

God's gentle presence heals

Lynn G. Jackson

THE feeling of God's presence is something we all yearn for at one time or another. If we're hurt or feeling sad, there's something inside that naturally reaches out for God, to feel His touch. As we turn to Him, trustful, we feel His all-encompassing, healing love.

God's presence is gentle. It's comforting. His love for His child is all-embracing. It's His love and care for His own creation that makes us feel Him ever near. Each of us is God's child, perfect, always reflecting Him. Actually, there can never be a moment when we are outside of God's embrace. Why? Because there's never a moment when God is not present.

Even when bad things try to convince us that He's not with us, God has not left us by ourselves. There may be times when we have to work harder at trusting God's presence—if we're afraid or hurt, but that doesn't mean that He isn't already there, guarding and guiding us. It just means that we need to awake to His gentleness and to the oneness of God and man. How do we do this? Through prayer and heavenly inspiration, that is, through God's thoughts of comfort and love for us. These awaken us to God's ever-gentle presence, teaching us that, in reality, we can never really be separated from God.

God is always man's gentle Father-Mother, and man is always God's comforted child. Since God doesn't experience pain and discomfort, His child can't either. Because God is always God and man is always man, we don't just *know* of His ever-gentle presence. We *feel* it, through reflection, through being God's perfect child. We feel it through the comfort, love, and guidance God shows to us.

Christ Jesus taught, "All things that the Father hath are mine" (John 16:15). He was teaching us that man reflects everything that God is. That's why we can pray: "All the gentleness my Father has is mine. All the comfort my Father has is mine. All the peace my Father has is mine." In reality, all that we need is already ours as God's beloved child. That's why we never really need to be afraid of anything. All we'll ever need is already given to us by God—all the love, all the comfort, all the gentleness.

One Friday night when I was a girl, I had an experience that really helped me to feel God's tender presence.

My dad usually popped corn every Friday night. But this Friday he was away on business, so Mom said I could pop it all by myself. I had done it before, but this time was different. I must have added too much oil, and after the popcorn was finished, I picked up the popper to turn it over, and instead of turning it away from me (like my dad had taught me) I turned it toward me. I dumped all the hot oil down the front of me. I screamed. It was very painful, and the oil wasn't cooling quickly.

Mom heard me scream and came out to help. She immediately began praying. As she helped me change my clothes, she talked to me about God's presence and power. She told me that in the kingdom of God, where God's child dwells, there can only be comfort and peace.

I had been attending Sunday School, so the ideas my mom was sharing with me were familiar. But I was wondering how God could be ever present, comforting, and peace-giving if I was feeling fear, pain, discomfort! I had been taught in Sunday School that when we're really quiet, we feel God's gentle presence holding us, guarding us. We feel comforted. That's why not long after

I really began listening, I realized that I could be heavenly inspired rather than materially upset.

To me, being heavenly inspired meant that I could give up fear and wholeheartedly turn to my Father-Mother God. It meant that I could feel peaceful. Being heavenly inspired isn't trying to be humanly brave. It's being spiritually receptive to God's gentleness.

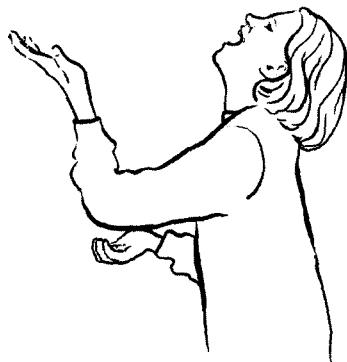
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The more I listened, the more I felt God's allness around me. I started to calm down, and the pain began to go away. My deep desire to feel God all around me helped me listen to the truths Mom was sharing with me.

After I settled down a little more, my mom began reading to me from *Science and Health* by Mary Baker Eddy. Mom read some passages about God's gentleness. And deep down in my heart I wanted to *feel* the gentleness of

God's presence. In thinking about this healing, I often remember this verse from Isaiah, telling us the words of God: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (66:13). And I *was* comforted. There was no more pain.

God's presence is always gentle and powerful. It's the presence I felt that Friday night and have felt many times since. And through heavenly inspiration, it's the same gentle presence you can feel today. ■



Grief dissolved with love

Tony Lobl

DEATH is tragic, especially to those facing the loss of their loved ones. Such circumstances are among the deepest of human challenges.

But death is not the final experience for anyone. The spiritual message of eternal life contained in the Bible proves the powerlessness of death to boast itself above Life, God.¹ Understanding this message and realizing the presence of divine Love give us the tools with which to overcome grief.

We can begin to prove dominion over death and grieving by understanding the unreality of what could be called death's "sneak previews"—sin, disease, deprivation. Each of these supposed realities constitutes a foretaste of mortality. Therefore, every time we employ spiritual means to restore health, to reform ourselves or others from sinful thoughts and behavior, or to prove sufficiency where lack appears to be, we strike a blow against the general belief in death's inevitability. We do the same when we gain freedom from grief through prayer to God.

I experienced the latter when my mum, whom I loved dearly, passed on unexpectedly while undergoing medical treatment for a chronic condition with no known medical cure. I was alone with her in the house, and as I dealt with ambulances and hospitals, and called to inform family members of what had occurred, I started praying to grasp the truth that mum's life was spiritual and therefore was going on, untouched by what had happened. I found that to be the easy part!

But after a couple of days the feeling of loss became overwhelming. At this lowest point I wrote a letter to a Christian Science