

DEVELOPMENT, PURPOSE, GRACE, AND GRATITUDE

a talk by Marilyn L. Bradshaw, Trustee, High Ridge House
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This talk will focus on four important concepts: Development, Purpose, Grace and Gratitude. We'll begin by defining development. The original meaning of the word is quite different from its meaning today. Here are the definitions of develop and development from Webster's 1828 Dictionary, which was one of the dictionaries used by Mary Baker Eddy:

Develop – To uncover; to unfold; to lay open; to disclose or make known something concealed or withheld from notice.

Development – An unfolding; the discovering of something secret...; disclosure; full exhibition.

True development is not a human activity designed to create support and raise funds. It is the uncovering, unfolding, disclosing of what God has already done.

Isaiah (43:21) records God as saying, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." This is our development work, – to disclose or exhibit what God is and does.

In Genesis 1:26, 27, we read that God created man in His own image and likeness, male and female. In verse 28, we are told that "God blessed them." One meaning of the Hebrew word translated "bless" is "empower to prosper." Verse 28 continues, "and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth..." So we see that first God empowered man to prosper, and then commanded him to exercise that power to flourish and to replenish the earth. How could we accomplish that if we didn't already have all the supplies needed to replenish it? Why are we commanded to do this? Because it shows forth, unfolds, reveals, God's goodness.

In Genesis 3:1-6, we have the story of the serpent tempting Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She answers that "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." So how did the serpent get her to disobey God? He undermined her trust in God. He said, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." He portrays God as not having their best interests at heart, as being selfish and not giving them something that would actually be good for them to have. Adam and Eve had it made in the Garden of Eden, – they were abundantly supplied with all that they needed. But when Eve doubted that God was a reliable, unselfish, loving supplier of all good, they lost that source of good. This is what mortal mind is tempting us to do – doubt that God will supply all our needs.

In Jeremiah 2:15, God says, “my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” If we are not trusting God to supply all that is needed to fulfill our purpose, we are forsaking the fountain that is pouring forth an infinite supply of all that we need. The idea that we must find ways humanly to fund Christian Science nursing, that we must somehow extract money from people to build up our finances, is hewing out broken cisterns - looking to finite sources that can quickly be dissipated.

Back in Genesis 2:5, when the true creation was finished, “there was not a man to till the ground.” But in the second account, after the Adam man doubted God and ate the apple, the Lord God “sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.” In other words, he would have to work hard to grow his own food, to meet his own needs. In development work, it is often said that we must “cultivate” donors; but we are not the Adam man, we are not made to toil and cultivate. We are to have dominion, to replenish, to show forth what God has already done.

Science and Health says, “Divine Love blesses its own ideas, and causes them to multiply, – to manifest His power. Man is not made to till the soil. His birthright is dominion, not subjection. He is lord of the belief in earth and heaven, – himself subordinate alone to his Maker. This is the Science of being.” (517:30)

In Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6 urge us to “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Verses 9 and 10 are equally important: “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty.” In other words, acknowledge that all thy substance always has and always will belong to God. He takes good care of it and uses it to bless, to express love, to unfold perfection and harmony; and we perceive His work as healing and prosperity.

This brings us to our second word, Purpose. The purpose of a Christian Science nursing facility or service is more than a loving human response to a human need, however noble and unselfish that may be. In its highest sense, the purpose of Christian Science nursing is to reveal the health and harmony of being that is already true.

In her address to us a couple of days ago, Elizabeth Trevithick gave us a wonderful definition of Christian Science nursing. She said it is “providing physical care in the presence of God increasingly understood.” This increasing understanding of God is the unfolding of reality, true development. Isn’t it also the advent of the Holy Ghost? *Science and Health* defines Holy Ghost as “Divine Science; the development of eternal Life, Truth, and Love.” (588:7)

From God’s point of view, purpose and fulfillment are inseparable. Every idea, every step, every action, every communication is revealed, and unfolds in its proper sequence. And it always produces the desired result. The purpose of Christian Science nursing and the human activity that supports the fulfilling of that purpose are one indivisible whole.

When God calls us to participate in the fulfilling of His purpose, He gives us all that is needed to do it: guidance, wisdom, ability, tools, opportunity, -- and resources.

Since God is indivisible, the idea of Christian Science nursing is indivisible. Development isn't a separate human activity. It must be seen within the context of the one indivisible purpose and fulfillment of Christian Science nursing.

We must take our stand. This leads us to the next word, Grace. Adhering to the highest sense of the divine purpose of Christian Science nursing, -- the demonstration of pure Christian Science healing, -- and trusting that God is fulfilling this purpose, opens the floodgates of grace.

According to the Greek dictionary in Strong's Concordance, the word translated "grace" throughout the New Testament is the Greek word "charis." It means, in part, "the divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life; including gratitude."

Grace is the effortless energy of Love, and as Mrs. Eddy says, "Love impels good works." (Mis 358:1). These good works that we do are not "tilling the soil." They are our responding to grace. It is grace that unfolds the right ideas for outreach, for connections with donors, for engaging supportive hearts, -- hearts that have been divinely influenced.

It is right to undertake development activities, but human effort will be consistently successful only if it is wholly God-directed, letting His grace unfold His purpose in every action. Then it is free from any sense of false responsibility, human psychology, unrequited toil, anxiety, uncertainty or reluctance. To me, the following sentence in an article by Paul Stark Seeley encapsulates the action of grace: "In the divinely ordered consciousness of man there is inevitably a perpetual sequence of right ideas causing him to coincide with the unlabored motion of God's government of His all-inclusive kingdom." (from "Our Father's Demand - Unself Mortality" CSJ, June 1975)

We now arrive at our final concept, Gratitude. The words grace and gratitude have the same origin, the Latin word "gratus." This is fitting, because so often the grace of giving works through donors who are grateful for a healing that they experienced at a Christian Science nursing facility, or for the loving care that a relative received there.

Gratitude is also an essential quality for us to have in our development work. When we contact prospective donors, it is not with the thought of persuading them to give, but rather expressing our gratitude for the love they show for Christian Science, for pure Christian Science healing, for their participation in fulfilling the glorious purpose of Christian Science nursing. We share our love and enthusiasm for our work, and our love and gratitude for them, and then we trust God's grace to be the divine influence on their hearts, as it is on ours.

Our Leader wrote, "As of old, I stand with sandals on and staff in hand, waiting for the watchword and the revelation of what, how, whither. Let us be faithful and

obedient, and God will do the rest.” (Mis. 158:19 As) This is our part, – to be faithful and obedient.

Paul assures us in a very familiar passage in II Corinthians 9:8, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:” Certainly “God is able,” and He will, if we are faithful and obedient.

Every word of this much-loved verse will yield great inspiration if you take the time to meditate on it. Think of what it means to have *all grace abound*, to *always* have *all* sufficiency in *all* things, to abound to *every* good work. The Greek word translated “sufficiency” actually has a different meaning. The translators apparently just couldn’t grasp its meaning in this passage. Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is translated correctly as “contentment.” Paul is assuring us that we will always have enough grace, not just to get by, which would be “sufficiency,” but to be contented. Using the metaphor of sheep, Ps 23 verse 2 says, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.” A sheep will not lie down until he has eaten to the full, and is contented. This is a promise that God will supply every need and desire, to the point of utter contentment.

In Miscellany (5:7-10), our Leader writes, “Wholly apart from this mortal dream, this illusion and delusion of sense, Christian Science comes to reveal man as God’s image, His idea, coexistent with Him – God giving all and man having all that God gives.” Development is demonstrating the truth of this statement.

I’ll close with an illustration of grace at work at High Ridge House last year. For a long time, we had wanted to replace some of the tired furniture in public areas and staff rooms, and redecorate, but the budget couldn’t accommodate it. Last summer, we hired a new Executive Director, and an Interim Director of Christian Science Nursing. (We now have a permanent DCSN.) In addition, we had to prepare for our triennial Commission inspection slated for February. Needless to say, redecorating was low on our list of priorities last fall.

But then a dear friend of High Ridge House decided to donate a few pieces of high-quality antique furniture, and they totally changed the look of our living room. Another friend then offered more furniture. We were filled with gratitude, but that was only the beginning. Seeing these new pieces, one of our long-time supporters, an interior decorator, was inspired with the idea of helping us to “refresh” our facility. She works with real estate companies to furnish and decorate empty houses to make them more attractive to buyers, and she has a warehouse full of lightly used furniture and furnishings. So she donated not only her time and expertise, but many pieces of furniture, as well as artwork, pillows and other decorative items, and she oversaw all the changes, doing much of the work herself. With relatively little effort on our part, Love’s bountiful provision increased the beauty, utility and comfort of our facility.

While the High Ridge House board and staff were devoting thought to our divine purpose, working to demonstrate excellence in our practice of Christian Science

nursing, grace was at work, influencing the hearts of these dear friends to meet a need we weren't even addressing. This outward renewal that was unexpectedly bestowed on us not only met a specific need, but was a wonderful affirmation of the rebirth and renewal that has been taking place in our thinking and our operation. Although we still have work to do to demonstrate full financial sustainability, we are buoyed by this modest example of how true development -- unfoldment -- can occur.

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