



# What's in the name "Christian Science nurse"?

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**We all want to** be known and understood accurately for the good we do, and a name or title can foster that understanding. There are many instances throughout the Bible where names and titles reflect the spiritual vision and enlightenment of an individual. Jesus' divine title is *Christ*, based on his expression of the highest type of divinity reflected in a human form. His disciple, Simon Barjona, was renamed *Peter* (from the Greek *petros*, meaning stone) for his recognition that Jesus exemplified the Christ—the Son of God, the Savior of the world. It was on this spiritual foundation that Jesus said he would build his church. And Saul was renamed *Paul* when, in humility, he became a follower of Christ after the misguided premise on which he had previously persecuted Christians was revealed to him.

In our society, job titles often tell us something about the individuals holding those jobs. For example, if someone is a nurse, this would give some insights about them. It would likely give a sense of someone who cares about humanity and is dedicated to the well-being of others. In most instances, there would probably be an assumption that the individual was trained and credentialed as a licensed professional in a conventional health-care setting.

Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, provided a title, standard, and job description for the function of a "Christian Science nurse" in the *Manual of The Mother Church*, where it states: "A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick" (p. 49).

While parts of the description could apply to a variety of health-care professionals, a Christian Science nurse is uniquely distinguishable as having "a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice." This not only is the first element of the job description, but is perhaps its most important aspect. It serves as a complement to prayer, or spiritual treatment, provided by a Christian Science practitioner, or healer.

The requirement of "a demonstrable knowledge" of this metaphysical practice indicates the need for an understanding of how one can experience healing through the spiritual teachings of this Science. It requires not only a concerted and consistent study of the Bible and *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mrs. Eddy, but also a commitment to living the efficacy of Christian Science healing in one's daily activity. This demonstrable knowledge is attained through taking class instruction in Christian Science, individual practical experience, and most importantly, a character of humility, charitableness, and selfless love of God and mankind. These enable the Christian Science nurse to see patients as God sees them, and to help patients see themselves in that same light. The demonstrable knowledge requirement is the qualification for being uniquely situated to support those who choose to turn to spiritual healing through Christian Science.

Christian Science nursing is not a form of medical care, and includes no medical diagnosis or prognosis, physical manipulation, administration of drugs, or medically oriented techniques or technology. A fundamental aspect of the ministry is "active, prayerful affirmation of everyone's innate spirituality and responsiveness to God's harmonious government" (see "Christian Science Nurse Scope of Services" at [christianscience.com](http://christianscience.com)), while at the same time providing skilled, practical care. The provision for a "Christian

Science nurse” in the *Manual* establishes the official title for those representing themselves in this profession. It might be tempting just to refer to Christian Science nursing as “nursing,” but leaving out the words *Christian Science* in reference to this profession can actually promote a false sense of it.

Society tends to medicalize terms like *physician* or *medicine*. But Mrs. Eddy writes, “Through Christian Science, religion and medicine are inspired with a diviner nature and essence; fresh pinions are given to faith and understanding, and thoughts acquaint themselves intelligently with God” (*Science and Health*, p. 107).

*Science and Health* explains medicine as a “means of divine thought,” which includes “spiritual laws emanating from the invisible and infinite power and grace” (p. 118). The first medicine, which lay behind Christ Jesus’ healing work, was the divine Mind, dependent on no material means or manipulation. This Mind reveals man as made in the image and likeness of God; and because God is pure Spirit, man must be entirely spiritual, not material. A spiritual creation can no more be corrected with a material substance than can a mathematical equation be solved with a baseball bat. Therefore the means by which Jesus brought a higher sense of health and healing to mankind was spiritual revelation and transformation, not material procedures and remedies.

This extends to the concept of Christian Science nursing—a spiritual activity empowered by divine perception, love, charity, and compassion. The source of this activity is divine Love itself, a name that the Bible and *Science and Health* both use for God, and which conveys His ongoing provision and care for His children. This care is expressed through qualities of cheerfulness, orderliness, punctuality, patience, faithfulness, and receptivity to divine Love (see *Science and Health*, p. 395). These spiritual qualities, rather than material methods, form the foundation upon which Christian Science nursing is carried out.

Mrs. Eddy states, “The two largest words in the vocabulary of thought are ‘Christian’ and ‘Science’” (*No and Yes*, p. 10). This has bearing on Christian Science nursing. It therefore wouldn’t do justice to the magnitude of this profession to leave out “Christian Science” in the title, even in casual conversations with others who might be familiar with this form of care.

Recognizing the full title not only acknowledges the high spiritual standard and foundation on which it is based, but it helps “to maintain the dignity and defense of our Cause” through obedience to the *Manual* (p. 3). Using the full title “Christian Science nurse” not only helps to promote clarity, but demonstrates appreciation for the efficacy of Christian Science nursing and its contribution to spiritual healing.