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## *To break the hold of addiction*

By Elise L. Moore, CSB

If you or a loved one is struggling with addiction, there is hope. There is a law of good operating in your life and in their life. This law of God isn't dependent on our understanding of it, anymore than the law of gravity operates only for those who understand physics. The law of gravity functions whether one understands it or not. The law of good is operating in the universe whether we are aware of it or not. This law of good is a divine principle acting to protect what is worthy and remove what isn't.

As I was writing this article, a mother e-mailed me to ask what parents can do about young people using drugs. And a dad told me he was spending his life savings for a treatment program to keep his daughter from cutting herself.

There had been newspaper reports, too, about people (some of them students) who had become enslaved by videogames and pornographic websites.

As I thought about these situations, it came to me that the law of good removes the pleasure from addictive substances and the compulsion from harmful behaviors. It places a desire for safety and freedom in each individual's heart. It nurtures every right thought and desire. In the middle of chaos, the law of God, of good, can be felt. It has a powerful transforming effect. When individuals are receptive to good, the activity of divine law awakens and guides them. For those clinging to destructive habits, the operation of divine law might seem to aggravate the symptoms. But they can rest assured the law of good is having a positive effect. The law of God breaks up habitual hardness. Whether broken in one clear moment of Truth understood, or after persistent hammering, bad habits fall before the operation of God's law.

On one occasion when I was a chaplain for a homeless shelter, I was asked to visit an agency where the reception area was chaotic. Close to 100 people milled about, swearing, shouting, sleeping in drunken or drug-induced stupors, cramming every seat and corner. Prostitutes and drug dealers plied their trade more openly than I could have imagined. It was a place where addictions and the effects of addiction were unmistakably on display. No one wanted to talk to the chaplain (me), so I searched for an empty seat to quietly read and pray. But the din was so distracting that I couldn't concentrate.

I closed my eyes to tune out the visual chaos. I stopped listening to the myriad conversations by ceasing to be interested in or appalled by them. Then I tuned in to God. For me, tuning in to God means thinking deeply about spiritual truths regarding the Divine. I might consider that God is all-powerful or that divine Spirit is present everywhere. I might ponder the meaning of God as good, the Creator of only good. In this case, I tuned in to God by affirming that the law of good was operating and that the Christ was there. Right where out-of-control behavior was, right there the Christ was in control.

The Christ is the divine message bringing salvation and healing to all humankind. The Christ rescues what is good and removes whatever is unlike good—in other words, evil. The mere presence of the Christ results in the destruction of evil. Now, I wasn't expecting the man Jesus suddenly to appear in the middle of the room, although that would have been rather thrilling. The Christ is the divine healing and saving power that Jesus preached and lived on earth. Jesus, as the Son of God, embodied and demonstrated the saving Christ. He preached to those who followed him that they also could rely on and apply the healing Christ to save them and others: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12).

As an ardent believer of Jesus' words and works, I began silently affirming that "the Christ is here." At first nothing happened. Hardened human habits don't always yield with the first mental prayer. But every prayer has a healing effect. So I persisted, sticking with the same spiritual fact, becoming

increasingly certain that the Christ was present, active, and saving right there.

Within a few minutes, a man loomed in front of me and yelled to quit whatever I was doing. I looked up a little startled, since all I was doing was silently praying. Then I began to smile as I realized the hammer of the Christ, Truth, was beginning to break the hold of addictive thinking in human consciousness. This man had felt the Christ and didn't like it! Before I could say a word, another person told him to leave me alone. The man stalked off.

A few minutes later a woman announced that I was ruining her business (prostitution). I simply looked at her and silently declared, "The Christ is here." She walked out of the building. The room became quieter. The swearing stopped. People began to leave. A man sat next to me and asked for the Sentinel in my hand, and started to read it. In less than half an hour, everyone remaining in the room appeared awake, quiet, and respectful. I hadn't said two sentences. The staff told me it was miraculous.

The Christ was there. The law of good was in operation. It takes only one individual holding thought steadfastly to this spiritual fact to break the mesmerism for everyone in a room. I'm not implying that all those people became clean, sober, and moral in that half-hour. But the impact of my mentally affirming the Christ-power and Christ-presence was evident.

The saving power of the Christ is operating ceaselessly in every human consciousness until it is felt, understood, and obeyed. In her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy used the Hebrew name for Christ, Immanuel, which literally means "God with us." She explained that Immanuel is "a divine influence ever present in human consciousness and repeating itself, ... " (p. xi).

How comforting to those praying for others, to know that the saving Christ, or "divine influence," is already within the thought of the one needing help. You don't have to be personally present. You don't have to know the right words to convince a person to relinquish harmful behavior. Christ is consistently speaking the healing truth until it is understood and accepted.

We might consider taking practical steps to remove addictive influences, or perhaps move a person to a healthier, safer environment. As Mrs. Eddy said, speaking about the prayer of Christian Science treatment, "It is equally important in metaphysical practice that the minds which surround your patient should not act against your influence by continually expressing such opinions as may alarm or discourage,-either by giving antagonistic advice or through unspoken thoughts resting on your patient. While it is certain that the divine Mind can remove any obstacle, still you need the ear of your auditor" (Science and Health, p. 424).

I think of this in terms of a greenhouse. When you plant seeds in good soil, it's important that the seeds are protected in a safe environment. Too hot, and the tender shoots might be scorched. Too cold, and the seed might not germinate or might be killed by frost. In the protective environment of God's "greenhouse," sprouts are protected and nurtured until strong enough to grow on their own, just as someone taking his or her first steps to be free from addictive substances or compulsive behavior needs to be mentally, emotionally, and physically protected and nurtured.

The atmosphere of God's house is filled with moral and spiritual qualities, such as the fruit of the Spirit, against which "there is no law." They include "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22, 23, Holman Christian Standard Bible). Or rather, such are the qualities included in the law of God nurturing the good in life. Several of these qualities are described in Science and Health:

"MORAL. Humanity, honesty, affection, compassion, hope, faith, meekness, temperance." And: "SPIRITUAL. Wisdom, purity, spiritual understanding, spiritual power, love, health, holiness" (pp. 115, 116).

Expressing these qualities would help us keep out the heat of anger, frustration, and envy as well as the coldness of criticism, complaint, and comparison which tend to trample the early efforts of one breaking free from addiction.

Those who have been praying diligently, maybe for years, and feel discouraged that addiction hasn't lost its grip, can know that Christ, Truth, is ultimately, always, the victor. Truth has the last word. Love overcomes condemnation. It's what Paul the Apostle called "the carnal mind" that feels

discouraged. But Paul's assurance is that we all have "the mind of Christ," which comforts and assuredly heals and saves.

We are all dearly loved. Not one of us has failed. In every situation, our prayers can have a healing effect. The Christ is present and operating through the divine law of good reaching and freeing every individual.

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