

LYNN HOUSE OF POTOMAC VALLEY



“Love one another”

A New and Timeless Commandment

A talk given by Tina Bilhorn

Hosted online by Lynn House

November 13, 2021



Tina Bilhorn is a life-long student of Christian Science. She was called to Christian Science nursing after leaving her business career to devote full time to serving her branch church.

Tina currently serves as the Director of the Tenacre School of Christian Science Nursing in Princeton, New Jersey. She also serves on the board of The Dominion Foundation, a benevolent funding organization dedicated to supporting Christian Science nursing in the home. In addition, Tina is involved with several working groups in the Christian Science Nursing Collaborative, including Continuing Education, Training Access and Affordability, Communities of Christian Caring, and the Youth Action Committee.

As you know, Christ Jesus gave us what he referred to as a “new commandment” — to love one another, as he loved us. And he indicated that this love for one another is what identifies us as his disciples, as Christians.

We read in the Gospel of John:

*A new commandment I give unto you,
That ye love one another; as I have
loved you, that ye also love one
another.*

*By this shall all men know that ye are
my disciples, if ye have love one to
another.*

(John 13:34, 35)

Let’s consider together what was (and wasn’t) new about this commandment. Let’s understand its source, its origin, and its development and continuity — how its newness is a timeless “nowness” that is both a command and a promise.

Although Christ Jesus refers to loving one another as a new commandment, the concept was not actually all that new. Loving one’s neighbor was part of Hebrew culture from the time of Moses. Jesus had been brought up in that culture and would have known — and obeyed — this commandment as part of the Mosaic law.

Did it begin in the Hebrew culture? Was it unique to the Jews living at that time? Did they come up with this concept? What was the source of that love?

Of course, God, divine Love, was always the source.

As we know, the Bible begins with affirmations that God is the source and

the creator of all that was made. In the first chapter of the first book of the Bible (“Genesis” which means “origin”) we read that God made all that was made. And that it was good — very good! And that man (everyone) is made in the image and likeness of God. In the image and likeness of good.

This is more than a theological idea. The root meaning of the word “identity” is “sameness” or “oneness.” Our true identity is then, by definition, our sameness or oneness with the source of our being. With God, with divine Love.

Our Leader, Mary Baker Eddy, writes —

*How do we reach our true selves?
Through Love.*

(Mis 104:23-24)

Christ Jesus’ command to love one another affirms what is natural to us as the children of our Father-Mother God, made in God’s image and likeness — expressions of divine Love. It’s who we are. It’s what we’re made to do. It’s natural for each of us to love one another. And what a gift that is! What a glorious gift we have been given — that our very identity is the expression of Love! This isn’t because we are Christians or Christian Scientists. It’s because God is Love, and God is infinite — All-in-all.

So this commandment to love one another, and the Ten Commandments given to us through Moses, are actually promises. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” “Thou shalt not steal.” These are promises from God, just as much as they are instructions. And they go even

deeper than that. These promises are actually affirmations of the truth of our being, aren't they? They define us. They define our true identity.

Our textbook tells us that "divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need" (SH 494:10-11). Our identity as expressions of Love then very naturally and inevitably is expressed in loving and caring for one another. As reflections of divine Love, it is natural for us to express that Love in ways that meet human needs.

We see God throughout the Bible, so we see love being expressed throughout the Bible; and we see divine Love's reflection, individuals throughout the Scriptures, meeting human needs. "Love reflected in love." (See SH 17:7)

So let's take a look at just a few examples of divine Love meeting human needs in the Bible. We'll start with the Hebrew Scriptures — the Old Testament.

Not surprisingly, we see the Love that is God expressed right from the beginning, in the book of Genesis, with God's promises to Abraham:

*... behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
And I will make thee exceeding fruitful,
... And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*
(Genesis 17:4, 6, 7)

Then we see God's constant, loving presence re-affirmed each generation thereafter.

To Isaac, God said:

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; ...
(Genesis 26:3)

And then to Jacob:

*... I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: ...
... behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, ...*
(Genesis 28:13, 15)

Divine Love was then beautifully and consistently present with Moses and the children of Israel as well.

When God calls Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, he assures him:

... Certainly I will be with thee; ...
(Exodus 3:12)

As they journey, God is present as a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, leading and protecting (Exodus 13:21) and meeting their need for food and water.

When Joshua steps in, God then assures him:

... as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.
(Joshua 1:5)

Seeing these examples of divine Love's active expression from generation to generation, we see how natural it is for man, as the reflection of Love, to be an

active expression of love. So that's our starting point. Love is who we are — and what we do. It's a promise; it's the truth of being.

Let's look again at the commandment. It is to love one another. Who is included in that?

In Hebrew culture, there were somewhat specific instructions, weren't there?

We read in Exodus (20:12) and Deuteronomy (5:16) that they were expected to love and care for their parents. The fifth commandment states:

Honour thy father and thy mother: ...
(Exodus 20:12)

They were also expected to love and care for their neighbor:

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: ...
(Leviticus 19:18)

What did this look like? What do we find in the Hebrew Scriptures that shows us this love being expressed?

We have examples of those who provided loving care to the prophets:

Elijah was even fed by ravens ... and then cared for by the widow of Zarephath. (See I Kings 17:1-6, 7-16)

Elisha was given a place to stay and food to eat by the Shunammite woman. (See II Kings 4:8-10)

Hebrew law required the Jews to care for the fatherless and widows in their communities and also to care for the stranger among them. We read in Deuteronomy:

When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean it afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.
(Deuteronomy 24:19–21 NKJV)

Now let's fast forward to the New Testament. Of course, the overarching theme in the New Testament is the very tangible expression of the Christ — the manifestation of God, divine Love — constantly and consistently evident in Christ Jesus' ministry, meeting every human need.

In the Gospel of Mark we read:

And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: ...
(Mark 6:34)

And then he fed over 5000 people. He washed the disciples' feet — to show them how love should be expressed among them.

Jesus' pure exemplification of divine Love — "Love reflected in love" — brought redemption and healing to individuals and to multitudes.

Christ Jesus' commandment to love one another echoed the requirements articulated in the Hebrew Scriptures. Why, then, did he refer to it as a "new" commandment?

Did Christ Jesus' teachings introduce anything new to the expectations for loving and caring for others?

Is there anything about Christianity that goes beyond what was expected in the Hebrew culture?

A few aspects come to mind. First, let's consider the scope of the loving care — whom we are to love.

We mentioned the love of family found in the Hebrew Scriptures in the fifth commandment: *Honour thy father and thy mother.* (Exodus 20:12)

Jesus takes that farther when he asks:
*...Who is my mother, or my brethren?
And he looked round about on them
which sat about him, and said, Behold
my mother and my brethren!
For whosoever shall do the will of
God, the same is my brother, and my
sister, and mother.*
(Mark 3:33–35)

And, on the cross, he lovingly provides for a familial relationship between his mother

and one of his disciples. He says to his mother:

"Woman, behold thy son!"

And to the disciple:

*Behold thy mother! And from that hour
that disciple took her unto his own
home."*

(John 19: 26-27)

We also see that Christ Jesus loved and valued the individual over the letter of the law. For example, after criticism from the ruler of the synagogue when he healed a woman there on the sabbath day, Jesus asks:

*... ought not this woman, being a
daughter of Abraham ... be loosed from
this bond on the Sabbath day?*

(Luke 13:16)

We also see that Jesus wasn't afraid to love and care for those considered "unclean." In the parable of the good Samaritan, he taught his followers to put compassion above the letter of the law about touching a person who was severely injured (and perhaps dead) and therefore considered ritually unclean. He also teaches a timeless lesson about who our neighbor is.

And in his ministry, he touched and healed lepers.

Early on in Christ Jesus' ministry, in the Sermon on the Mount, he significantly broadened the scope of whom we are to love.

As we noted earlier, the Hebrew culture required love of family, of those in need in

the community, and the stranger. Jesus raised the bar. We read in the Gospel of Matthew:

*Ye have heard that it hath been said,
Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate
thine enemy.*

*But I say unto you, Love your
enemies, bless them that curse you, do
good to them that hate you, and pray
for them which spitefully use you,
and persecute you;
(Matthew 5:43, 44)*

“Love your enemies.” That’s new!

Perhaps the most progressive step is that Christ Jesus’ ministry was a healing ministry rather than perpetual care-giving. He didn’t take care of the man at the pool of Bethesda by helping him be more comfortable as he lay there; he enabled him to rise, take up his bed, and walk. (See John 5:8)

And he expected his followers to heal as well. We read in the Gospel of Matthew:

*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise
the dead, cast out devils: ...
(Matthew 10:8)*

Moving forward in the New Testament, we see that after Jesus’ ascension, the apostles, including Paul, continued loving and caring for one another and others — and healing.

Now let’s continue to move forward — into the teachings of Christian Science.

What does Christian Science bring that’s new to the commandment to love one another?

One of the steps of progress we noted in Christ Jesus’ teachings was to go beyond loving God and one’s neighbor — to loving one’s enemies. Mrs. Eddy takes us yet another step farther, doesn’t she? She writes:

*“Love thine enemies” is identical with
“Thou hast no enemies.”
(Mis 9:9–10)*

This is so much deeper than loving one’s enemies, isn’t it? It’s transformational!

It takes us back to that true sense of identity, our — everyone’s — sameness and oneness with our source, divine Love. It affirms the infinitude of Love, the allness and everywhere-ness of Love’s expression. How can the children of God — created in the image and likeness of Love — have (or be) enemies?

We mentioned earlier how Jesus’ love and care for others went beyond care-giving to healing. Clearly, this is also what we find in Christian Science. “Love reflected in love” is an expression of the divine embracing the human, rather than the human embracing the human. This pure reflection of divine Love heals. We’re not trying to love or heal a flawed mortal. We’re striving to love as Jesus loved — to behold in Science the perfect man. And this correct view of man heals. (See SH 477:3)

I had a simple experience that was helpful to me in understanding — and holding to

— my and others’ true identity as God’s reflection.

One day as I was finishing getting ready in the morning, I looked at myself in the mirror to straighten the collar of my blouse. It was a dark blue blouse, and I noticed something on the front of it, so I reached up to brush it off with my hand. But it didn’t come off. Then I took a damp washcloth to wipe it more thoroughly, but that didn’t remove it either. Then, rather than looking in the mirror, I looked down directly at my blouse — and there wasn’t anything there. When I looked again at the reflection in the mirror, there were the spots. I then realized that the spots I saw on my blouse when I looked at it in the mirror were water spots on the mirror, not anything on me. A citation from *Science and Health* came to mind:

... compare man before the mirror to his divine Principle, God. Call the mirror divine Science, and call man the reflection. Then note how true, according to Christian Science, is the reflection to its original. As the reflection of yourself appears in the mirror, so you, being spiritual, are the reflection of God.
(SH 515:28-4)

This was so helpful! The spots weren’t on me; they were on the mirror. Anything I looked at in that mirror would look like it had spots on it. Quite the opposite of looking into the mirror of divine Science, where the true likeness can be seen — the perfect reflection of divine Principle, of divine Love. Were there spots on me that needed to be cleaned off? Or did I need to use a clean mirror?

I’d been struggling with an inharmonious relationship, and this idea resonated as exactly the healing idea I needed. And so it proved to be. The inharmony was eliminated, because it had never actually been part of either of us.

Christian Science also brings that word “Science” to the understanding of the healing activity of divine Love in human experience. Rather than miraculous — or unique to Christ Jesus and a few specially-anointed followers — the healing power of divine Love is acknowledged as being available to everyone throughout all time. This uplifted approach to loving and caring for others — an approach that heals — is based on divine law, showing that the laws of God (laws of health, harmony, supply) are in operation for everyone, everywhere — to be demonstrated and experienced by everyone, everywhere.

As we read in our textbook:

... the so-called miracles of Jesus did not specially belong to a dispensation now ended ... they illustrated an ever-operative divine Principle.
(SH 123:24–27)

And—

It is not well to imagine that Jesus demonstrated the divine power to heal only for a select number or for a limited period of time, since to all mankind and in every hour, divine Love supplies all good.
(SH 494:11)

As we consider what all of this means to us today, let’s note that the Science of

Christianity — the divine, healing law of Love — doesn't take us beyond active obedience to the command to love one another and the obligation we have (as Christians and Christian Scientists) to be an active expression of divine Love meeting human needs.

The Founder of Christianity, Christ Jesus, expected his followers to lovingly care for others. We read in the 25th chapter of Matthew:

... Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

(Matthew 25:34–40)

And the Founder of Christian Science expected Christian Scientists to lovingly

care for others. We read in *Miscellaneous Writings*:

Love is not something put upon a shelf, to be taken down on rare occasions with sugar-tongs and laid on a rose-leaf. I make strong demands on love, call for active witnesses to prove it, and noble sacrifices and grand achievements as its results. Unless these appear, I cast aside the word as a sham and counterfeit, having no ring of the true metal. Love cannot be a mere abstraction, or goodness without activity and power. As a human quality, the glorious significance of affection is more than words: it is the tender, unselfish deed done in secret; the silent, ceaseless prayer; the self-forgetful heart that overflows; the veiled form stealing on an errand of mercy, out of a side door; the little feet tripping along the sidewalk; the gentle hand opening the door that turns toward want and woe, sickness and sorrow, and thus lighting the dark places of earth.
Mis 250:14)

And in *Pulpit and Press*:

Christian Scientists are really united to only that which is Christlike, but they are not indifferent to the welfare of any one.
(Pul 21:18–20)

Our textbook also cites examples of the uplift the divine law provides to those lovingly caring for others:

It is proverbial that Florence Nightingale and other philanthropists engaged in humane labors have been able to undergo without sinking fatigues and

exposures which ordinary people could not endure. The explanation lies in the support which they derived from the divine law, rising above the human. The spiritual demand, quelling the material, supplies energy and endurance surpassing all other aids, and forestalls the penalty which our beliefs would attach to our best deeds.

(SH 385:1–11)

What more do we have within our church — the Church of Christ, Scientist — that puts forth the expectation of love for one another that includes the care that meets human needs?

As we know so well, Mrs. Eddy provided within the structure of our church, within our *Church Manual*, the By-Law “Christian Science Nurse” — an indication that she expected members of The Mother Church to actively care for one another.

And she placed that By-Law in the portion of the *Church Manual* called “Guidance of Members.” It wasn’t placed in its own Article, separately — as is the case for some other roles provided for within the *Manual*. It was placed in Article VIII (under “Discipline”) “Guidance of Members” — all members. She expected members of the Mother Church to lovingly care for (and be cared for by) one another.

And then, simultaneously, she provided an important resource in support of loving and caring for others beyond fellow church-members — *The Christian Science Monitor*. The *Manual* By-Law “Christian Science Nurse” was initially published in the November 21, 1908 edition of the

Christian Science Sentinel; the first edition of *The Monitor* was published on November 25, 1908.

The Monitor’s object was (and is) “to injure no man, but to bless all mankind.”

The Monitor regularly publishes beautiful and deeply inspiring examples of individuals loving their neighbors in the largest sense of both love and neighbor. We read about individuals who make simple — and profound — contributions to help others, their communities, and the world, because they care deeply about their fellow man.

Here’s one example I love. It was published in the daily online edition of *The Monitor*:

*“Someone needs your help.”
The text alert came on a particularly busy Monday morning.*

“A blind or visually impaired person is calling for help,” the message continued.

I accepted the call and was instantaneously transported into a stranger’s living room. He asked me to read the amounts on some checks he was holding up in front of the camera on his phone. The whole exchange took about 20 seconds. But the satisfaction of being able to help someone in need has lasted all week.

For the past year, I’ve been receiving these calls periodically through an app that connects sighted volunteers with users who need a quick set of eyes. The calls are rare. And with 1.7 million

volunteers helping 100,000 users, I know that if I can't answer, someone else will. But I always try.

I've helped people microwave frozen meals, start their laundry, and avoid fashion faux pas. But my favorite call came from a man who asked me what his dog looks like because he wanted to know how other people perceive his furry friend.

I've discovered that I get as much out of these calls as the people asking for help. Because they help me to see, too – to see from someone else's perspective. At a time when so much of our lives is curated to fit our particular lens, that's a valuable commodity.

(Noelle Swan, The Christian Science Monitor Daily, Nov. 1, 2018)

I love that Noelle acknowledges that she gets as much out of the calls as the people asking for help. That's the nature of Love reflected in love, isn't it? Everyone is blessed! There's no burden or anxiety, is there? It's proper care — the expression of divine Love meeting the human need, the activity of Love that is innate and natural to each of us.

Here's another lovely example from *The Monitor*:

When a wiring problem in Gloria Scott's old craftsman-style home blew out her kitchen light last August, it was quite literally the spark for a good deed by one kind electrician that has turned into a movement of good deeds.

After John Kinney fixed the problem, he couldn't quit thinking about basic

safety repairs the retired executive assistant's home needed. So Mr. Kinney rounded up his network of skilled colleagues and came back to help Ms. Scott, who explains: "I kept saying, 'Are you sure? Are you sure?'"

Mr. Kinney was quite sure: Looking for donors for the few thousand dollars needed for materials, he started an online fundraiser with the tag line "Nice old lady needs help," along with a Gloria's Gladiators Facebook group.

To his surprise, \$111,000 flowed in. And some of the more than 16,000 people who joined the Gladiators group now post pictures of other projects they've volunteered on, or request help for their own restoration projects.

"What started off as a project to just repair a few holes in Gloria's kitchen ceiling has spiraled into a movement where she's basically getting her whole house rebuilt," says Mr. Kinney.

(Anna Tarnow, The Christian Science Monitor, Oct. 28, 2020)

There have been quite a few stories like this one, that showed us that even during a time when we were sheltering in place due to the belief of a pandemic, individuals were finding ways to love and care for one another.

Here's an example of a church activity, published in *The Monitor*:

If you've ever prayed the "Lord's Prayer," you've uttered the words "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Some Christian churches are putting that prayer of forgiveness into practice, literally.

Last month, a group of United Church of Christ congregations in New England worked to fundraise, purchase, and forgive the medical debts of 7,175 families in New England and New York. The churches raised more than \$200,000 to pay off \$26.2 million in medical debts. ...

Sometimes it seems there is very little grace in the world," said the Rev. Matt Fitzgerald, senior pastor of St. Paul's UUC in Chicago last year. "What joy to open a letter saying, 'Your debt has been forgiven,' instead of a letter saying, 'We're coming after you. Pay up.' ... It's like Jesus feeding thousands of people from a few loaves of bread and two fish. We just watched \$38,000 become more than \$5 million."

(Generosity Watch column, The Christian Science Monitor, Nov. 9, 2020)

These are beautiful examples of what obedience to Jesus' new commandment to love one another can look like, aren't they? I'm sure you've seen many others as well — in the pages of *The Monitor* and in your own experience. There are so many opportunities — in our families, among our neighbors, in our branch churches, and in our communities — to love and care for others in ways that bring deep blessings to all involved. It's natural for us to do so. Our true, spiritual identity — our sameness and oneness with divine Love — is the source and sustainer of this timeless Christly activity.

As Christians and Christian Scientists, we are expected to be actively aware of our identity as expressions of that Love — our oneness with that Love, and we are constantly striving to more consistently be conscious of it as our (and others') only identity.

This opens the way to the demonstration of the law of Love that heals.

We read in our textbook:

Christians are under as direct orders now, as they were then, to be Christlike, to possess the Christ-spirit, to follow the Christ-example, and to heal the sick as well as the sinning. ... Our Master said to every follower: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature! . . . Heal the sick! . . . Love thy neighbor as thyself!" (SH 138:18–22, 27–30)

Here's how the apostle Paul describes this in his letter to the Galatians:

...what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.

Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as

an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives.
(Galatians 5:22, 23, 25
The Message translation)

This quote from our Leader is in *Pulpit and Press*:

Christian Scientists, their children and grandchildren to the latest generations, inevitably love one another with that love wherewith Christ loveth us; a love unselfish, unambitious, impartial, universal, — that loves only because it is Love. Moreover, they love their enemies, even those that hate them. This we all must do to be Christian Scientists in spirit and in truth. I long, and live, to see this love demonstrated. I am seeking and praying for it to inhabit my own heart and to be made manifest in my life. Who will unite with me in this pure purpose, and faithfully struggle till it be accomplished? Let this be our Christian endeavor society, which Christ organizes and blesses.
(Pul 21:1)

Let's join our Leader's Christian endeavor society! Let's go forward together, with our Leader, longing and living to see Love demonstrated — for it to inhabit our hearts and for it to be manifest in our lives.

Our families, our branch churches, and our communities need our commitment to obedience to the timeless command to love one another. Our country is being characterized as angry, divided, and dysfunctional. The truth of man's spiritual identity as the image and likeness of Love,

inseparable from that Love, is the counterfact to those counterfeits.

As Christians — and Christian Scientists — our prayers and our active expressions of love in our relationships and interactions with others are vital contributions to harmony, unity, progress, and healing for the world.

Thank you for all you've done — and are doing — as opportunities arise to compassionately, patiently, lovingly, and steadfastly be who you really are as an idea of Love, and to see others that way. Thank you for continuing in our Leader's "Christian endeavor society," longing and living to demonstrate "that love wherewith Christ loveth us; a love unselfish, unambitious, impartial, universal, — that loves only because it is Love" (Pul 21:3–5).

It's our turn to see ... and be ... even newer expressions of loving one another, isn't it?

Notes on citations:

Church Manual— *Manual of The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts*, by Mary Baker Eddy

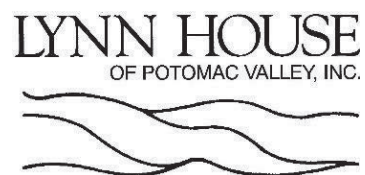
Mis— *Miscellaneous Writings 1883-1896*, by Mary Baker Eddy

Pul— *Pulpit and Press*, by Mary Baker Eddy

SH— *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy

NKJV— New King James Version

The Message— *The Message, The Bible in Contemporary Language*, by Eugene H. Peterson



4400 W. Braddock Road
Alexandria, VA 22304

For additional copies, please contact us at:
info@lynnhouse.org or 703-379-6000.

Copyright 2021 Tina Bilhorn