

READY TO RESPOND

BY GREG JARVIS

A FRIEND OF MINE had been a firefighter for many years. Since she became a fire officer, however, it had been a long time since she'd donned a fire coat and rushed to a fire in the middle of the night. Most of her days were spent in budget meetings, communicating through e-mail, handling personnel issues, and other management tasks.

But one night at 2:30 a.m., my friend was awakened by a phone call that there was a house fire in her district. While there was evidence that no one was at the home, it was nevertheless her responsibility to go to the alarm. In a series of quick moves she woke up, dressed, and drove to the emergency. She told me later that her response was all very automatic, free of resistance, questioning, or delays. While she's usually a person who presses the snooze bar on her alarm at least three times, this automatic response was quick and alert. It was an experienced response, the result of years of training.

What is your response in times of crisis? Aren't there sometimes "alarms" that go off in our everyday experience, too—like an illness or injury that seems to press for attention, or a relationship that never seems to be at peace? How can we "put on our mental fire coats" and respond with calm, right activity?

The firefighter's response comes from training and practice. They overcome their fear and respond to emergencies in protective clothing, with training in how to use rescue and fire suppression equipment.

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Similarly, I've found that prayer enables us to respond immediately and calmly in the face of sudden circumstances. Our spiritual sense gives us the ability to overcome the fear of life's emergencies so we can respond and not simply react to them. And as we continue to practice this prayer, we see that it also includes a preventative aspect. As we replace a sense of emergency with an understanding of God's harmony and ever-present good, our experience mirrors the calm and peace that come from God.

A hymn I like that describes this beautifully:

From earth's fears and vain alarms
Safe in His encircling arms,
He will keep us all the way,
God, our refuge, strength and stay.
(John R. MacDuff, *Christian Science Hymnal*, No. 53)

We read in the Bible about Jesus: "Great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all" (Matt. 12:15). The scene must have included people crowded about him, reaching out in an emergency. To those who were approaching Jesus with their loved ones, to those sick or sinful and in need of healing, reaching out to Jesus must have been an urgent need. Yet we do not picture the Master as panicked or hurried. We picture the ultimate calm of one who was in constant communication with God. This is the picture, even though all the pleas of humanity were focused on him.

As with a concert pianist, who practices alone and then plays at a packed symphony hall, it didn't matter if Jesus was healing one little child or a multitude; he knew the notes to play, how infinite blessings could be bestowed on all those whom his thoughts rested upon. Jesus' proofs of the healing Christ-power serve as an example to us.

If Jesus' healings were only applicable to his time, then we would indeed be subject to every emergency that is pressing on humanity. But if his message to his disciples is for all his followers, for all time, then his command includes the power to fulfill it. His message was and is: "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8).

In the middle of the 19th century, Mary Baker Eddy was healed of the effects of a life-threatening accident. With a sense of discovery and wonderment that accompanies a great thinker, she sought a way to understand and repeat spiritual healing. She found that Jesus' healing method could be understood and practiced in such a consistent way that she gave it the name Christian Science. She studied the Scriptures and learned by experience and struggle that the truth which Jesus shared with his disciples so many years ago applied not only to them but to all men and women for all time. She explained this healing Christ Science in her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*.

What a change this new, spiritual way of responding brings to mankind! We don't need to petition a God who is arbitrary or far removed. God can be understood as a present help, constantly caring for all of His/Her children. So many wonderful new views this brings to humanity!

To begin with, the Christ-centered view is focused on the solution and not the problem. You may ask, How can I focus on solutions when I'm in crisis or pain? Isn't this ignoring the problem and just hoping it will go away?

Turning to the Christ never means ignoring the present need; it is seeing through the fearful circumstances to focus on God's presence and love for all Her children. We know this is possible because one can prove it. (In fact, the last chapter of *Science and Health* is devoted to testimonies from those who read the book and were healed.)

I've had many proofs that God is a reliable help. Not long ago, I'd started a new line of work and felt that I was quite successful at this new organization. I was leading my team in sales and was to receive the top bonus for my work. Suddenly, however, my company eliminated my sales territory and my job. I was out of work with very short notice just two weeks before Christmas.

There was a list of obligations, debts, and responsibilities that made this loss of employment a financial emergency for both me and my family. I wondered how would I pay my expenses if I had a long job search? Would I have trouble finding work? Was I qualified for a new line of work? These fearful suggestions tried to flood over me. But I've learned through many healing experiences that man is expressing God constantly, and is always in His care. As I am the expression of God, my purpose can never be lost. For me to be unemployed would be for God to be unexpressed, and this is impossible. In my prayer, I held on to the truth that God's purpose could not be blocked or reversed, or in any way terminated. I saw that as God's child, I must always be employed; useful, rightly placed, active; confidently trusting all-knowing Mind's (God's) direction. I felt spiritually ready, prepared to respond to this challenge.

Just at the right time, an opportunity came for me to work in a new position very well suited to my skills and experience. I was happy to be back at work, but happier still that I was able to see God's care directing me and providing for my family.

When sudden wake-up calls come, we can be always prepared as we consistently listen to what God is telling us about every situation, every threat, every disappointment. It's effective to respond without fear, knowing that the Father-Mother is caring for us always. Life's problems lose their ability to alarm us as we find that every new day is an opportunity to see more of God's constant love for us. icss

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