



Christian Science Institutional Committee for New York State

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TALK GIVEN BY KEVIN LESTER At the Annual Open Meeting of the Christian Science Institutional Committee November 29, 2021 at 7:00 EST VIA ZOOM

Good Evening!

My name is Kevin Lester and when Christian Science came to me, I was incarcerated, and a wreck physically, emotionally, and financially. One Sunday morning, I attended a Christian Science Bible Study at the Manhattan Detention Center in downtown Manhattan and was given a copy of the Christian Science textbook, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy. That book has changed my life.

Since reading it, my thought has been turned toward the light of Truth as found in Christian Science. I have discovered that, as far as I am willing to receive the Word and live it, I can bring all my problems to God for guidance, comfort, and healing. I am extremely grateful for that spiritual help. I know that the things I did and thought, a few years ago, I would not think or do today. I am satisfied that I am on the right track, although I am still challenged and need consistent reminders to keep my thinking filled with the truth of my being.

Through the careful study of Science and Health and the ongoing assistance of the members of the Christian Science Institutional Committee I have been lifted from sickness to health, from stress to peacefulness, from lack to plenty, (though still an ongoing challenge) and, the most beautiful of all, from darkness to light.

I have been educated by Prison Programs, at the New York Institute of Technology, and Columbia University in the city of New York. I have also received advanced Battle Degrees from the streets. Yes, I have been Ivy League groomed, family supported, spiritually curious, but also New York State Department of Corrections confined. As a result of substance abuse, I became the property of the city, the county, the state, and even the Federal Government with an A-1 conviction. I have worked on Wall Street, but also have been “thrown against the wall.”

However, through it all, I was always aware that I had a spiritual identity, and spent several years searching, studying, and comparing religions, scriptures, and metaphysical ways of life. I have studied Qurans, different versions of The Holy Bible, the Metu Netta, Gilgamesh Epics, Torahs, Talmuds, Rattibs, the Egyptian Books of the Dead, Bahagavit Gita, to name a few. It wasn't until I read the Christian Science Textbook, that the truth of being became clear.

Initially, the church service was simply an escape, to get away from the cellblock!!! But then, it became a "tool" to help me cope with incarceration. The church, the Mosque, the library, the Gym, the prison yard were all tools. The Scriptures, the prayers, the books, the basketball courts, the track fields, they too, were all tools. But there was something very different and empowering about those Christian Scientists. They seemed to know something deeper. They seemed to demonstrate a higher level of understanding. Love poured forth from them.

Being somewhat of an intellectual, I found the information being presented by them was profound and quite logical. I am learning that the divine Mind, God, governs, and that in Science, man reflects God's government. I strive to really understand that God is All, as the Scriptures tell us. I have continued to study and put into practice the teachings of Christian Science, as best I know.

Christian Science, members of the Christian Science Institutional Committee , and The Principal Foundation have not only helped me, but shown me how to help others, especially my brothers and sisters who have been recently released from prison. My heart goes out with gratitude to those who introduced me to the teachings of Mary Baker Eddy, for all the work that they have done and continue to do. I look forward to being able to add value to upcoming efforts, programs, and projects to do even more for the people who have experienced the sting of incarceration, and mainly to get a better understanding of God. I am most grateful that God is guiding me into the truth, that I may have life, and that I may have it more abundantly.

I have no doubt whatsoever that Christian Science has saved me from the grave, from recidivism, from addiction, and thus proved a most practicable and efficient help in my time of greatest need. However, no matter how great my suffering behind bars seemed to be, I can be glad that through it all, that the door of my consciousness was opened to let in the light of Truth. Thus, I have progressed and continue to progress, little by little, in the knowledge of God.

One of my favorite phrases from *Science and Health* reads, "You say that you have not slept well or overeaten. You are a law unto yourself. Saying this and believing it, you will suffer in proportion to your belief and fear." On the same page, 385, line 31, Mrs. Eddy writes, "Any supposed information, coming from the body or from inert matter, as if either were intelligent, is an illusion of mortal mind—one of its dreams."

So, as long as I declare the error, those effects will follow, on account of my belief. Mistakenly, I often look back to see if the error or the ailment I am experiencing is gone.

Recently, after listening to a friend and mentor, a committee member, I realized that to catch a glimpse of what spiritual sense means, I must put corporeal sense behind me. "If God were understood, instead of merely believed, this understanding would establish health." (SH 203:7-8) I see now that I must get this understanding.

Since my release from incarceration, there have been many challenges in my reentry process back into society. Of course, I wanted and needed to get re-established and settled. I needed a job and many employers were reluctant to hire me.

I came to realize that my mindset was also playing a part in my acceptance by employers. Initially, I expected to be questioned and shunned as a result of my criminal background. But soon, I began to declare to myself that I had valuable skills and energy to offer any employer that might interview me. I also declared that I was God's perfect man, an ideal candidate for any job.

Restored, ready, willing, and able to make a meaningful and positive contribution to whomever would hire me, I began articulating what I could offer a potential employer. I turned to God to guide me. I'd say, "Hire me! I'm an investment with a good return. I began to offer my services as a possible increase to their profits and a definite cost savings to them. I also began mentioning the legal advantages of hiring an ex-offender, such as the tax credits available and the Federal Bonding that insured them, things I had learned in the Law Library. And I assured them that they were investing in a highly motivated man of God, determined to add monetary value to their businesses.

I would visit the Christian Science Reading Rooms and get spiritual guidance, suggestions, and even transportation assistance to get to and from job interviews!

Then, one day, I was offered two positions with two employers with whom I had worked previously. I put my best foot forward and offered verbal guarantees that I was in it to win. I assured them that I was reliable, spiritually renewed, rehabilitated, trustworthy, and in recovery. I was hired as a recruiter, an employment placement agent with a staffing firm. Since that time, four years ago, I have advanced from recruiter to technical recruiter, to resource manager. The truth of God's providence has opened doors for me that had previously seemed totally shut.

There were times, I found myself knocking on the wrong doors, but God has continued to show me how to demonstrate and acknowledge that He is the source of my supply. He has supplied me with innovative ideas to increase my success in business. Now I not only place qualified individuals in positions of high employment, but I am also able to provide career counseling to individuals in employment categories, from the newly released, to the highly educated, experienced worker. I have learned that God will supply all my needs according to His riches and glory. I ask him for guidance and direction on a daily basis.

During the Pandemic, I saw that people were starting to work from home and schools were engaging in remote learning, again from home. Home based businesses were

popping up everywhere. The idea came to me to start offering desks to my community, then to the public, and then to online consumers.

After praying about the idea and asking how I would be able to sell the desks, I discovered that many businesses in my area were closing and selling their furniture at very low prices and some were even giving it away online.

With a small amount of startup capital, I launched my own business, Desks By Design. "I'll design it the way you want it." I find used desks, small and large, buy them, refurbish or refinish them, and sell them at very low cost. I sand, stain, polish, paint, and even build desks to order, student desks, workplace desks, gaming desks, computer desks, executive desks, etc. God continues to show me His divine ideas and I implement them.

As a result of my continued reliance on the most high God, I am progressing and my life has improved tremendously. Today, I am married to my beautiful childhood sweetheart. She is a Bible Scholar and a wonderful support to a God-centered life. We drive a nice foreign car and we have recently purchased a new home in a nice suburb.

My gratitude is heartfelt when I say thank you to the Christian Science Institutional Committee for introducing me to Christian Science. Now, with God and the Institutional Committee I pray to help others turn their lives around and enter the service of God.

Suffolk Zone Report

The Suffolk Zone remains very active despite the pandemic restrictions in NYC, and throughout the state. The Zone Chair reports, "For my part, it is a delight to say to these men that they have a unique, God-given purpose. That God is good, only good, and that He loves them unconditionally. It is always a special moment for me. If I were pressed to choose one quote from the Bible that underscores the work we do, it would be a verse from Jeremiah 17:15, 'Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now.'

"Though we have not returned to Yaphank, we were able to maintain a consistent presence in Riverhead, pandemic or not. This fact is a continuing source of inspiration and joy for all of us. We meet with them on a weekly basis and read a Bible Lesson from the Christian Science Quarterly. The discussions that arise from these sessions bring out many ideas that some of our guests may be hearing for the first time. With thankful hearts, we know that the Word of God is a healing presence for our inmates. That wherever they may be in their learning experience, this Word is right there with them and it is there for them NOW."

The Christian Science Institutional Committee is grateful beyond measure for the continued prayerful and financial support from the Christian Science Churches and Societies in New York State. Those we serve express their gratitude continually.

It is a blessed work and we are thankful to be a part of it.

