



# HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

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

August 2023

## Out of the wilderness

I remember the time when dad and I went camping, along with a score or so of other fathers and sons. That first morning I awoke early and quietly slid out of my sleeping bag so as not to wake up dad. I felt like Daniel Boone treading noiselessly through the dense forest that surrounded the campgrounds. My seven-year-old enthusiasm propelled me deep into the woods until I suddenly realized it was best to head back to our campsite.

That's when I turned around and saw only trees. There was no trail. I had absolutely no idea where I was or what direction to go to get back. Panicked, I stopped and stood in the sunlight that filtered through the boughs. With simple trust, I prayed to feel God's presence. In a moment, a few words from my bedtime prayer came to me: ". . . guide my little feet up to Thee." Now calm, I waited for God to tell me where to go. He did. Soon, foreboding wilderness gave way to the familiar scene of tents and morning campfires. Dad never knew I'd left.

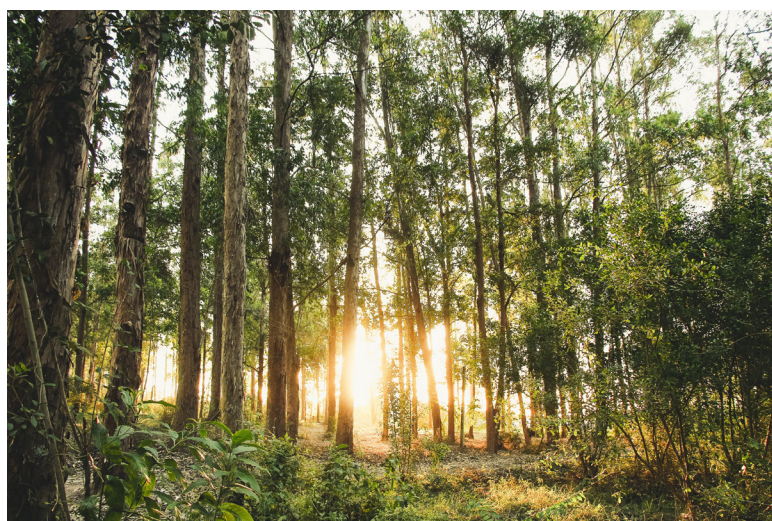


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The first part of Mary Baker Eddy's definition of wilderness—"Loneliness; doubt; darkness"—seemed to be my lot that day. Yet I intuitively knew that focusing on those three mental states would've left me lost, wandering in bewildering circles, gripped with fear. Instead, my trusting heart sided with the rest of her description of wilderness: "Spontaneity of thought and idea; the vestibule in which a material sense of things disappears, and spiritual sense unfolds the great facts of existence" (*Science and Health*, 597:16).

Continued ▼

What are “the great facts of existence”? Well, I’m sure I was comforted by the one great fact I knew: God is Love. I also understood what it meant for divine Love to be “reflected in love.” For, even at that young age, I was learning Mrs. Eddy’s spiritual sense of the Lord’s Prayer (SH 16:7). It meant, to me, that we’re to love all our neighbors as God loves us.

Oh, and there’s one more thing I knew without a doubt: Jesus, who taught his followers the Lord’s Prayer, was the best man ever, because his love for God and his neighbors was so huge!

Come to think of it, perhaps I even recalled, from reading all those Bible stories in Sunday School, that Jesus actually *liked* to go into the wilderness. He wasn’t afraid of forests or deserts or mountaintops.

In fact, when Jesus heard about the death of his cousin John—his playmate when they were little boys and the young man who would baptize him at the start of his healing ministry—his response was to walk into a desert, a wilderness place, to commune quietly with his heavenly Father. There, Jesus let Love lift him out of grief.

When some people who wanted his help scouted him out, Jesus was so uplifted by his alone time with God in the wilderness that he was ready to selflessly meet their needs. Later, his disciple Matthew remembered that day, “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick” (Matthew 14:14). From this account of our Master we learn not to be afraid of—but even to welcome—our own wilderness experiences.

Of course, that’s easy to say, harder to do. Dire circumstances sometimes press upon us, leaving us feeling embattled.

Consider how besieged Abraham Lincoln felt during the Civil War, yet he remained steadfast and stayed the course. He once said, “I know I am not a great man—and perhaps it is better that it is so—for it makes me rely upon One who is great and who has the wisdom and power to lead us safely through this great trial.”

That’s from a new book titled *And There Was Light* by Jon Meacham (p. 226). Meacham continues:

In a conversation with General Daniel E. Sickles, who lost a leg at Gettysburg, Lincoln described the anxious hours as he had waited for the verdict from the hard-fought battle. “In the pinch of your campaign up there . . . oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went into my room one

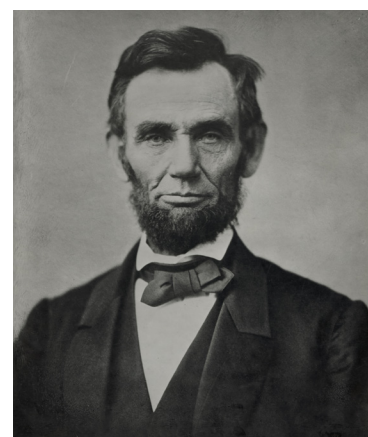


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day and locked the door and got down on my knees before Almighty God and prayed to him mightily for victory at Gettysburg," the president told the wounded Sickles. "I told him . . . we couldn't stand another Fredericksburg or Chancellorsville [both disastrous Union losses]. And I then and there made a solemn vow to Almighty God that if he would stand by our boys at Gettysburg, I would stand by him. And he *did*, and I *will*" (p. 303).

Lincoln was not a churchgoing man. He embraced no theology except a desire to humbly acknowledge and yield to God. Trustingly he said: "I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do a particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know" (p. 255).

Just as the Almighty found "a way" to guide humble Christ Jesus and humble Mary Baker Eddy and humble Abe Lincoln, so does He direct the way when each of us honors and obeys Him. We prove, during our foreboding wilderness trials, that no discord, no illness, no crushing obligation, no loss, no form of evil can ever separate us from God's goodness, from pure peace, from fearless freedom.

One of the most humble servants of God we have the pleasure of knowing is our *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen. God always "finds a way of letting [Susie] know" exactly how to help each dear one for whom she is caring. When the physical picture presents a trying wilderness experience, she bears witness to "spiritual sense unfold[ing] the great facts of being."

A special trait we've observed in Susie is that, no matter what trials her clients face, she faithfully follows this request from our Leader: "Let us serve instead of rule, knock instead of push at the door of human hearts, and allow to each and every one the same rights and privileges that we claim for ourselves" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, 303:13).

## Save the date

Save the date for our HVCSNS annual meeting: Saturday, September 16, 2023, at 2:00 PM. There's plentiful parking at our chosen location: Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist, 1740 Yorktown in Houston (77056). Soon we'll announce the names of our two special guest speakers.

## Financial Assistance Available

Any Christian Scientist relying upon the services of a Christian Science practitioner and/or a *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse may obtain financial support by applying to the [National Fund for Christian Science Nursing](#) (NFCSN). You may contact The Principle Foundation, which manages this fund, by emailing [info@nfcsn.org](mailto:info@nfcsn.org) or by calling (800) 873-2843.

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Our service is grateful for the financial support from area Christian Science churches and individuals. Their contributions help us pay for our contracted staff and operating expenses.

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“Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee”  
*Christian Science Hymn 324*