

“AS IN HEAVEN, SO ON EARTH.”

(Part four – Learning Life Lessons through Prayer)

by

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This is Part Four of the talk, “As in heaven, so on earth” delivered to the Nurses and Staff at Sunland Home Foundation, a Christian Science Nursing Facility, just north of San Diego and ten minutes south of The Gardens, which provides loving care for senior Christian Scientists. As mentioned in Part One, in our Fall Newsletter, Auriel spoke from notes so this is not a verbatim account of what was said and it has been expanded upon for this newsletter.

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We’ve traveled quite a distance along the river of prayer in our exploration boat. Having found and tested the gold of prayer, we then quickly rounded the next bend where we spent the gold on ourselves by enjoying our communication and connection to God through prayer. It took a little longer to reach the House of Light and ponder how we may spend our gold on others and so bless them through prayer. Now we are poised for the fourth and final point of this particular expedition.

It may seem surprising to find a fleet of boats on our river. We are not alone! There’s good reason for the sudden swell in our river population, for around this bend are very many schoolhouses with open doors inviting us to enter. We’re all prepared and eager to take classes and learn how to improve our lives. Perhaps this indicates humanity’s underlying desire to know Life, God. Mary Baker Eddy’s statement, “Earth’s preparatory school must be improved to the utmost,” (*S&H 486*) is an accepted sentiment today. The concept is out there from Oprah to someone you might meet in the Post Office. Yes, we know we’re here to learn lessons – life lessons. But how shall we learn them? is the question.

The teacher of an enrichment class for senior citizens was overheard talking in an elevator with some of her pupils. A man asked her, “Do you just teach affirmations, or do you include denials as well?” It’s a popular topic. In fact, we could say the latest buzz word is “affirmations.” A book claiming to have found the key to getting what you want out of life lists a hundred or more affirmations to do with success, health and finances. And such books are plentiful, but prayer, or asking, is in short supply. It doesn’t appear to enter into the “success” equation. Neither is humility discussed because, of course, it takes humility to ask.

Now it’s just as difficult to experience heavenly harmony – “as in heaven, so on earth” – without asking God questions, as it is to progress in an academic school without asking the teacher any questions. So this last section is all about learning life lessons through prayer. We’ll turn away from what the human mind wants, to find the divine Mind’s perfect plan for us all. Christian Science is an invaluable aid to students in life’s classroom.

## Learning Life Lessons through Prayer

### Finding-the-Subject Lesson

When Glen and I moved to the top of Palomar Mountain in Southern California we referred to our tiny home among the trees as our new classroom. We knew we were there to learn spiritual lessons and how to apply them on the human scene – make them practical. What we didn't realize was that we would also be enrolled in night school, but we were!

Palomar Mountain was quiet enough in the daytime, there being only about two hundred full-time residents on the top of the mountain, plus the summertime visitors, of course. You can imagine that nighttime in our little house in the middle of ten wooded acres was very quiet indeed. However, one night a telephone “went off.” Yes, it sounded like an alarm clock, yet no one was calling us. Having been roused from sleep, we then talked about the preceding day and began listening for lessons in it. Then, for various reasons, we'd wake up night after night and our school sessions would usually last a couple of hours in the dark. Sometimes when our night school hadn't taken place for awhile Glen would pray, “Dear Father, please show us our next step” and night school would occur again. We were never tired after these learning sessions.

There was always a subject attached to the lessons, and if at first this seemed a negative subject, like pride, it was always corrected by something very positive, such as humility. Then of course we had to live it, which was proof we were learning it. On one occasion, it became obvious to us that simply speculating on the meaning of someone's statement or action usually led to wrong conclusions. We saw examples of this happen over a two-week period. It might have been a simple event over which we pondered. Why did an acquaintance move out of Los Angeles? Maybe because of the traffic? We were usually wrong it turned out.

Years later that lesson is still very clear and if I don't understand what an individual is saying or doing, and it appears important to know the thinking behind the statement or action, I'll usually ask them exactly what they mean. If you don't practice this, try it sometime and compare the answer with what you were surmising. You'll probably find the guess to be wrong. Now, if “jumping to conclusions” or “rushing to judgment” usually leads to wrong conclusions, then the art of expressing intelligence and humility, by asking for input, is definitely a more sensible approach.

This of course leads to a much larger picture. If it's important for communication and kindness' sake to understand what another means (whether we agree with them or not) how much more important it is to ask our heavenly Parent the meaning of life lessons – to understand what God is saying. So we need to ask what the lesson is. What is the subject? And if the subject isn't readily apparent, we can still learn lesser lessons until it is.

### Example: The Red Shoes

The year had to be 1967, according to my best calculations, and the lesson lasted forty years until January of 2007. No comments please at this point like, “What took you so long!” We can remember the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years when a quicker route was available to them. It’s interesting what gets in the way of learning our lessons and why they are prolonged. In this case, I thought I knew what the lesson was.

It began when my dear parents, who were always tender of heart, wanted to buy a pair of shoes for a little girl whose mother evidently needed some help. So, my parents, the child, her mother and I all went to a department store. As my parents were giving the shoes and I had young children of my own, I became the designated shopper, trying various pairs of shoes on the child. My parents even remarked on the energy I put into this so that I redoubled my efforts under their approving gaze.

A number of pairs were rejected and then it came to the red shoes. The little girl was enamored of them and said she wanted those. Feeling these weren’t practical, I encouraged the party to put their support behind a serviceable pair of brown shoes. So, over the child’s disappointment, the brown shoes were purchased. All seemed to end well.

However, the red shoes began to haunt me. Now and then they would pop up and I would sigh, “All she wanted was a pair of red shoes.” This went on for literally decades. From time to time and for no apparent reason, there were the red shoes, dancing in the background, and that nagging, sad feeling that I hadn’t been loving enough. I also chastised myself for any pride I had at the time due to my parents’ approval. Each time the shoes accused me, I tried to remind myself that it was just a good lesson and would teach me to love more. I would take the red shoe episode out my mental files where it had been placed under “Auriel’s misdeeds” and put it into the “opportunities to love” folder.

However, the shoes would never stay put and the next time the thought came up, there they were again in the “misdeeds” category. I mourned over this and wished I could have done better, until something very unusual happened.

In January of 2007, I awakened early one morning with some ideas for a talk on parenting. It would be good to add a section on helping children to make better choices. Then quite suddenly, I mentally saw a vignette in front of me almost like the Ghost of Christmas Past out of Dickens. I “saw” that mother and child, though this wasn’t a physical recognition because I could never recall what they looked like. No, this was a metaphysical uncovering because instantly came the knowledge that the mother had been making poor choices. It was also clear that we were there not simply to get the child what she liked, or even what she needed, but to help her understand and make better choices. As her only pair of shoes, the brown would be much more suitable for all occasions than the red. With this

revelation, the vision faded and the sorrow over the red shoes faded with it. I'd had the wrong subject (lack of love) all those years and as soon as the correct topic – helping children to make better choices – was present, then that event came to mind as an example of it.

Christ Jesus told us, in a parable of the tares and wheat (*Matt 13*) not to pull up the tares until we can distinguish them from the wheat. In my haste to berate myself for lack of love, I didn't recognize the wheat of that experience. I surely could have shortened that whole process by asking God for the lesson, namely, that wisdom is just as necessary as love. God is Love, but God is also divine Mind, the intelligence of the universe, and both must be expressed. The red shoes are now comfortably and permanently settled in their new folder under "wisdom and love," subtitled, "helping children to make better choices."

Just a little addendum on lessons: Sometimes there are a few similar events in a day that come under the same heading. One morning, not long ago, it appeared as though the family of a friend was relying unnecessarily on her. Then by mid-day I became disappointed when someone I had expected to do something for me didn't do it. By the evening another incident arose when an individual told of all the people who wouldn't help her. She was leaning on others while making little to no effort on her own behalf. When the day's subject became obvious – the need to lean on God – then my own disappointment disappeared and I can't even recall what it was about. It was simply part of a lesson that reminded me to lean more on God and to help others do likewise. Another good day in earth's preparatory school!

### **The Humility Lesson**

"The human mind is opposed to God and must be put off, as St. Paul declares," states *Science and Health* page 151. Why this opposition? Because the human mind has its own agenda – its own desires to pursue – rather than the plan of the divine Mind. So, the human mind objects to asking. It balks at giving up human will for the divine will, and would rather substitute good sounding phrases for the humility of asking, listening and following obediently what divine Love is requiring of us.

One thing Glen and I quickly found out, as we pondered important concepts in our textbooks, is that we can't understand what's right until we are willing to be wrong. That takes humility, doesn't it! Mrs. Eddy says humility is a requirement for healing and "must be had to understand our textbook." (*Mis. 356*) In fact, she makes strong statements on the subject and some may be a little hard to take. (But no rushing through this part, please!) Let's look under the surface of *Miscellany* page 165.

Of two things fate cannot rob us; namely, of choosing the best,  
and of helping others thus to choose. But in doing this the  
Master became the servant. The grand must stoop to the menial.

There is scarcely an indignity which I have not endured for the cause of Christ, Truth, and I returned blessing for cursing. The best help the worst; the righteous suffer for the unrighteous; and by this spirit man lives and thrives, and by it God governs.

Does that seem just – the righteous suffer for the unrighteous? No, it may not be just, but justice is not the topic here, the spirit of humility is. The human mind objects to this, concentrates on the possible injustice, not humility, and even calls into question the enduring love of our Father-Mother, rather than face the lesson, though by humility we will **thrive!**

Now, let's try this garment on for size. It's a designer label called "humiliation," and is found in *No and Yes* on page 39. Please note that it's custom tailored for each one of us.

Prayer can neither change God, nor bring His designs into mortal modes; but it can and does change our modes and our false sense of Life, Love, and Truth, uplifting us to Him. Such prayer humiliates, purifies, and quickens activity, in the direction that is unerring.

Humiliates? That sounds pretty awful doesn't it! But successful prayer really does humiliate us. It humbles (lowers) us in our own eyes and perhaps even in the eyes of others.

Now, with only two quotations we have gained the possibility of taking part in menial tasks, indignities, suffering for the unrighteous and humiliation. Need we wonder more why the human mind is not prone to learning humility? It's either time for recess in "earth's preparatory school" (skip the lesson altogether) or work hard metaphysically to make the situation disappear. In the following incident, however, neither option was taken.

#### Example: A Questionable Promotion

A woman, head of her department with many years of work experience, assigned tasks to a newcomer, a young man fresh out of high school. After five years he became more or less her protégé. So, for another five years, she trained him further in many facets of the work. Then the news came that the woman's supervisor was going to retire and rumor had it that the young man would be promoted to that position. What a potentially humiliating situation that appeared to be! But the woman had grown up with an understanding of Christian Science and so, when a family member suggested the new situation could turn out to be a blessing (if some patience was applied), she decided not to react but to wait on God and listen to Him as well as she could. That desire to hear God became her patient prayer.

Well, the young man was indeed promoted to the position of being the woman's supervisor and the one to whom she would report. Now, he would write reviews on her performance instead of the other way around. There was some logic to this decision,

however, because the woman had not wanted that position (it included an expertise in which she was neither educated nor interested) and the young man was well suited for it. But one may wonder: Did it have to be that specific individual in the new position and not someone else? Could it have been less embarrassing for her? Couldn't divine Love have arranged this in a different fashion? In actual fact, divine Love had all the bases covered, though it took almost a year of patient waiting for the woman to recognize the benefits.

Because the young man knew the intricacies of the woman's department, having been trained by her, he could support her ways and means in the work far better than could a newcomer who was less knowledgeable. He was also more objective than his predecessor so the atmosphere in the office was improved. The woman admits that it sometimes still feels a little strange reporting to someone who used to report to her, but she also acknowledges that this was the best outcome. She has no regrets, hurt feelings or embarrassment over it. What a great lesson in humility that was. She obviously passed with flying colors!

### **Lessons for graduation**

The human experience is full of tremendous lessons. Our desire, our prayer, to God is that we may learn these lessons, even during recess and vacation time. Fourth grade humility isn't enough, just as fourth grade mathematics is not sufficient for graduation. Humility, as well as other graces of Spirit, are learned on increasingly higher levels. Being conscious of continually learning lessons of God's goodness, His nature and our true spiritual being, removes disappointments on the human scene, even those carrying the most regret – our own missed opportunities to love. Those regrets, if we are sure of the subject, can be placed into the "opportunities to love" folder. They will remain there until finally dissolved by the light of better actions and more love as we work towards graduation.

Christ Jesus gave us the lesson plan and Christian Science describes the spiritual laws behind this plan to eradicate sin, disease and death. But it's not enough to know the unreality of that trio of errors, for we need to prove it. So Jesus also gave us the Lord's Prayer to cover "all human needs" and showed us by example the path in which we should walk. Divine Love does not punish our best efforts but helps us every step of the way to understand and dwell in the Kingdom of God which is ever present. How do we describe this kingdom, or divine consciousness, which belongs to God? It's the kingdom of heaven, total harmony and joy, and is won by degrees as we advance in the most important subjects in life's school.

"Let unselfishness, goodness, mercy, justice, health, holiness, love – the kingdom of heaven – reign within us, and sin, disease, and death will diminish until they finally disappear." (*S&H 248*) Our diplomas carry the seal, "As in heaven, so on earth."

At this point, we'll throw our caps in the air. It's graduation day!