our thought from simply considering the physical and moves thought toward God. And now we're working out from the basis of God, of God's love, of God's goodness, of God's presence and power. We've really transformed where we're starting from.

Some mental-healing systems start from the physical perspective first, and that can trap us into thinking that we're a physical entity, either good or bad. And sometimes we get involved in *imaging*—where we image a more perfect physical body instead of an ill physical body and so forth.

But we're still trapping ourselves into the view that we're primarily a physical entity. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he started the Lord's Prayer with "Our Father which art in heaven." Jesus always started with God. He didn't start with a problem. So the prayer that Jesus was teaching us starts with God. That lifts our thought to God, makes us more receptive to God. And it prevents us from getting trapped into thinking that we're just physical.

spirituality.com host: The thinking isn't just an intellectual process, though. It's more shifting our thoughts to a spiritual basis, isn't it?

Elise: That's a good point. You know, people start in prayer from one of two bases, I've found. Some people are very heartfelt, and they start with their heart. Those individuals, when they start with God, really have a feeling of God's power and presence and goodness. So starting with God for them isn't really intellectual, it's more a sense of the Holy Spirit, of God's goodness and power with them.

Other individuals have a more intellectual approach. And sometimes that intellectual approach can be separate in their view from the feeling of love, the feeling of care, the feeling of grace.

But for those individuals that start with the reasoning, it's a very valid way to start. In fact, I have to admit, that's the way I start. I start with spiritual reasoning, but I'm always aware that I want to make sure that I'm feeling that love that I'm thinking about. When I'm thinking God is Love, it's not just an intellectual thought; I'm actually feeling that sense of God's affection and compassion and care for us as I'm thinking about "God is Love."

spirituality.com host: That's very helpful. The next question is from Louise in New York, New York, and she's asking—it's sort of related to the one we've been talking about: "How long do you have to have been practicing Christian Science before you can start healing yourself?"

Elise: I've found that some people can heal themselves almost instantaneously, when they first open *Science and Health* or first read a magazine published by The Christian Science Publishing Society. I know individuals who, for example, have just read an article in *The Herald of Christian Science*, the Spanish edition, and been healed instantaneously.

A friend of mine gave a copy of the Spanish edition of the *Herald* to an acquaintance of hers,

and he soon after that was working out in his apartment, lifting weights and so forth, and he did something to his back. And he found himself flat on the floor and unable to move.

As he was lying there, his thought went to his friend and wishing that she was there and could pray for him. And then he suddenly remembered the *Herald* that she had given him, and he was able to reach up and flip it off the table. Then he lay on the floor and just read this article. And he was instantaneously healed.

So sometimes, it isn't a matter of time. It's more a matter of spiritual receptivity. Perhaps behind your question is a feeling that you've been praying about something for quite some time, and haven't experienced the healing or transformation that you've been yearning for.

I would say to you, or to anyone else in that situation, to put aside the details of whatever the physical problem is. Try to move that out of your thought, and turn to God with a fresh sense of trying to feel that presence of God's love with you. Stick with that until you really feel that, and then progress with your prayer.

spirituality.com host: Do you think expectation would be helpful there, to just really have a feeling of expectation that healing does occur?

Elise: That's such a good point. That's the way *Science and Health* starts out, actually. In the very first sentence on page 1 talks about "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." That "absolute faith that all things are possible to God" is that expectancy of good that you were talking about.

spirituality.com host: Jan in California is saying, "How can I best keep my thought on God to see definitive healing?"

Elise: Move the details of the experience out of our thought. You know, there's a Biblical precedent for that. When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, before he gave them the Lord's Prayer, which was his answer to their question, he told them, "Go into your closet and shut the door. And then proceed with your prayer."

When we want to keep our thought focused on God, it's possible that first we have to make sure that we are shutting the door against the details of the disturbing experience or other intruding negative thoughts that would prevent us from really feeling the presence of God with us.

I call this "tuning out the static." You know how you tune a radio and you're looking for a station, and you're approaching that station but you aren't quite there yet, and there's this static.

That static can be like those negative thoughts. We really have to tune out the static in order to tune in more clearly to God.

spirituality.com host: Fred from New Hampshire is asking, “Because God is all-knowing and all-seeing, I assume prayer is more listening to God than asking Him for help. With this said, is health and healing acquired by simply listening to God, and is this what you are calling prayer?”

Elise: I particularly love that question, because I have an entire lecture on that topic, and it’s called, “God is speaking to you.” There are many ways to pray, and, frankly, however you’re praying is probably a good way to start.

But this one type of prayer that I explain in this lecture starts off with first, tuning out the static, like we were just discussing—tuning out fear, doubt, negative thoughts, hatred or resentment, whatever would attempt to interfere with your clear ability to listen to God.

The second step is to tune in to God by affirming spiritual truths about God and the nature of God—truths about God’s presence and love for you, God’s power, God’s ability, about the fact that all things are possible to God, and so forth.

The third step is to listen. Once you’ve tuned out the static and have tuned in more to God and that absolute sense of “God with us,” listening is certainly an important aspect of prayer. We don’t just always want to talk; we want to trust that God is with us and then listen for the inspiration or intuition that’s coming to you.

But there is a fourth step, and that is, we need to obey. It’s not enough to just listen. I actually believe that people are hearing inspiration and intuition from God frequently. But we almost discount it instead of taking it as the valuable, important inspiration from God and answer to prayer, and being immediately obedient—following up to those ideas. Sometimes we have a tendency to almost push those good ideas out, or put them on a back burner.

So perhaps if you have been praying diligently and have listened diligently to God, I’d almost assume that you have been hearing intuitions and good ideas and answers from God. Then you can be more alert to be immediately obedient to those answers.

spirituality.com host: That’s very helpful. James from Pennsylvania is asking this question, “How best can a Christian Scientist pray when visiting someone in a hospital or medical nursing home environment?”

Elise: I’m really grateful that you are visiting individuals who are in those environments. I

think that it is compassionate, supportive and healing to everyone around.

I want to share one little experience I had. I got a call one time, actually, from a hospital. This was when I lived in a small community called Gallatin, Tennessee, and everyone knew everyone, and people at the hospital knew me. So I got a call from a person saying that a Christian Scientist had been brought into the hospital. She was in a coma and not expected to live. Her family was not involved in Christian Science or supportive of Christian Science, and she actually was not from that town. She was visiting from a distant state, and this illness had occurred.

The person from the hospital called me because they felt that if this person were conscious, she would want a Christian Science practitioner to know she was there, and to come and visit her.

I went very early the next morning at 6:00. I stood by her bedside, and I actually began praying aloud for myself all the truths that I could think of about God and God's infinite power and care and love. I prayed aloud like this for maybe half an hour or so.

And the phone rang. It was her daughter from this other state, who was unaware of the current status of her mother, and asked to speak to her. So I held the phone to this woman's ear, and I knew the conversation was over, because this woman said, "I love you, too." And I thought, Oh, we're making some progress here.

So after I hung up the phone, I again began praying aloud. One of the things that is very precious to Christian Scientists is the thought from Matthew 5, verse 48. And it talks about God being perfect, and that we also can be perfect. And I shared that thought aloud, that God was perfect and had created me perfect and her perfect and everyone as the perfect idea of God. Now I don't mean humanly perfect—I'm talking about the spiritual identity here.

Well, you know, with that, she opened her eyes, and we had a little conversation. From that moment, she was out of the coma.

So my answer to the question is, when you are going into any environment, aren't you taking God with you? Or isn't God already there before you? So the environment that you are in is your conscious awareness of the power and presence of God, of the love of God. And maintain that awareness with you wherever you are.

spirituality.com host: That's really helpful. Brent in Gary, Indiana, is asking: "When praying about hereditary disease, should we pray to overcome the disease or the idea of inherited illness?"

Elise: I might like to start a different way. Mrs. Eddy, who is the author of *Science and Health* and the Founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist, has a short sentence where she talks about a starting point. And then she has another sentence in another part of her book, *Science and Health*, in which she warns us where not to start. And if it's okay, I'd like to read these two sentences.

spirituality.com host: Sure. That'd be great.

Elise: The first sentence is on page 275 of *Science and Health*. She says, "The starting-point of divine Science is that God, Spirit, is All-in-all, and that there is no other might nor Mind,—that God is Love, and therefore He is divine Principle."

So regardless of what the problem is, the starting point of effective prayer is God. That entire page, page 275, is full of truths about God that I find very effective to start from, regardless of what the human situation is or what you think the cause of the situation is.

And then she gives us a little warning about starting point page 395. In it, Mrs. Eddy mentions a concept that she calls *mental quackery*. So I'm going to read this short sentence from *Science and Health*: "It is mental quackery to make disease a reality—to hold it as something seen and felt—and then to attempt its cure through Mind."

If we aren't starting with God first, and establishing clearly and firmly in our thought the power, presence, and allness of God, and of ourselves as His beloved image and likeness, we might have a tendency to make a mistake and start thinking that disease is a reality; that there's a cause for it, whether it's heredity or an accident or something else. And if we do that, and then attempt its cure through Mind, this isn't particularly effective. And she even calls it *mental quackery*.

So we really want to start with God, not with the problem. And if it's okay, I could give a little example of my own.

spirituality.com host: That would be great.

Elise: Some time ago, we were on vacation in Mexico, and I cracked my foot against an exposed beam that was in a museum. And by the time we were out of the museum, I couldn't walk any longer.

The next morning, I got up and went out early to the beach with my books, the Bible and *Science and Health*, sat down underneath a palm tree, and began to read the Bible Lesson.

Before I started to read, I was aware that I really needed a quick healing. This vacation was going to be a walking vacation, and so, as I was thinking about that, some negative thoughts began to crowd in. The sort of “what if” thoughts—and I didn’t even want to go that way.

I seriously and immediately shut that off. I didn’t even want to think whatever that “what if” thought was going to be, because I know that if we can shut out those—as Jesus said, go into our closet and shut the door—if we can shut out those negative thoughts before they even grab our attention, that we have quicker healings.

The other negative thought that started besides the “what if,” was that there was a problem here, that I could no longer walk, and that there had been an accident. As that thought began to form, that there was a cause and a problem that needed to be handled, I shut that out as well; because I have found that if we very firmly just start with God and stick with the allness of God, that this makes for less process in the prayer.

So that’s what I did. And two very specific thoughts came to me, from reading that Bible Lesson. One was a phrase from *Science and Health*, it says “sins at every step.” I suddenly realized that if I was agreeing with pain, agreeing with a problem, that was actually a mistake. And *mistake* is another word for *sin*. So I would be sinning at every step. I resolved at that moment, I was not going to agree with pain and problem.

The second thought, also from *Science and Health*, is a phrase that starts, “Every step towards goodness...” and it goes on, is like a step towards God. And what that meant to me at that moment was, I wanted to have every step being a step more spiritual, a step toward the understanding of God and His presence and power, the understanding of divine Love.

I got up at that moment, and began walking down the beach. When I needed to, I would know that every step was toward God, toward divine Spirit, toward the power of Truth to heal. I was not going to agree with pain. I made my way up and down the beach several times, working this way, praying this way, and then realized that there were some people about, and I probably needed to get back to the room.

As I stepped out across the road from the beach, I realized I was completely healed.

spirituality.com host: That’s excellent. And a very good example. This question is a little bit more complex. It’s from Markie in St. Louis, and she’s asking, “Could you comment on the recent study that found no connection between prayer and healing in heart patients.”

Elise: I think many people have commented on that study. And perhaps their comments are more valuable than mine. I certainly can’t comment on a study that I wasn’t participating in

and don't know all of the thoughts of those participating in, because I've found that prayer is very dependent on our thought and our feelings. And so especially since my own grandmother was healed of a heart condition through prayer, I am very well aware of the power of prayer to heal that specific problem.

I guess that my comment is, I'm not so sure that it's as important what others are thinking and feeling, as what you are thinking and feeling. If you are feeling the presence of God with you, if you are affirming and declaring with conviction that all things are possible to God, and have that sense of peace that comes with a feeling of God's presence, of God being in control, I think this is very helpful.

In praying about heart conditions, I often think about feelings—that we can remove feelings of feeling hurt, of resentment. Instead, we can feel the love of God uplifting us and uplifting others, and can really feel God in control. God is controlling the pace of your life, and you can feel and rely on that control of God.

spirituality.com host: I think one other thing that I've found helpful is that healings tend to build on each other. In other words, whereas a study may be looking at one particular event, you might say, individually, every healing you have reinforces the next quest for healing, because you know that God was with you in the previous experience and you've seen proof of how it worked and how you did it. And it builds up a feeling of confidence, that the next thing will also be healable, don't you think?

Elise: Yes. That is absolutely true. Another thing I think was mentioned in that study is that individuals who were told that they were being prayed for experienced undue anxiety. You know, that's the exact opposite of what true prayer is all about. There's a sense of peace, a sense of God being at work.

You know, it's not you that's responsible here, and it's not our prayers that are somehow making God come to us or making the situation change. God really is in control, and in that sense, we're turning to God first and feeling that sense of peace and assurance and calm trust that comes from knowing that God is governing. It's not dependent on you somehow, or the effectiveness of your prayer. It really is God at work, and we're agreeing with God.

spirituality.com host: Eduardo in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is asking a totally different kind of question. He says, "A dear friend's daughter passed on several years ago after a couple of years of suffering from cancer. My friend still suffers from grief. I would appreciate your ideas on how to heal this through prayer." And I'm assuming he's referring to the grief.

Elise: I'm so grateful that you care enough about this individual to think about this, and to help

her through this. And your love and care as a good friend is so supportive to her.

You know, when someone has prayed in the best way they know how and it doesn't turn out as they had hoped it would, we can still pray about this today. We can tune out the static. And that includes tuning out whatever the material senses say happened. You know, when we feel overwhelmed by a sense that someone passed on, it makes it almost impossible for us to pray effectively and to hear what God has to say to comfort us today.

So for just a day, if you can, urge her to tune out that static of what occurred, and instead, for just one day, to tune in to the presence and power of God with her right now. And if she will do that for one day, then I know that the message of comfort that God has for her will come right through, and she'll be able to hear this comforting message that God has already been sending to her. I don't know what that message will be, but I do know that it will be healing and helpful and comforting to her.

spirituality.com host: That's a lovely thought. We have two questions now that are both difficult questions, and they both deal with situations that have not yielded to healing. I'll take this one first. It's from Abbey in Washington, DC, and she says, "I've been struggling with a physical problem for a few months now. This morning I cried out to God, asking to be made whole again. The thought came to me clearly that I am already whole. I'm confused, then, as to why I'm not seeing this wholeness manifested."

Elise: Well first, I want you to know that your prayer is effective; that every right thought has a healing effect. And instead of feeling that your prayer is not effective, what if we changed that a little bit and started from that thought that your prayer is effective, that God is at work, that God is transforming, and that healing is taking place.

What if we stuck with that and didn't go back and forth between looking at the material picture for information about how we're doing, and then switching back to looking to God for information about how we're doing? Sometimes it's that switching back and forth that seems to discourage us.

There's a wonderful passage in *Science and Health*, and it's on page 120. In fact, that whole page is really good, and I recommend it to anyone who is feeling that they might be going back and forth between the testimony of the physical senses and the evidence of the spiritual facts that God is giving to them.

Anyway, on page 120, in the middle of the page, there's this sentence: "Health is not a condition of matter, but of Mind ..." (and that's a capital M Mind, referring to God). "Health is not a condition of matter, but of Mind; nor can the material senses bear reliable testimony on

the subject of health.” I find it very helpful to think about this—that “health is not a condition of matter,” but health is a condition of divine Mind and is discerned mentally.

So therefore, I don’t want to ever look to the material senses to tell me whether I’m healed or not. That means I’m not looking to the material senses to tell me I’m well, nor to tell me that I’m unwell. Instead, I’m looking to divine Mind.

I find in my own practice what that means is I look into my own human consciousness to see what’s around the living room of thought. Is everything in order, or are things in disarray? Is there a doubt? Am I feeling resentful about something? Am I feeling uneasy about something?

And then addressing those specific issues, instead of thinking just about the physical problem and healing the physical condition. Instead, addressing these issues of thought and correcting those issues with spiritual facts until those negative issues of thought actually aren’t in my thought anymore.

And that’s another important point. I think sometimes, especially if we’ve been praying about something for a while, and I don’t mean to sound critical at all, but sometimes I know for myself, I find that my prayer becomes a little perfunctory.

I’m going over spiritual facts that I do know to be true and that I have great confidence and conviction in. But I’m not allowing those spiritual facts to actually change the negative thought that’s in my heart. And I’ve found that I really want to go for the change. I want that resentment or hurt feeling or doubt or fear to actually be changed, transformed, removed. I don’t want to just pray about it and then end up with the feeling still there.

I want to go for the actual removal and change. I keep at the spiritual facts until that negative feeling or thought really yields, and I feel it leave, so that what’s in my heart is a real sense of that power and presence and goodness of God, instead of the resentment or fear or hurt.

Then you hold on to that change of thought. You really hold on to it until it’s firmly established with you. I’ve found that when I do this—look in the living room of my thought for these negative or inharmonious thoughts or feelings, really change them until they’re removed, and the spiritual feeling and thought is now established with me—that physical problem has sometimes been transformed.

I want to tell one quick healing I had. Actually, the healing wasn’t quick. The thought that came to me was quick. I’d been struggling with something for a while, had really been praying about it. There was a lot of physical sensation regarding this, and it was difficult for me to deal with.

This one day I was really sort of frustrated and at my wits' end here, because the sensation was so grabbing my attention. I thought, okay, what are the rules of Christian Science practice here? I just need to go back to the basic rules. I thought, the first rule is I've got to put the physical out of thought—that's tuning out the negative. I thought, Oops, I'm not doing that very well. All I can think about is the physical sensation. I thought, okay, I'm not going on to rule number two until I've done rule number one.

So as I prayed about how to do this, the thought came to me that I just needed to literally tune it out and not pay attention to this. Instead, I needed to hold on to a thought about God. So I determined to do it for one day ... because this almost seemed impossible. It almost felt like, I don't think I can do it.

I thought, No, for one day, I can do anything for one day. For one day, I will tune out this physical condition—not look at it, not pay attention to it; and I'm not going to feel this or agree with these feelings. I'm only going to tune in to a truth about God. And I actually prepared myself with a couple thoughts about God that were meaningful to me at that moment. I thought, I'm going to do that for one day.

Well, the next day was full of meetings. I was very busy, and whenever this physical condition seemed to try to grab my attention, I would instantly tune that out and tune in to these truths about God, and just hold on to them firmly in consciousness until that was all that was in my thought. And then I would go on.

I want to tell you, by the end of the day, there was a lot of improvement.

I still wasn't looking at the condition, but I could just tell I wasn't as challenged to hold on to these truths about God. I could do it more easily. So I decided, okay, I'll do this for another day. Well, I continued this way for quite some time. I determined I was not going to think of health as a condition of matter, but of Mind. And I continued in that way until at some point I realized I was healed.

spirituality.com host: I think that's the key thing. Even if you can only make the commitment for an hour, and then do it another hour or another hour, that idea of really keeping your focus spiritually is so important.

Elise: Yes.

spirituality.com host: And in a way, you've already been answering Amy's question. She's writing from upstate New York, and she says, "What about a longstanding problem that has not

yielded to prayer? Is it okay to use medicine until there is relief? There's just too much pain to deal with." And it sounds like you were really answering her question before you even knew about it. But would you like to elaborate on that a little bit?

Elise: I will say that everyone is working out their own salvation. This isn't a group thing. Everyone is working out their own salvation. And you're not looking for someone's permission to pray, and you're not looking for someone's permission to do what you feel is the right thing to do.

So instead of looking to someone else for permission, let's look to God. Turn to God, and see what God is telling you to do at this moment.

spirituality.com host: And oddly enough, you're already answering a little bit of this also difficult question from Hayley, who's writing from Orlando, Florida. She says, "I have three family members who are also Christian Scientists. But within four months, all three have had to go to the hospital. Two had broken something, the other was told by the doctors she had a stroke, but aside from her right arm, is doing very well.

"My question is how and why does this happen when you know these people are and always have been good Christian Scientists? What material thought got in there?"

Elise: I know that especially young people sometimes look around them to other Christian Scientists as role models. Mrs. Eddy actually recommends that we turn to Jesus Christ as our role model, and not to other people. It's interesting that when we read the Bible, we really do turn to Jesus Christ as the role model.

I'm not so sure we turn to Peter or to Judas or to Thomas or some of the other disciples. Some of these disciples did some wonderful works, some wonderful things. And then sometimes they made mistakes.

And I don't think we find ourselves asking, Well, why did Peter deny Jesus at the point of the crucifixion? so much as when we think about Peter, we think about how Jesus gave him after the resurrection a wonderful assignment to feed his sheep and set Peter on a course of action. We think about Peter's overcoming problems, not, Why did he have problems?

So it's very helpful, I find, to think of Jesus Christ as the role model. How would Jesus respond? What would Jesus do? And then when we're thinking about other individuals and how they're working out their own salvation, I just think we need to give people some slack. Let's allow people to work out their own salvation.

We don't actually know the thoughts and feelings that other people are challenged with or thinking about. But, you know, we can be supportive of them. We can hold up the right idea of them in our mind, and this is very supportive and helpful to anyone.

In fact, Mrs. Eddy, in one of her other books, which is a book called *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, has a sentence that I'm particularly fond of, and it's on page 62. Mrs. Eddy says, "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."

What I take from this is, What's in my thought? What am I thinking about these relatives? Am I holding up an image of them as the image and likeness of God—the right idea of man in my mind? Or am I seeing them as mortals—maybe as sinning mortals or sick mortals or failing mortals? What am I holding in my thought?

I want to hold the right idea of man in my mind. It's not so much what other people are thinking, it's, What am I thinking? If I'm holding up the right view, the spiritual view, the Godlike view of others and of myself, then this will be helpful and supportive.

spirituality.com host: That's great. Thank you very much. We've got an interesting change of pace here in this question from Ron in Holland, Michigan. He says, "The movie, *The Da Vinci Code*, is awakening interest in the 'divine masculine and feminine' which Mary Baker Eddy defined as Father-Mother God. The motherhood of God is expressed as Comforter by Isaiah 66:13. How can we use this idea of Comforter in our prayers to bring about healing?"

Elise: Oh, that's so wonderful. And by the way, I'm a huge fan of *The Da Vinci Code*. I happened to read it the first week it was out. I started at 9:00 at night—you know, I read a chapter of a book in the evening, or something—and I couldn't put it down. I read until 3:00 in the morning. Oh, and by the way, I really do think it's a fiction book. I don't think that it's a nonfiction book for those of you who are wondering.

Your question actually includes the answer, and it certainly indicates, Ron, your own spirituality of thought and your own depth of understanding of the Comforter. The Comforter, Jesus said, will be with us forever. The sense of the Holy Ghost, of that great influx of spiritual understanding that uplifts us, that brings peace to our hearts and comforts us, is with us. And this concept of the Comforter—God as Love, the mother view of God—is not a biological concept. It truly is that spiritually mental view of peace and love, of affection and compassion that is that mother-presence.

How can we bring this more into our healing work? If we start our prayer from the basis of God as all-present divine Love, bringing peace and harmony, comfort to the heart, if we start our prayer that way, then it's natural for us to feel more of that presence and power of divine Love in our healing work. So I think, you're really introducing a beautiful way for people to start their effective prayer—by starting with God as Love.

spirituality.com host: This is, again, back to a more difficult question from Barry in San Francisco, who says, “My daughter was in a car accident over 30 years ago and has made much progress. However, she is still in a wheelchair. When I visit her even after these many years, I still go away very depressed. Any suggestions?”

Elise: I think first, that reference that I gave in *Miscellaneous Writings*, page 62, and it's at the top of the page, line one, I think this is very helpful. What thought are you holding in your mind? And I think at this moment, the answer is that you are holding the boa-constrictor view.

No matter what the physical picture is, it is always helpful to the other person, as well as ourselves, to hold up the right idea of man, that spiritual view. Not a physically right view. You know, this is not imaging.

I want to maybe not speak to Barry here, but to anyone else who's listening who might be a little confused between the concept of imaging and the image and likeness of God. Imaging, which is used in some mental practices, is the practice of imaging a physical picture in your mind, maybe of a better situation, or imaging a perfect physical body or something.

Christian Science is not involved in physical imaging. In fact, it's the exact opposite. It's putting whatever the picture is out of thought, and, instead, holding the image and likeness of God in thought. Since God is Spirit, and God is Truth and God is Love, these aren't physical pictures that we're holding in thought. We are holding the image of God as Spirit, and seeing that since God is Spirit, man is spiritual; since God is Love, man is the image of Love. That's a wonderful way to think of your daughter, that she is the image of Love.

spirituality.com host: Carol in Germany is asking, another tricky question, which is, “I'm scheduled to have surgery in the next couple of weeks. Should I cancel the surgery and just seek God's help?”

Elise: I think that you can turn to God, and just for one day, today, tune out all the details of the problem, and tune in to what God is telling you is true about you as His beloved daughter.

You might turn to *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, page 275 that we were talking about. You might also turn to pages 258 and 259 in *Science and Health*, which are some

beautiful pages talking about your relationship to God, man's relationship to God. It has some very specific and wonderful ideas about perfect God and perfect man.

You might also turn to page 475 in *Science and Health*, which is all about the spiritual view of man and your relationship to God as His image and likeness. And it lifts up our view above the physical.

A couple other recommendations in *Science and Health* are the chapter "Creation." It's a very short chapter, but it certainly shows man's relationship to God and that God is the only Cause, the only Creator.

In the Bible there are some wonderful passages that might help you to tune in to God and to feel His healing power with you more today. You know, you don't have to wait two weeks to feel God's healing power and presence with you. Some of these references might be Romans, chapter 8, a wonderful healing chapter. And also Ephesians, chapter 4.

spirituality.com host: Those are very helpful. And, Carol, if you don't have a copy of *Science and Health*, you can read it on the website. Just click on the picture of *Science and Health* that's on the home page, and that'll take you right to *Science and Health*. And the Bible is online also in many different translations. So do feel free to take advantage of its presence right there on spirituality.com.

And now, I think this is going to be our last question, Elise. It's from Joy in Denver. And she says, "What are the parameters, or rules, when wanting to help my spouse with physical issues, and who is not a Christian Scientist?"

Elise: Well, you know, first, the first rule is to uplift your own thought. What is in your thought? We've been talking quite a bit here this afternoon, I think, about holding the right idea of man in your mind. And so the first step is, What is the view that you're holding in your thought about your spouse?

Let's remove from thought these lower views of him as physical, a suffering mortal, and so forth. Instead, let's transform our view to what Jesus told us about man—that man is made in the image and likeness of God; that man is the beloved idea of God.

And what Mrs. Eddy points out about man. You might turn to that page 475. I find it very helpful, actually, and very effective in transforming my thought, to substitute a person's name in that page 475, which is asking the question, "What is man?" I might put my spouse's name in there. And it transforms how I might be perceiving them, how I might be viewing them.

When we then transform our view, and have moved our thought from simply observing physical conditions to actually seeing the spiritual reality of an individual, then, you know, sometimes just through divine Mind, you will find thoughts coming to you from God of further transformations of your own thought that you could make. This is so helpful to your spouse—holding that right view in your mind really does heal others.

spirituality.com host: I wanted to ask you this question, which sort of ties in with all these questions we've had about dealing with people and issues where people are suffering in some way. There's something called negative prayer, and I wonder if it is appropriate to maybe close our discussion with some comments on that topic. Is that something you'd like to talk about?

Elise: I would love to talk about that. I think that's very, very important. Sometimes individuals have a view of prayer that actually is the opposite of effective prayer. I remember I was going out to lunch with someone. This was in Nashville, Tennessee, where I live, and they had heard that I was a Christian Science practitioner, and they wanted to talk with me about Christian Science, and so forth. They were a member of another denomination.

And at the beginning of the lunch, they wanted to show that they believed in the power of prayer and that we were in the same camp, and so forth, and so they told me a story of how they really did believe in the power of prayer, and this was their example.

There had been a woman in their church who had a mother who was very ill for a long period of time. It was a drain financially on the family, and the woman who was a member of the church actually was feeling overwhelmed with being a caregiver for an extended period of time.

So she'd gone to the church with these troubles. And the church prayed that her mother die, and within a week, her mother died. The woman that I was speaking with gave this as an example of effective prayer. I was horrified. This is the exact opposite of prayer. This is what Christian Scientists would call *mental malpractice*, or terribly bad practice.

I certainly corrected that with the person I was having the conversation with. But I think it's important for everyone to think, you don't want to do negative prayer. Our prayer is to uplift someone, to uphold the real view of them as the image and likeness of God, as the beloved son and daughter of God. It's not to curse, it's not to somehow give in to an illness. We want to hold up the right idea of them.

I also want to mention there's sometimes a question, Do we ever stop praying for someone? Though it does seem that people pass on at some point. I know that when I was with my mother, who has passed on, that this was an issue that I was very clear on myself.

What was helpful to me—it's one of the last pages in *Science and Health* before you get to the chapter on Fruitage, and it's on page 598. At the bottom of the page, there's this wonderful little paragraph, and I'm just going to read a few sentences here. Mrs. Eddy says: "One moment of divine consciousness, or the spiritual understanding of Life and Love, is a foretaste of eternity. This exalted view ... would bridge over with life discerned spiritually the interval of death, and man would be in the full consciousness of his immortality and eternal harmony"

What that says to me is that at no point do I want to give up the consciousness, the divine consciousness, of eternal life, because this consciousness will "bridge over with life discerned spiritually" this interval of death.

So there's never a moment when we let go of, or need to let go of, the right idea of man, this divine consciousness. It's always helpful. It's always supportive. We never want to do negative prayer. We always want to uphold this right view of an individual. It's a blessing. It gives them comfort and healing, and it certainly is comforting and uplifting and healing for us.

spirituality.com host: I would just like to add one little comment there about the folks who prayed that way. I'm sure that they didn't have really an evil intent there, but it sort of shows the danger of outlining how the answer will come in terms of saying, Well, this is the right answer, and so therefore, God, give us this. And it gets back a little bit to expectation and letting God open the way toward a solution that is a real blessing, don't you think?

Elise: It certainly does. And it also goes back to the situation with my grandmother, who was diagnosed with a very short expectancy of life. And if someone had agreed with that and prayed that she die a painless death, that certainly would not have been helpful.

spirituality.com host: Right.

Elise: But upholding that right idea of man opened up a whole life for her.

spirituality.com host: Yes. And blessings for you as well.

Elise: Oh, yes.

spirituality.com host: Well, Elise, do you have anything else you'd like to add before we close here?

Elise: You know, I'd just like to say that God is with you. God is blessing each one that's listening to this program. God loves you. God is present with you to comfort you, to give you the answers that you need. Don't hesitate to turn to God with your whole heart. Tune out

whatever the negative thoughts are and listen for what God has for you. You'll hear that answer. You'll feel the power and presence of God with you.

spirituality.com host: Thanks so much, Elise. I really am so grateful that you joined us today. And I'd like to thank you all for joining us, for your prayers and also for your questions.

Citations used in this chat:

Science and Health:

2:23 (to .)

1:1-4

275:6

542:1 (only)

213:11-12

120:15-17

258:9-21 np

475:5-477:18

598:23

King James Bible:

Matt. 6:9 Our (to ,)

I John 4:16 God is (to ;)

Matt. 6:6

Matt. 1:23

Matt. 5:48

Isa. 66:13

John 14:16

I John 4:7, 8

Rom. 8:1-39

Eph. 4:1-32