



I grew up in Christian Science. As a kid I witnessed healings of many kinds, both physical and societal. Seeing how illness and other human problems dissolved through prayer gave me a sense of freedom. I rarely fear the appearances of this world. Often, they seemed unworldly or funny.

I remember coming upon a car wreck in the Malibu Mountains when I was a teenager. I had been learning first aid and when I saw an overturned Jeep and people laying on the side of the road my first inclination was to look for the movie camera. It didn't seem real, and in spiritual consciousness it wasn't. The friend with me got physically ill, which also seemed unreal. I took action applying the first aid I had just learned, and at the same time kept my peace in the midst of bleeding and broken bodies. A car came by – this was before cell phones – and went for help. By the time the firetrucks arrived, everybody was calm and bandaged with old towels I had in my car, and my friend and I went on our way leaving the first responders to do their work.

I often think about my ability to not react to the things of this world and wonder where that came from. Certainly, it is the Grace of God. But my early conditioning contributed to that ability. Both my parents, when confronted by negative situations, would turn to prayer for answers. They were not prayers of petition or to seek some sort of divine intervention. They were silent prayers for peace in the midst of chaos. One example stands out.

On a particularly wet winter day in Pacific Palisades, California, my mother had me and my Cub Scout troop sculpting figures from multi-colored modeling clay in the unfinished rumpus room of our hillside home. There was a deluge outside, and the pouring rain kept pulling our attention away from our art projects. When we began to feel water flowing around our feet, we turned to see Mom rushing down the stairs with an armful of brooms.

“Three of you grab a broom and sweep out the water!” she said. “The rest of you help me find where the water is coming from.”

We soon discovered the wall holding back the mountainside was leaking. Instead of reacting in fear, Mom became very still and closed her eyes. I knew what had been going on with the house. (I had big ears.) The contractor had cut corners with the

foundation concrete and had not finished all the details in the house. I also knew that money was tight. Mom kept her composure in front of the boys, but I felt her anxiety.

After a moment she opened her eyes and with a big smile said, “Everyone grab their clay and let’s fill the holes in the wall.”

She showed us what to do: Dry a hole with a paper towel and then stuff it with clay. Within 20 minutes every crater and blemish in the concrete was filled with multicolored clay. This was a victory! The water had been stopped... for now.

Another big downpour hit, and water flowed from new holes. Mom got still again and then ran upstairs. She returned with a large bowl of bubblegum left over from Halloween. It was stale, but us kids did our duty. We religiously chewed the gum and resumed the process of drying a hole and stuffing it with chewing gum. The water finally stopped.

It wasn’t the final solution. My parents eventually got the outside of the wall sealed and the room finished. But that experience showed me how creative prayer can be. My mother never panicked or appeared worried in the slightest. She trusted that divine intelligence was available to help in any situation if we allow ourselves to be still and listen. What could have been a disaster became one of my fondest childhood memories... and it was the best Cub Scout meeting ever!