

Women's Emphasis Day 2002

June 8, 2002

RESOURCE PACKET

“Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled!”

by

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Euro-Asia Division

About the Author

Ludmila Krushenitskaya was the Women's Ministries director for the Euro-Asia Division from 1991 to 2000. This territory covered the entire former Soviet Union. Originally from the Ukraine, she now lives in Moscow where she is director of Archives for the division. She served beside her pastor husband, Victor, for 18 years previous to their move to Moscow.

In November of 1998 she received her Master's Degree in Religion from Zaoksky Theological Seminary, Andrews University. She also has a Master's degree in Physics and Mathematics (1972) from the Odessa State University in Ukraine.

Ludmila and her husband, Victor, have two married adult children, Albina and Olay and a grandson, Timothy. Ludmila likes reading, singing, communicating with people, and working in the garden.

How to Use This Packet

This packet, which includes a suggested order of service, a responsive reading, and a sermon, are a resource for you if you wish to use them. If you desire to create your own special program for the Women's Ministries Emphasis Day, please feel free to do so.

Likewise, if you would like to modify any portion of the program or sermon, you are welcome to do that also. It is especially helpful if you can insert illustrations or experiences from your local area.

If you are unable to have Women's Ministries Emphasis Day on June 8, it is our hope that you will have it on another Sabbath so that your church may be blessed by its women and learn of some of the things that are happening in Women's Ministries in your local church.

May the Lord bless you as you experience this special worship opportunity.

Prayer Emphasis for 2002

The prayer emphasis for 2002 will be for women and Women's Ministries in the following areas:

The Inter-American Division: This division covers all of the island nations in the Caribbean Ocean, Central America from Mexico south, including Colombia and Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana on the north of South America.

The South Pacific Division: Australia, New Zealand, and the island nations of the South Pacific from Papua-New Guinea east to Pitcairn Island make up this large division.

The Southern Asia Division: This division is comprised of the nations of India, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal.

“Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled”

Worship Outline

Opening Song: #462 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* “Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!”
Choose One #467 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* “Life Is Great! So Sing About It”
#470 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* “There’s Sunshine in My Soul Today”

Call to Worship: Psalm 103:1-5, 11-12
Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal Reading #703 “Praise the Lord, You That Are His Servants”

Offertory Reading: You choose

Special Music: You choose

Personal Testimonies:

Women witnessing (those who successfully overcame difficult circumstances – in their homes, in the church, in society, etc, due to God’s leading.

Children’s Story: Select a story based on one of the following:

- A little girl or boy who trusted the Lord during a difficult period of life and was not disappointed;
- The servant of Naaman’s wife;
- Other

Bible Reading: **O Lord, You Are Our Dwelling Place** (Enclosed)

Special Music: You choose

Sermon: “Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled!” (Enclosed)

Prayer: (by WM Director or Pastor)

Closing Song: #468 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* “A Child of the King”
Choose one #469 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”
#530 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* “It is Well With my Soul”

Silent Prayer

Bible Reading

O Lord, You Are Our Dwelling Place

(This dialogue can be used as a Bible reading during the worship service.)

Voice One:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations.
Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from
everlasting to everlasting you are God. Ps. 90:1-2

Voice Two:

How long will be the wicked, O Lord,
how long will the wicked be jubilant? Ps. 94:3

Voice Three:

Let those who love the Lord hate evil,
for he guards the lives of his faithful ones
and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.
Light is shed upon the righteous
and joy on the upright in heart. Ps. 97: 10-11

Voice One:

Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous,
and praise his holy name. Ps 97: 12

Voice Two:

The wicked, O Lord, pour out arrogant words;
all the evildoers are full of boasting.
They crush your people, O Lord:
they oppress your inheritance.
They slay the widow and the alien;
they murder the fatherless.
They say, "The Lord does not see..." Ps. 94: 3-7

Voice Three:

The Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.
Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law;
you grant him relief from days of trouble, till a pit is dug for the wicked. Ps. 94:11-13

Voice One:

For the Lord will not reject his people;
he will never forsake his inheritance. Ps. 94:14

Voice Two:

Unless the Lord had given me help,
I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.

When I said, "My foot is slipping,"
your love, O Lord, supported me.
When anxiety was great within me,
your consolation brought joy to my soul. Ps.94:17-19

Voice Choir (or one individual woman):

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. Ps.95:1-2

Voice One:

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
Come before him with joyful songs. Ps. 100:1-2

Voice Two:

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Ps. 100:3

Voice Three:

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name. Ps. 100:4

Voice Choir:

For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations. Ps. 100:5

All Participants:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Amen

Sermon

Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled !

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” (John 14:1)

I. Christian behavior before the second Coming.

“ We are hard pressed on every side, (but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair)” (2 Cor. 4:8).

God has given us the privilege of living and working in this unique time—the beginning of a new century and millennium. From time to time we hear disturbing questions: What can we expect in the future? What will the new millennium bring us? Will cross-cultural and interreligious conflicts, economic crises and other problems be solved? What problems do people have in these last days? Abuse, unfair treatment, embarrassments, confusion, failures, diseases, and loss of our loved ones takes place in the lives of every human being. At these times, many people look backward only, and as a result, get depressed or feel they have no hope for a better life.

II. What is the Christian attitude to such circumstances?

“(We are hard pressed on every side,) but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair” (2 Cor. 4:8)

As Christians read the promises in God’s Word, we see difficult situations in perspective and so as the apostle Paul said: “We are perplexed, but not in despair.” This beautiful assurance of God’s Word was a great comfort and joy for God’s people in Bible times. These words were very precious for all those who went through different troubles. They also inspire our hope today. We often forget the goodness of our Lord to us when we face difficulties; we again suffer and are disappointed.

Of course, it’s human nature to be depressed, lonely, tearful, tired, or confused during difficulties times. Sometimes, it brings emotional collapse (Ps. 42:1-4). The temperament of a person usually determines how she goes through different kinds of difficulties, but this in no way diminishes the spirituality of that person. Quite the contrary. In such times, a sincere Christian

turns to the Source of Victory: “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God” (Ps. 42:5). Sufferings can initiate a new push to unprecedented spiritual growth and to a special relationship with the Lord.

1. We have to remember God’s goodness to us.

“ Remember how the Lord your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands...Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you” (Det. 8:2,5).

Let us glorify and thank our Savior for what He has done for us already—for the salvation and redemption of His Children, for His daily care to every one as well as for His unlimited love to each person.

2. Recognition of God’s promises brings optimism to the Christian.

Recognition of God’s comfort and assurance: “ So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Is. 41.10). Reflecting on this removes all fear from our hearts. “He who did not spare his one Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”(Romans 8:32).

In the sacred pages of the Scripture we find some exciting experiences of God’s children and His interceding in their salvation—the story of Esther and her nation, Ruth, Deborah, Daniel and three of his friends, as well as the apostles in the early church.

(Let us praise and glorify God through prayer in groups of 2-3 for the inspired experiences of God’s people in the past).

Our Lord continues to love His Church and take care of His children. Whatever difficulties might surround us, we don’t have to be disappointed. David went through special losses and difficulties and said: “Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Ps.29:6). It appears, thus, that sorrow is a companion of joy. So, if we long to experience joy as God intervenes in our lives, we will also have difficulties and trials which will probably bring temporary sorrow.

God's inspiring words "I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isa. 41:10) relates to everybody: to small children, to boys and girls, to men and women, to each of His children. The Lord will not allow anything in our lives that might damage our salvation if we dedicate ourselves everyday to Him. God's people have no reason to fall into disappointment. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

3. Some examples of God's promises fulfilled in contemporary times:

a) God's care for church members

There is a story from the 1970s, which took place during the Brezhnev era in the Soviet Ukraine of the former USSR:

Lidia, a Christian girl, had a chance to study at the Agriculture College. The country was atheistic. She studied diligently at this college, and each Sabbath she attended the Adventist church for worship. After a half of the school year (in wintertime) the administration wanted to expel her from the college because of the Sabbath. Following conversations between the pastor and the administration, and with God's guidance, the school allowed her to take study leave in order to find another school in which to further her studies.

Of course, this was painful for Lidia, but she decided to remain faithful to the Lord. Together with her relatives and friends, she prayed and left everything in God's hands. She was advised to start working as an accountant in order to be able to transfer into correspondence study and continue her studies in a way that would reduce the control of the Sabbath classes as well as personality conflicts with school officials. And the Lord was good: within half a year she was able to transfer to an Odessa Financial College and continue her education by correspondence. Lidia was happy and thankful to the Lord for His guidance. This college was better than the previous one. She also continued to work as a regional hospital accountant.

In her last year of studies, Lidia was to be tested and tried once again on her loyalty to the Lord. There was a state exam on the Sabbath.. The diploma was almost in her hands, and now she faced new difficulties. She prayed earnestly and decided to submit a written request to the exam committee asking them to allow her to take her exam earlier, with another group. She also explained the reason of her request. Unfortunately, her request was denied. Crying, Lidia asked the Lord for help and support. Together with her relatives and friends, she prayed. But nothing

was changed. It appeared that four years of study and hard work were in vain. But the Lord has His own plan. A week after the state exams took place a state commission from Moscow Ministry of Education visited the college. Looking through all the students' documents they stopped at Lidia's documents. They saw her request to change the date for her exam. They also read a good recommendation from Lidia's workplace and asked the chairperson of the commission: "Why did you not satisfy her request?" The answer was categorical: "We don't need any sectarians." The Moscow representatives contacted Lidia's administration at the hospital, inquiring about her and her job performance.

The chief accountant answered: "If all accountants I have would work as Lidia does, it would be very easy for me to work. I'm very pleased with Lidia's work."

At the same time the people from the Ministry of Education contacted someone from the Religious Affairs Department, asking him whether he knew that in that city a student's rights were denied. They named the student and asked him to defend her rights on education.

The Religious Affairs officer immediately invited the pastor of the only Adventist Church in the city where Lidia has her membership to meet with him. Harshly, he asked why the pastor did not ask him to protect the student. After a while the pastor diplomatically answered: "We used to know that you only offended the believers but from now on we will know and remember that you also can protect."

Soon Lidia was invited to the college and was promised that as quickly as possible they would allow her to take the exam. It was slow, but certainly the changes were coming to the atheistic country. That the state was available to protect citizens when they were persecuted was a surprise not only for Lidia, but also for many believers. Of course, there were good laws for the believers on paper, but in reality they suffered different kinds of persecution. This was a good lesson for all of them.

Who sent the State Commission to Lidia's College? Who was leading it? There is only one answer—only God Himself. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

Lidia personally experienced in her life the biggest and most solid guarantee—"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom.8:31). What excitement, what glory, what thanks to the Lord poured out from Lidia's heart for the difficulties and tests, for God's guidance and salvation.

Our Lord allows difficulties not to lead us into despondency, but to turn us back to our God. “You may be perplexed in business; your prospects may grow darker and darker; and you may be threatened with loss; but do not become discouraged; cast your care upon God, and remain calm and cheerful. Pray for wisdom to manage your affairs with discretion, and thus prevent loss and disaster. Do all you can on your part to bring about favorable results....When, relying upon our Helper, you have done all you can, accept the result cheerfully” (Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p.122).

Dear children, dear youth, whatever obstacles, difficulties or sufferings you face, earnestly entrust them in your prayers to the Lord. He knows all you endure and is ready to solve your problems; to support you in hardships; ready to strengthen you when your endeavors are weak. So never be embarrassed. Trust in Him only all of your life and remember—He is your God and He is always with you!

b) God’s care for our children, who are unbelievers.

Often moms and dads are sad or despondent because their children leave them and the Lord. And, how painful it is when one’s spouse does not share his or her beliefs, and even worst, when an unbelieving spouse brings moral and physical abuse. How painful when relatives are not understanding but are critical. In these cases the Lord says: “ So do not fear, for I am with you,” “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” The amazing assurance of God’s Word is especially vital in Isaiah: “Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives rescued from the fierce. But this is the what the Lord says: ‘Yes, captives will be taken from warriors and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save’” (Is. 49: 24-25; compare Luke 4:16-18).

Another story from the mid 1990's tells how the Lord is powerful and how He can free the captives. It happened in Odessa (Ukraine) during one of the seminars in which women were deeply meditating on the role of women as well as a mother’s role. After personal confession before the Lord, one of the sisters, with tears on her eyes, asked the group to pray for her son, a drug addict. He very much depended on drugs at that time and he was not able to give them up.

In intercession, they lifted the sincere prayers of this mother to the Lord. All were deeply touched by the problem and a stream of prayers was lifted up for about half an hour. All felt a special influence of the Holy Spirit. At the next women’s meeting, the mother’s heart overflowed

with joy. She described how after the last meeting she returned home and met her son fully healed. When she entered the house, her son asked: “Where did you go? Where were you all day? Is it not Sunday? I want to tell you very joyful news—I’m free of drugs! It happened in the afternoon, at about 5:00 p.m.” The mother’s eyes were filled with tears of joy and she thanked the Lord for such wonderful healing. She embraced the son and explained to him that at the same time that he felt healed, they were praying at the sanctuary for his liberation from his disease. He left the drugs with no difficulties. In order to break the connection with his old friends he moved to his relatives, became gainfully employed and got married. Now he has a nice family and has never gone back to his bad habits.

The promise: “Yes, captives will be taken from warriors and plunder retrieved from the fierce; I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save.” This was fulfilled immediately in his mother’s life in order to save her son, to inspire her and many other mothers.

“But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us close to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace....Let us keep fresh in our memory all the tender mercies that God has shown us, the tears He has wiped away, the pains He has soothed, the anxieties removed, the fears dispelled, the wants supplied, the blessings bestowed” (Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, p 125). What a mighty and loving God we have. He is the source of our joy, optimism and confidence.

c) God’s care for our spouses, who are unbelievers.

We must not be confused or despondent, but to lay our hope in our Lord—even if we face abuse in our own families. Quite often women express to each other that they endure different types of abuse in the family—from husbands or sons. Of course, sometimes men may complain about the abuse from their wives. Abuse cannot be justified in any form no matter how accustomed one may get to it. How do we need to react to abuse, especially when relationships are destroyed because of the spouse’s beliefs?

After being able to participate for almost nine years in different women’s meetings in the former USSR, Ludmila Krushenitskaya, previous WM director in that division, understood that in all successful cases we may see Galina’s experience:

Even before Galina accepted God her relationship with husband was such that she sometimes was ready to get divorced. But when Galina was baptized, the situation became much worse, especially when she returned from worship. Her husband forbade her to attend worship and sometimes he was even physically abusive. One day Sister Galina attended a women's meeting. She was attentive, listening to each of the topics discussed. She got closer acquainted with the sisters and listened to their counsel. Her husband's mistreatment became very plain to her and she asked herself earnestly: "Do I want my husband to become a believer?" She realized that she wanted this in order to receive something good for herself, too. She started to pray earnestly to the Lord about the salvation of the man from whom she suffered humiliation. She noticed that after this prayer her attitude to her husband changed immediately. Anger and bitterness toward her husband went away; there was compassion and respect instead. Tender and warm words started to sound as a new song in their family relationships. The Holy Spirit labored on both his and her hearts. She noticed that her husband started to be interested in spiritual literature, and shortly after that he started to visit the church. After his first visit he was faithful in attendance. Many women approach Galina and say: "How happy you are! You are both in the church." Galina is certain that if every woman would lift up her humble heart in prayer to the Lord for her dear ones, the Lord would do the rest for their salvation. (Note: We must remember God always allows free will; He never forces anyone to follow Him). Now Galina and Nicolay are volunteer missionaries in Belarus. They spread the Good news of the Gospel in the cities where there is no Adventist presence. Praise the Lord!

III. Jesus Christ is always faithful to His promises

All these experiences take place today, but "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" so He can turn contemporary Sauls into Pauls. Many women can be channels for the outpouring of God's love to their husbands, sons, daughters and other relatives.

Mrs. S.M.I. Henry, the woman who first started Women's Ministries in 1898, once said: "The woman who can realize that her life is only one of the manifestations of the Spirit of God, that it is her privilege to determine what it shall perform in the work of her home, will very soon find the solution of every domestic problem" (Words of Truth Series #19. *A Woman-Ministry, or The Gospel in the Home*).

The Lord did not promise us that our Christian way would be covered by beautiful flowers, but He did promise to be with us in all our life circumstances. He also promised to provide His grace to overcome all our trials and difficulties. The Lord's messenger says in this regard: "The trial will not exceed the strength that shall be given us to bear it. Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial will be given."

"And by and by the gates of heaven will be thrown open to admit God's children, and from the lips of the King of glory the benediction will fall on their ears like richest music, 'Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Matt.25:34, Ellen White, *Steps to Christ*, pp.125-126).