



HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

Our mission is to heal through practical, operative Christian Science.

April 2024

Spring Cleaning

Spring cleaning at my grandparents' farm usually meant, for me, whatever outside chores my grandfather, Pop, deemed important. In April I could be found helping him plant seeds in the garden. Doing it by hand took several days and included wrangling a small rototiller to prepare the soil. The garden was massive, and I thought it was far more work than the two of us could manage. But apparently that thought never entered Pop's mind.

He belonged to the local Rotary Club, which met on the first Wednesday of every month. One of those early spring Wednesdays, while Pop was at Rotary for a couple of hours, I decided to see what Gram was up to.

My grandmother, a *Journal*-listed practitioner, could almost always be found immersed in her Christian Science books or on the phone with a patient. Today, however, she was doing household chores—starting with laundry.

Even as a 10-year-old, I regarded Gram as the glue that held our family together. Her quiet manner and practical matter-of-factness drew me to her. Somehow, being with Gram freed me from the self-imposed burden of trying to work harder to impress Pop. She was always patient with me and never made me feel inept. When I asked questions, she always replied—even if only briefly—in a way I could understand.

Anyway, Gram was in the basement handwashing clothes at the well-worn concrete double sink. It seemed odd to me that a practitioner was doing such menial work. But there she was, standing in the morning light coming through a small window, bending over the soapy side of the sink. The other side of the sink was for rinsing, and to the right of that stood what we would today describe as a vintage automatic clothes wringer.

Gram seemed to be deep in thought. Curious, I asked what she was thinking. "Just thinking about God." I accepted that answer, figuring she

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was praying for a patient and needed to be undisturbed.

I watched her methodically rub each towel or pair of work pants against a shiny washboard propped up in the soapy sink then rinse the item in the second sink. For me, the coolest part was watching her feed the rinsed clothes through the wringer. I loved to see the water squirt from the damp clothes, which came out pancake flat. "Be careful, Davey," she'd say. "Don't let your fingers get caught in the wringer."

After Gram filled the wicker laundry basket with clean clothes, I carried it outside for her, feeling helpful and happy. Looking absent-minded, she hung each article on the clothesline as I handed her the clothespins. I sensed she was still praying.

For Gram, spring cleaning was primarily a *mental*—hardly a *menial*—exercise. It was not confined to a single season. Year-round, she daily cleaned her mental house and washed the "laundry"—mortal dreams, illusions, and myths about God's purely good, spotless creation. Sure, she cooked, dusted, and washed windows, dishes, and clothes, but her all-consuming, 24/7/365 labor involved an activity I call "cherishing."



Photo by Chittima Stannore on Unsplash

She cherished God and she cherished His children—His spiritual man. This cherishing was her main task throughout the day and often into the night. It was what enabled her to heal others.

Mary Baker Eddy says of this kind of toil:

"There is no excellence without labor; and the time to work, is *now*. Only by persistent, unremitting, straightforward toil; by turning neither to the right nor to the left, seeking no other pursuit or pleasure than that which cometh from God, can you win and wear the crown of the faithful" (*Miscellaneous Writings 1883–1896*, 340:5).

In Gram's front-room study hung a gilt-framed print of Briton Riviere's 1890 oil painting, "Daniel's Answer to the King." Though the lions are prominent characters in the painting, Daniel is the focal point. His upturned face, bathed in light, is serene, at peace. His hands are clasped behind him. His back is turned to the seven hungry lions. How could he have been so nonchalant?

To me, the answer is that Daniel daily devoted his entire attention to God alone. Because he refused to let his thoughts be diverted, he didn't need

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to pray for protection from the lions or even for an escape route.

Notably, there is not only no fear shown in his countenance or deportment but also no trace of resentment or righteous anger toward the princes who instigated the decree that prevented him from openly worshipping God and then tricked King Nebuchadnezzar into signing it.

Too late, the king realized he had been hoodwinked into condemning Daniel to die in the lion's den. He probably spent the night alternating between fury at himself for being fooled by the duplicitous princes and fervent hope that the God the innocent Daniel revered was mighty enough to spare his life.



He was. Under God's omnipotence, Daniel was unharmed by the king's law and by the lions. He felt nothing but *agape* love for his enemies, for the king, and even for the beasts. That love shielded him from all forms of attack.

The symbolism of this famous depiction of Daniel with the disarmed-by-divine-Love lions reminds us that when we feel trapped in a den of loss, lack, sickness, or pain—and by the fear, doubt, and worry that are behind these conditions—we can claim *our* dominion, as did Daniel, by calling on our Father, even if, unlike Daniel, we have not been His faithful followers.

We needn't take inventory of our woes and then try to escape them by praying ourselves out of a hopeless pit we've condemned ourselves to. Wouldn't that be like Daniel seeing vicious lions, counting their number, and envisioning the bones of their past victims scattered over the stone floor?

Daniel didn't attempt to humanly befriend the lions. He didn't stroke their beards or twirl their tails. If he had, would he still be standing in the morning to greet the king? Definitely *not!*

So, how did Daniel dare turn his back on the mortal scene? I sense he was conscientiously doing his mental spring cleaning, while confidently holding fast to "the enduring, the good, and the true." That whole sentence in *Science and Health* reads: "Hold thought steadfastly to the enduring, the good, and the true, and you will bring these into your experience proportionably to their occupancy of your thoughts" (261:4).

All these years later, I still remember how Gram, inspired each morning by the Daniel print on her study wall, brought her love of God and a sense of purpose to everything she did, from her healing practice to her farmhouse chores. All her obligations were opportunities to do joyous spring cleaning.

Similarly, our *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen, devotes her Daniel-like thought to God and bathes her clients in His love. She does spiritual spring cleaning before, during, and after every home visit.

We all can do the same spring cleaning wherever we are and whenever—but especially in early April in Houston, where spring has sprung.

Lovingly,
The HVCSNS Board of Directors and our
Journal-listed Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen

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Christian Science Hymn 324