

*God knows if we're standing on the inside*

I will never forget this story about a boy and his teacher. As class was moving along, little John was misbehaving. Ms. Meacham had tried to reason with him, but he just would not cooperate. After what felt like hours of trying to get the boy to follow the rules, little John finally gave in and took a seat. That would seem to indicate the boy at last understood the importance of behaving in class – if it weren't for the words that followed: "Ms. Meacham, I may be seated outside, but inside, I'm still standing."

That story resonates with me for several reasons. For one, being a teacher myself, I've had to deal with several Johns – both kids and adults – who were simply unwilling to cooperate. However, it's much deeper than that. If we are honest about it, all of us have behaved just like little John more often than we'd like to admit. Our words and behaviors may not always be in tune with how we are feeling inside. We may be doing all the right things, but inside we are still standing – in other words, our hearts are not in tune.

As we start a new year, we often evaluate the quality of our lives. We take different points into consideration, such as our professional development, time management, quality of our relationships and so forth. I wonder if we ever reflect on our motives. Why do we do what we do? Why do we say the things we say?

As we ask ourselves those questions, we are pointed in one direction: It's all about our hearts. as Proverbs 4:23 tells us, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Though we usually associate hearts with love, our hearts hold much more than love. It is there that we hold grudges, nourish vanity, welcome anxiety and nurture evil desires. As Jesus says in Matthew 1:18-19, "But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts – murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

Our hearts play a key role as they hold the greatest passions and loves that will drive our whole lives. The

whys to our actions and reactions are found in the treasure of our hearts. The matter of the heart matters! And it matters to the Lord, "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart'" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Our God sees our hearts. He knows whether we are sitting or standing inside. "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind," Jeremiah 17:10 says. He knows us better than ourselves! He perceives our thoughts from afar, he knows our words before we articulate them and he discerns our motives. Isn't that wonderful? We walk before the Lord fully aware that he knows everything there is to know about us, and, amazingly, he still loves us. As a response to his love, we can choose to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," as Jesus says (Matt. 22: 37). Out of our love for him, we surrender our hearts to his scrutiny: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139: 23-24). And we offer him the best part of ourselves: "May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Ps. 19:14).

I'm so thankful that you have a heart for the women to whom TWR Women of Hope ministers. And I pray that your heart will be filled with his joy and peace throughout 2025.

In his amazing love,



Susie Pek

Global Director for TWR Women of Hope

## JANUARY 2025 Prayers for Europe

1. Lord, give wisdom and creativity to the team producing the *Hidden Treasures Part 2* audio drama. May the drama bless those who have left prostitution and are now following you in a new life. (2 Cor. 5:17)
2. Lord, as our team in Albania minister to women leaving situations involving domestic violence, enable them to introduce these women to Jesus and connect them with local churches and organizations that can help. (Heb. 13:16)
3. Father, help Christian women in Croatia connect with one another for support, fellowship and strengthening of their faith to face their daily challenges. (1 Thess. 5:11)
4. Lord, we ask you to comfort girls in Denmark who are confused about their gender. Guide them to embrace the identity you gave them. (Gen. 1:27)
5. Lord, we praise your faithfulness as Finland celebrates its 25th anniversary of TWR Women of Hope. We give thanks for over 90 prayer groups around the country. (Lam. 3:22-23)
6. Father, we ask for protection of Christians and Jews in France who are being attacked or killed because of their faith. May those with hate-filled hearts be changed by you. (Ps. 140:1)
7. God, we pray that victims of human trafficking who work in Germany's red-light districts receive help to start a new life in freedom. (Ps. 119:134)
8. May the people of Greenland be set free from alcohol and drugs which destroys their families and leads to abuse and suicide. Jesus, penetrate their darkness with your light. (John 8:12)
9. Many teenage girls in the Netherlands struggle with depression. May they receive the help they need and find true comfort and rest in Jesus. (Matt. 11:28)
10. Father, set women from the North Caucasus free from societal and familial judgment, giving them courage to openly follow Christ and testify to their faith. (Isa. 41:13)
11. May the *Precious and Beloved* program reach the hearts of women in North Macedonia to bring hope, healing and freedom, especially among those of the dominant religion. (Ps. 34:18)
12. May Norwegian Christians warmly welcome immigrant women who face language and cultural barriers, isolation and discrimination. (Lev. 19:34)
13. Lord, grant wisdom and discernment to the rulers and political opposition in Poland so that they may cooperate and lead this nation. (Jer. 29:7)
14. We pray, Lord, for fair compensation in employment and increased opportunity in society for women in Portugal. (Ps. 34:15)
15. As divorce increases in Romania, Father, help couples on the verge of separation fight to save their families successfully. (Mark 10:9)
16. God, may women in Russia seek a personal relationship with you, grow in their faith and find comfort and strength in you for their lives. (Eph. 3:16)
17. Lord, bring peace and harmony to families in Serbia. May women recognize their worth and potential in Christ and be bearers of love, understanding and faith. (1 Pet. 3:9)
18. As suicide rates rise in Spain, we ask, Father, that young women learn to protect their minds from the unrealistic standards of social media. (Ps. 147:3)
19. We pray, Lord, for orphans in Albania and children abandoned by their parents. May the church provide them love and introduce these children to Jesus. (Deut. 10:18)
20. Father, please use the program *Arise and Shine* to touch, encourage and strengthen the hearts of women in Belgium and the Netherlands to openly live out their faith. (Isa. 60:1)
21. May women in Croatia recognize their worth in Christ, be set free from fears and insecurities, and step into the freedom and confidence that comes from him. (Matt.10:31)
22. May women in Denmark who live in fear of rejection, abuse, loneliness, hunger or homelessness trust in you, God, to be their defender, provider and hope. (Ps. 18:2)
23. Father, break the stronghold of drug and alcohol abuse in the Faroe Islands and restore the families torn apart by these substances. Help people to find love and healing in you. (John 3:16)
24. A 2021 poll showed that over half the citizens of France no longer believe in God and see Christianity as irrelevant. Strengthen true believers to engage nonreligious people with God's love and truth. (Luke 18:8)
25. We praise you, God, for the German intercessors who pray faithfully with the prayer calendar and for donors who enable us to support *Women of Hope* programs in different languages. (Phil. 1:3-5)
26. May Norwegian women see the value of gathering in prayer groups, sharing joys and sorrows, praying for one another, and interceding for women around the world. (Matt. 18:20)
27. Heavenly Father, we pray that Polish school curricula would promote the family model that is accordance with your will. (Matt. 19:4-5)
28. Lord, may Portuguese women who feel overwhelmed while trying to reconcile family and professional life find their rest in you as they look to your Word for guidance. (Matt. 11:29)
29. In this difficult economy, Lord, give Romanian women wisdom to manage their resources well and to understand that you are the source of all blessings. (James 1:17)
30. Father, grant wisdom to our team in Serbia as they write and produce programs. May they choose topics that will positively change the lives of women who listen. (James 1:5)
31. Lord, may women in Spain who are alone, without resources and wish to continue with their pregnancies find the support they need. (Ps. 32:8)