

World Woman's Christian Temperance Union

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Dear White Ribbon Sisters,

The Holy Bible advises us to sanctify everything with the word of God and prayer. Health, home, job, White Ribbon work, friends, home, country, and the whole of mankind are good gifts from God. Therefore we praise him and also in White Ribbon meetings.

In the name of the Saviour we pray for God's blessing on our meeting. The heavenly Father gives us energy and mutual trust and material and spiritual resources for every day to come.

In the midst of everyday life we direct our eyes to the heavenly home. May the love of Christ reign in our hearts. Grant that our WCTU may be a place of rest and recreation, not only for the members of the WCTU, but also for those who come to our meetings as visitors.

Irja Eskelinen

Materials included for the Christian Outreach Department

- 1) 2 Devotions
- 2) Suggestions for Prayer Groups and How to Write Devotionals
- 3) Convention Christian Outreach Workshop

MORNING WATCH

Irja Eskelinen

On a typical morning, I wake up, quickly do my morning errands, run to the bus, and go to work. Most of the time this happens in darkness or around dawn or dusk. At work, I start with *Coram Deo*- in front of God! My mind is blank, even weary. Many of us battle with these same sentiments. Anyone can become worn out and depressed. We have to beware. In Job 33:28 we are reminded: *He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light.* We must learn from the adversity in our lives. At times it is appropriate for us to lead a quiet life and do our work. The key to learning the right attitude towards life is to learn not to expect too much from it. In Isaiah we are counselled: *In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. But you would have none of it (Isaiah 30:15).* Our best approach to life is a quiet trust in God's help. Matthew writes: *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." (Matthew 20:25-26).* It is difficult to live in the spirit of service and at the same time, be assertive and, when necessary, even relentless. How can I be a true servant of Christ without letting people take advantage of me?

Psalm 17, verse 8 pleads: *Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.* What a rich and comforting metaphor: apple of His eye, in the shadow of His wings. We must live **in** the world. We may not hide in loneliness. We were created to belong to a community. Even when no one gives us thanks, we must do the work that we believe to be important. We must not follow the wishes and requests of others. In Genesis 26:24 God makes a promise: *Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you.* We can lay our lives on that promise.

It would be best for us to complete our work in small portions. We should not worry about more than the current day. Matthew 6:34 teaches: *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.* Life and health should not be taken for granted. They are gifts that can be taken away from us at any time. We have received many reminders about that in these past months. "Theologia viatorum" – we need theology for wayfarers. It is time for us to go about our journey and make an effort. I think of the late Margaret Jackson who came to visit us in Finland in August 2003. I vividly remember the discussions I had with her at our kitchen table. We also visited a nearby Christian bookstore where we saw some beautifully painted icons. Now Margaret is with God. I pray that her close ones may be comforted. Blessings to the life and work of every one of you! May our journey together continue each day.

PROTECTED BY GOD'S WORD AND PRAYER

Irja Eskelinen

We live our lives in the battlefield between good and evil and, at times, evil, pain and trials seem to overwhelm us. Prayer is a way not to give in to the darkness, to hold on to God and to His goodness despite the opposition around us. Psalm 23 reminds us; *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*

God is with us, but not as an on-looker, or a life coach who observes how much adversity we can handle. No, God walks with us and bears our burdens together with us, just like Jesus wavered under the weight of the heavy cross he carried. Jesus presents to us a God who suffers with us, the same God whom we approach in prayer.

Luke 11:10 holds a promise; *For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

Jesus showed us how to pray to please God; not in empty words but seeking meaning. Jesus prayed a lot and his prayers led him closer to people and their problems. Prayer also led him to those who were shunned and excluded. Prayer taught Jesus to see beyond superficial judgment and prejudice. It taught him to understand backgrounds and reasons. Who asks, receives. Looking at Jesus, we notice that He was given a new way to see those who were different. This meant trouble with the religious and earthly authorities of His time. They wanted to set strict boundaries to God's Kingdom and determine whom God loves.

Prayer opens our eyes. When we expect our environment to change in answer to our prayers, we may ignore the fact that God has already created a change and he needs our hands and feet to make it grow and expand.

Many times we stare at the sky waiting for our prayers to be answered, not noticing that the answers are right there, at our feet on this earth. I think to pray for someone who is ill. When I visit her I don't see her getting any better. I think with dismay that God has not heard my prayers. Yet I fail to notice how peacefully this person endures her illness, how much love surrounds her in her family and nursing staff taking care of her. It is an answer to my prayer, sent through caring hands and loving words. It is an answer to my prayer that the person is not in despair with her illness but has found peace and hope from God in her heart.

Whenever one who is tired is comforted and strengthened, where one who is angry begins to smile, prayers are answered. It is God's miracle to have so much goodness, beauty and love in this world. I believe it is an answer to the prayers spoken in silence or aloud, in solitude, prayer circles or church services.