As most of you know, for the past several years Brad Stock asks the new students to ask themselves -- Why am I here?
I would also like us to think about why is Principia here? And what is our role in actively recognizing this?
Principia is a place to make a difference. It should be a place of healing and righteous judgment – yet I get that we often have challenges in executing on both healing and judgment – so that’s what I want to talk about.

Healing

I want to start by talking about healing – it is something we do a good deal of here at Principia – and often we acknowledge it and sometimes we don’t. We have acknowledged numerous important healings over the past year – and these are just those we hear about at CSO -- healings of depression, smoking, physical ailments including twisted ankles, knees, elbows, shoulders, concussions, multiple types of influenza. We heard of relationships restored, financial situations resolved, and academic challenges overcome.

Thank you all for your vital, effective roles as students, teachers, and healers.

And we shouldn’t expect anything less.
After all, Jesus disciples were likely your age (I am speaking specifically to the students here!).
Not any older. Many members of MBE last class were your age

How grateful we are to know that practicing CS and experiencing and acknowledging healing has nothing to do with age.

My personal experience with physical healing this summer provided me with a continued understanding that Christian Science is both prophylactic and therapeutic – preventative and curative. I am appreciative of the protection and preventative impact of CS… through my summer activities of overseas travel, heavy storms and tree damage closer to home, and the inevitable completion of a few home projects!

This summer, as I was celebrating that protection, I was up early one morning and decided to take the opportunity to finish moving some fairly heavy pieces. Shortly after I began a few twists and turns landed me on the cement floor of our basement, headfirst into the water
heater. I was aware of what felt like some significant scrapes and when I ran my hand through my hair saw evidences of blood. I began quickly to reverse the case and claimed my rightful place as God’s reflection – reflecting Principle in obedience and right activity, reflecting Mind in intelligence and Soul in balance and awareness, Spirit in strength and true substance, Life in harmony and health, Truth in integrity and innocence from accident, and Love in dominion and care-full right activity. I am happy to report a quick stopping of the blood and of pain, no evidence of other injury or lack of clarity and the ability to return immediately to the work.

As I am grateful for my own healing progress and that of the community practicing around me, I continue to look for ways we can nurture healing more obviously and consistently.

In the March 2000 issue of the Christian Science Journal, Mark Swinney is interviewed in an article entitled, “How can you heal consistently?”

In the article, he discusses what we can learn from Jesus about healing with consistency through spiritual means.

I am quoting here, “Once a man came to Jesus, telling him about his son, who had a severe form of what might be diagnosed today as epilepsy. The man described how the boy suffered. And he told Jesus that the disciples had tried but were unable to cure him. They undoubtedly became discouraged. Jesus, however, "rebuked" the evil, and the boy was cured, right on the spot.

There are no more specifics about how Jesus prayed on that occasion. Yet John's Gospel records some words of the Master that indicate what might have been the basis for his prayer, or treatment: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgement." In other words, don't just judge things by how they appear on the surface, but consider them from a deeper, spiritual standpoint.

He continues...

Could it be that Jesus' followers had unsuccessfully tried to pray away the disease as though it were a solid reality, whereas Jesus prayed from the standpoint of a fundamental spiritual fact: God's perfection and the concurrent perfection of His offspring? How radical! The boy's perfection as God's spiritual likeness may not have appeared on the surface, but it was there to be perceived. Jesus' clear spiritual view of the boy, reflecting what God knew of him as His child, was his treatment. It invited the power of God to transform thought by destroying the belief in disease with the truth of each individual's God-given perfection. And this removal of the false belief brought concrete healing.”

I love Mark Swinney’s comments that the basis for Jesus’ prayer involved righteous judgment – judgment that had nothing to do with the appearance of the problem. I would like us to think more deeply about this righteous judgment and how it relates to the healing we all want to see – for ourselves, our fellow community members, and the world.

Judgment

In our community of practice, I believe there is a significant amount of discussion of the idea of judgement. We often hear “Don’t judge me!” in our conversations, from light-hearted storytelling and conversation to earnest objections (and even supporting Bible quotations) about the right of anyone to judge. We sometimes wonder – apologetically -- if anyone can or should judge righteously and what that looks like. I would submit it looks like healing.

First some definitions. The Student’s Reference Dictionary says this about “Judge”: To compare facts or ideas, and perceive their agreement or disagreement, and thus to distinguish truth from falsehood.

To discern; to distinguish; to consider accurately for the purpose of forming an opinion or conclusion.

Doesn’t this sound like what should – and does -- happen every day on a college campus – inside the classroom and outside of it? We’re constantly trying to distinguish truth from falsehood – in what we read, in what history tells us, in experiments we conduct – and we’re forming conclusions about it just as naturally and constantly.

Then the definitions get a little more controversial, perhaps. Here’s a couple more definitions, complete with Bible quotes within the definitions to illustrate:

To censure rashly; to pass severe sentence. Judge not, that ye be not judged – Matt vii

And:

Rightly to understand and discern. He that is spiritual judgeth all things -- I Cor ii

And suddenly it seems we’ve gone from an abstract appreciation for our use of judgement in studying concepts, to the more controversial area of judging people, and this is where we may start to disagree about it, right? Most of us can probably agree that each of us has a sense of what is right and wrong – “distinguishing truth from falsehood” as the definition states – but we’re not always ready to take on a full discussion of what’s absolutely right and wrong in all
circumstances – and for each of us. And who are we to judge, anyway? Didn’t Jesus say “Judge not, that ye be not judged?”

He did – and then some. In Matthew 7 he discusses the standard of judgement and refers to how blinded we can be in our judgement of others. In the King James version we read: Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote (one commentator has here ‘a speck of dust’) that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam (plank) that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. Matt 7:1-5

Notice, by the end, it says the goal of all this is to work to see clearly enough yourself (minus the plank) to help your brother cast out the speck of dust that’s holding him back. The goal is not to either keep walking around with a plank in your vision, or to clear up your own vision but leave your brother out of it – the goal is to judge effectively with a blessing for both of you. How much this requires discussion with your brother, or how much it just rests with seeing yourself and your brother more spiritually is left to the specific unfoldment, but the result is healing.

Jesus reveals the spiritual basis of this “correct judgement” in the gospel of John where he is recorded as saying:

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. John 5:30

One of my favorite Bible commentators, William Barclay, has this to say about this passage: Barclay (John p. 193) “… Jesus has claimed the right of judgement. It was not unnatural that men should ask by what right he proposed to judge others. His answer was that his judgement was true and final because he had no desire to do anything other than the will of God.

So maybe now you’re saying to yourself, “Ok, maybe Jesus could be trusted to judge others because he so clearly demonstrated his understanding of the will of God, but that doesn’t mean I, or my fellow students, teachers, healers in this community of practice should ever presume to judge.” Or maybe you’re willing to consider that there could be times when we could or should offer each other some help to remove specks of dust, but how do we know when it’s appropriate?
In addition to telling us that our judgement needs to be in accord with God’s will to be truly just, Jesus gives us that other condition for judging correctly, further on in the gospel of John. It’s what Mark Swinney quoted, remember?

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. John 7:24

So we see that in our prayers to have our judgement reflect the will of God, we see clearest (no planks) when we remember that God’s spiritual and perfect man is what’s true, and any imposition – a speck of dust, a plank – needs to be seen for what it is, a lie about man that should be recognized for what it is and let go.

In addition to these teachings of Jesus that support our thinking about the most healing way to approach righteous judgement, Paul’s letter to the Philippians is instructive. Philippi could be seen as a community of practice too. He says

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;” Phil 1:9,10

Here Paul links love with knowledge and judgement. As the commentator Barclay elaborates:

“It was Paul’s prayer for his people that their love would grow greater every day. That love, which was not merely a sentimental thing, was to grow in knowledge and in sensitive perception so that they would be more and more able to distinguish between right and wrong. …The Christian is himself pure, but his love and gentleness are such that he attracts others to the Christian way and never repels them from it.”

So this establishes the Christian approach to righteous judgement that should be at the foundation of our community of practice. We’re not stopping at an incomplete look at “Judge not” – we’re recognizing that we’re to judge spiritually, clearly, without any blinders/preconceptions - planks. It’s demanded of us that we are to be clearly seeing the man of God’s creating and that we’re sincerely motivated in listening for God’s will, not ours, as we pray for how to best help our fellow community member – how best to accomplish healing.

Clearly we are being told that we are to exercise and share our judgement at times with others – and we’re to do it in accord with God’s will, not simply our own personal agendas. How can we be sure what’s guiding us? Here’s where our daily, consistent prayers for spiritual direction and enlightenment lay this foundation. As we know, we have specific requirements as Christian Scientists and particularly for those of us who are Mother church members, on this very subject of judgement – how we’re to be judged by our actions, and how we’re to be motivated.
Every day our daily prayers help remind us of this:

“Alertness to Duty. Sect. 6. It shall be the duty of every member of this Church to defend himself daily against aggressive mental suggestion, and not be made to forget nor to neglect his duty to God, to his Leader, and to mankind. By his works he shall be judged, — and justified or condemned” Man. 42:4

Also in our daily prayers that our motives and acts be consistent with God’s will, we’re reminded that our rebuking of sin should reflect “the sweet amenities of Love” and that we’re to watch and pray to be delivered from “judging … erroneously.”

And in Miscellany we’re all reminded by MBE that it’s our habitual, regular self-examination that helps us keep our judgements in line with Truth:

“Watch, and pray daily that evil suggestions, in whatever guise, take no root in your thought nor bear fruit. Ofttimes examine yourselves, and see if there be found anywhere a deterrent of Truth and Love, and “hold fast that which is good.” My. 128:30

So when we hear (or say) “Principia makes me feel so judged” or “Who are we to judge each other?” or “Christian Scientists are so judgemental” – and I’ve heard comments like these, both on campus or in discussions with alums around the country, I recognize these as reactions to judgement that’s gone wrong, or to an unwillingness to humbly recognize an opportunity for improvement. Clearly, if we always engaged each other only when in accordance with God’s will, with our own planks removed, and with the sweet amenities of Love, it would be better received. It would have a truly healing result. Listen to how Mary Baker Eddy invites us to approach this:

“Let us serve instead of rule, knock instead of push at the door of human hearts, and allow to each and every one the same rights and privileges that we claim for ourselves. If ever I wear out from serving students, it shall be in the effort to help them to obey the Ten Commandments and imbibe the spirit of Christ’s Beatitudes.” Mis 303:13

I think that sometimes we don’t always get this “knocking instead of pushing” exactly right, which could lead to a sense of feeling judged. Could we, in these times, have the generosity of spirit to recognize that, in truth, our Father Mother is our ultimate judge and that’s how we’re truly known? Could we remember that merited rebuke is for our benefit and unmerited rebuke can’t hurt us or define us if we are conscientious in our prayers to be led to what’s true, for everyone, in the situation.
Let’s actively support each other in our daily practice of this with the recognition that, as Debra Jones, Dean of Students often says “we’re all in this together!” Let’s practice gracious acceptance of merited rebuke when we receive it, have a generous spirit toward those who don’t perhaps have the whole picture when they courageously try to give us feedback that may not be warranted, and let’s practice the daily prayer that ensures we’re judging our own conduct accurately and confirming God as our ultimate lawgiver and judge. Can we commit to honest efforts to live plank-free and help each other with our specks of dust when we are guided to? Can we progress together in our understanding that this true judgment, based not on appearances but on what God knows of each of His ideas, brings healing?

As Principia’s founder, Mary Kimball Morgan no doubt had countless opportunities to give merited rebuke and to field judgmental comments. I’d like to close with an excerpt from a letter she wrote to a senior administrator that amounts to a treatment we could all benefit from: “I am God’s child. He has created me for His own divine purpose, and that purpose must be fulfilled, for His will is law and cannot be broken. ... No personal peculiarities (my own or another’s) can interfere with the right unfolding of His purpose. No claim of sensitiveness can be used by mental malpractice to make me unhappy in His service. I am not sensitive to mortal mind suggestions. I am not sensitive to personal criticism. I am sensitive only to divine correction and instruction always and am always ready to accept wise counsel, no matter through what channel it may come. ... I cannot be hurt by what others do or say. I am willing to be corrected if the correction is merited, and, if not, it cannot touch me. All I desire is to know God’s will and to do it. ... My joy in God’s service cannot be taken from me, for it is His will that I shall rejoice.” EAP p. 223

And I have one last request for us all in our path to recognizing healing more often, more effectively, more naturally: become better acquainted with the most important textbook on any campus: *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy. It is the textbook for Christian Scientists, so if you haven't read it through, I encourage you to do it. If you have, you already know why you should read it again.

Study it, ponder it.
And as you receive more insight and inspiration from the Bible and *Science & Health*, it will heal you and the Principia Community and the world at large.
As the sowing, the reaping.
Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.
Thanks for being here today. Have a great semester.