

WWCTU World Convention Christian Outreach Workshop

Pastor Irja Eskelinen

WWCTU Christian Outreach Department Director

Finnish WCTU Secretary General

Stavanger, Norway, May 13, 2010

Christian Outreach

The Christian Outreach Department encourages the Christian walk of members, emphasizing “Do to others as you would have them do to you,” (Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31), and reaches out to the faith community with the WCTU total abstinence message.

Ephesians 5:15-21

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Colossians 1:9-10

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.



Nourishing your spiritual well-being

- Our spiritual, physical and mental well-being go hand in hand and affect all areas of our lives.
- We need to replenish the source of our spirituality.
- We should challenge ourselves to grow spiritually and to seek spiritual nourishment.

Sometimes we need to take inventory of ourselves, repent, and move on. We should not dwell on our past nor on the affairs of others, but concentrate on growing and improving our own lives. This liberates our resources for change.

- We come from different backgrounds, cultures and religions- but we all have our faith in God in common.
- It is important that we take care of our spiritual well-being as well as the well-being of others. We cannot give to others what we do not possess ourselves.
- Every person needs a spiritual lighthouse in her life- and everyone can be such a lighthouse for someone else in need of spiritual encouragement.
- Sharing our spirituality in a kind and considerate manner will uplift us just as much as the person we serve. We should always respect local culture and manners.

1. Personal spiritual life

- What can you do in your daily life to become more spiritual?
- Think about what your goals are and choose some exercises that guide you towards attaining those goals.



Project: Home altar

- Reserve a space from your home to be your personal sanctuary. This could be for example a corner of your living room, a shelf on your bookcase or the top of a dresser. Most importantly, it should be a quiet place where you can pray and meditate in privacy whenever you want.
- A home altar could include:
 - a tablecloth or a doily
 - a Bible
 - a candle
 - fresh flowers or a silk flower arrangement
 - a crucifix, an icon, a statue of Jesus or some other religious symbol



WWCTU World Convention
Christian Outreach Workshop

Project: Prayer Journal

- Purchase a simple notebook for starting a prayer journal.
- Write down the dates and topics of your prayers.
- You can do this daily, weekly or occasionally when something significant takes place in your life.
- Don't forget to write down when your prayers are answered.
- A prayer journal is a wonderful source of strength to go back to later on in life.

Project: Gratitude notes

- In our daily lives we often forget to give thanks to the one who has given us everything we have.
- To focus on everything we do have and on the things that are well in our lives, write down the things you are thankful for on small pieces of paper or card.
- Keep your gratitude notes in a jar or basket and look through them each time you feel challenged, depressed or angry.
- Add some new cards each time you look at them. Pray and give thanks to God.
- This simple exercise will help you live in a spirit of thankfulness.

Project: Using the Internet for Bible study

- The Internet has ample sources for studying the Bible.
- You can find topical guides, mailing lists, message boards, study groups etc.
- Many sites are non-denominational.
- Your church might have some resources available as well.
- Some links are available at our table.

2. Praying with others

- Prayer is a powerful tool, even more so when we pray together.
- We can unite our forces and be strengthened together as we pray together.
- Let's be considerate when we pray for others! We should not share unnecessary information about personal challenges and situations.
- God knows our thoughts and each person's needs.

Project: Prayer circle or prayer partner

- Form a prayer circle with others who pray or arrange to have someone as your prayer partner.
- Pray for each other and pass on prayer topics to each other.
- Set up common times for prayer.
- You can very easily circulate information by e-mail.
- Share the outcome of your prayers and promote your faith.

Project: Prayer walk

- Arrange a nature or city walk with your church or WCTU on a regular basis, e.g. monthly.
- Invite neighbors and friends to join.
- You can pray aloud or give prayer topics.
- This is a great opportunity to express gratitude for the things you come across during your walk.



WWCTU World Convention
Christian Outreach Workshop

Project: Noontide prayer

- Take a few minutes at lunchtime to pray.
- Designate a special day for noontide prayer with your prayer circle or partner.
- Pass on noontide prayer topics to other prayer circles.
- Ask your local church to promote noontide prayer.

Project: World Day of Prayer

September 28

- Arrange a prayer meeting in cooperation with your local church.
- Meet in person with your prayer circle or partner.
- Write an article in advance for the local newspaper or a Christian paper about the event on World Day of Prayer.

3. Letting the word of God speak

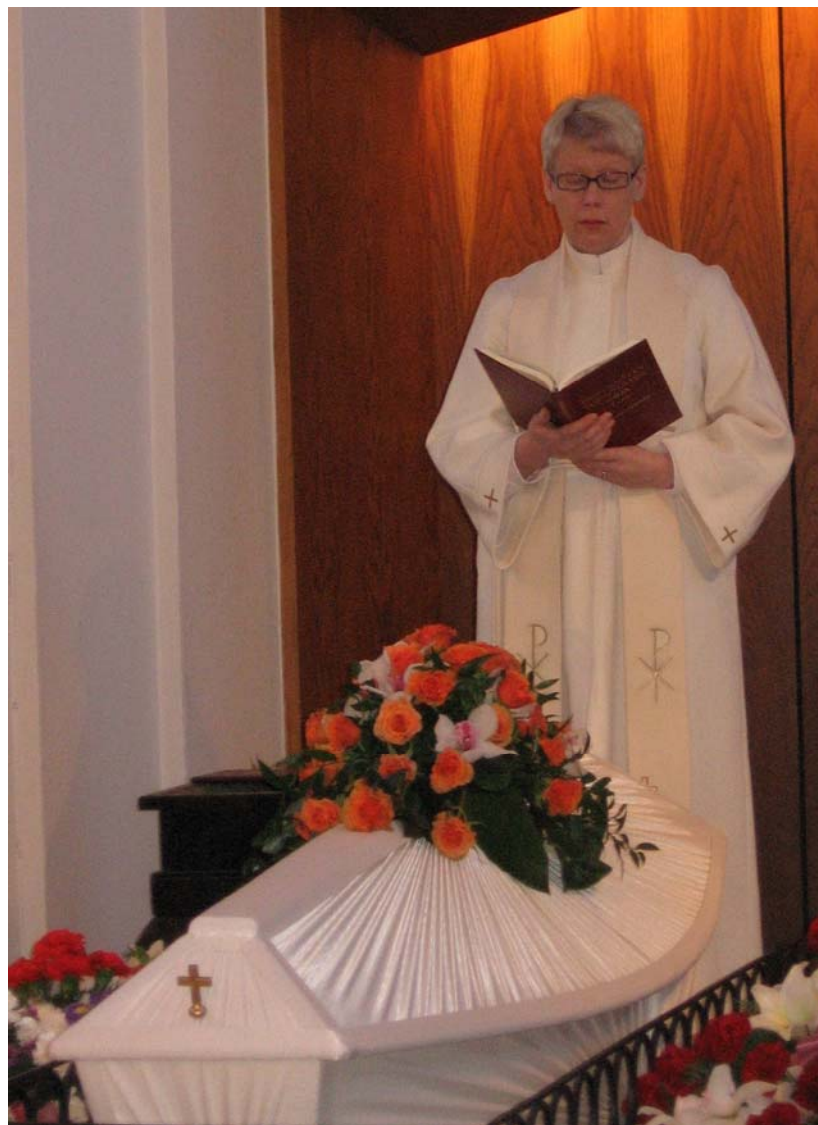
- The word of God speaks to us if we listen.
- It speaks with a still, small voice.
- In our noisy, busy world it is often difficult to listen carefully enough.
- We can develop our skill to listen to what the word of God has to say to us personally when we concentrate on the word, ponder it and let it change our thoughts and actions.

Project: Retreat of silence

- Many churches arrange retreats of silence.
- They are often arranged in remote locations over a weekend.
- The purpose is to speak very little and listen to what God has to say to us.
- Attending a retreat of silence can provide great spiritual insight and strength.

Project: Devotionals

- Devotionals are a good way to ponder upon a topic through scriptures and commentary.
- If you choose a topic that speaks to you, it will speak to others as well.
- If you need a devotional for a certain occasion, for example death or illness, choose a scripture with the help of a topical guide.
- Remain close to daily life. Keep your devotional simple and genuine. Avoid theological jargon and empty words.
- Topical guides and commentary guides are largely available free of charge on the internet and can be purchased at Christian bookstores.



WWCTU World Convention
Christian Outreach Workshop

Project: Bible study circle

- You can start a Bible study circle at your church, home or on the internet.
- Alternatively, you can join an existing study group.
- Concentrate on the word of God and stay away from personal interpretations.
- Open and close with a prayer.
- If you run into conflicts, resolve them prayerfully and quickly.

4. Living in accordance with the Spirit of God

- We need to practice what we preach.
- The basis of a Christian walk is living in accordance with the Spirit of God.
- When we do so, we will grow spiritually, in love and in compassion.



Project: Listen to your conscience

- God speaks to us through our conscience.
- Our conscience tells us when we are doing something wrong.
- We should listen to the voice of our conscience and keep it clear.
- It is our closest personal guide in becoming more spiritual.

Project: Forgive, forget and let go

- Many of us hold on to painful memories. Those keep us from progressing and from living in this day.
- We need to work on forgiveness until we are ready to do so, forget about the pains of the past and let go.
- Sometimes this can take a long time, but it is necessary for our personal development.

Project: Ask for forgiveness

- When we do something to hurt others, we must ask for forgiveness and make amends.
- Repentance is an essential part of living in accordance with the Spirit of God.
- God is willing to forgive us and let us put our mistakes in the past.
- Once we repent, we need to forgive ourselves as well and move on.

Project: Do not gossip or speak ill of others

- We as humans tend to be interested in the lives and affairs of others.
- It is not Christlike to discuss the personal matters of others and we should refrain from doing so.
- Speaking ill of others can seriously harm their lives and it can destroy our spirituality.



5. Growing spiritually through service

- We can grow in the service of others, which is our way to serve Jesus.
- Most service opportunities provide a spiritual reward.
- Here are some examples of spiritually focussed service projects:

Project: Visiting the less privileged

- Visit a retirement or rehabilitation home with a spiritual message e.g. reading the Bible aloud.
- A local church could provide a service and a communion.
- *The Helsinki Metropolitan Area WCTU sponsors a rehabilitation home for women recovering from substance abuse. The local Lutheran church provides a regular service and communion at the home.*

Staff and residents at the rehabilitation home Liisankoti



Project: Offering support to someone in search of a spiritual home

- Volunteer to sponsor someone who has recently become a Christian or joined your church. You could be a kind of "Spiritual Godmother" to someone in need of support at the early stages of their Christian walk. This kind of activity often results in beautiful friendships.

Project: Sharing your spirituality through music

- If you know how to sing or play music, share your skill at WCTU or church events or volunteer to play for the community. Play church hymns or spiritual classical pieces.
- Sing in a choir and perform at religious events.
- *The Finnish WCTU has a violin that dates back to 1912. It is loaned out to an aspiring violin student who often plays at WCTU functions.*
- *The Finnish WCTU hosted a charity concert in November 2009 for the second time. It commemorated young people who died as a result of drug abuse and was held at the Helsinki Lutheran Cathedral. A cross was formed on the cathedral stairs with as many candles as the people who died in the year before.*



Project: Serving as a volunteer at your church

- Your church typically offers many opportunities for service. Serve at your church: assist in services, teach family Sunday School or look after children during church socials.
- See your minister or pastor to discuss these opportunities and choose an activity that fills your spiritual needs.
- Remember that each one of us gives according to our resources. We are not expected to do more than we can handle.

Final food for thought

- What are you taking home from this workshop?
- What can you do in your daily life to be spiritually oriented?
- How can you replenish your own spirituality?
- Thank you for your attention!

