

DEVOTIONAL SERIES
ON
P.E.O. OBJECTS AND AIMS

With

Introduction and Instructions

**Twelve Devotionals designed to be presented by the
Chaplain at regular P.E.O. meetings**

BY

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CHAPTER BT/GA

INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTION

The purpose of creating a Devotional Series on our P.E.O. Objects and Aims was to familiarize us with the reasons we recite our Objects and Aims, and the connection that these Objects and Aims have with Biblical teachings. This series is intended to be presented within monthly P.E.O. Chapter Meetings by the Chaplain, with the first devotional being the Brief History and Introduction to the series. With the exception of the first history and introduction, each devotional connects a specific portion in chronological order, of our Objects and Aims to verses from the *Bible. The ending of each devotional states "Let us pray", and leads the Chaplain in praying the Chaplain's Prayer, and if applicable to the Chapter, the reciting of The Lord's Prayer.

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Chapter BT/GA

*Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV

I History and Introduction to a Devotional Series

On P.E.O. Objects and Aims

The office of Chaplain did not become an elective one until Sept 2, 1871, even though our Founders always opened with prayer at the beginning of their gatherings. They felt this was a natural thing to do since it was always a part of their daily college life at Iowa Wesleyan University. Our original oath as written by Alice Bird was not incorporated until 1882. Up to that point in time, Alice Bird had, prior to their first meeting and ceremony on January 21, 1869, composed an oath of only thirty-five words. Although we do not know those exact words, we can surmise that many of the same ideas and ideals became the Objects and Aims we now recite.

Alice Bird was commissioned the task of writing P.E.O.'s very first constitution, and it was within Article 2nd Section 1st that she outlined what was to finally find it's way into our present-day Objects and Aims. They stated, "The object of this society shall be general improvement, which shall comprehend more especially: (1st) Improvement in charity toward and interest in each other as P.E.O.'s; (2nd) Improvement in our charity toward and interest in all with whom we associate; (3rd) Improvement in our manners at home and in society; (4th) Improvement in our minds by the pursuing of such books and pamphlets in and out of society as shall be proper for P.E.O.'s."

According to accounts in **Out Of The Heart: A Century of P.E.O.**, that first set of laws as written by Alice Bird included the statement of purpose, which would later become known as our Object and Aims. It wasn't until later on November 26, 1881, that the Constitution and

Bylaws were revised and Article 3rd became the words that most resemble our present-day recitation. By 1930, reciting the Objects and Aims had become part of opening exercises of chapter meetings with the last paragraph, “The chief duties of P.E.O.”, not printed but memorized and recited. Then by 1977 the last paragraph was revised and allowed to be printed.

When we recite our Objects and Aims at each meeting, we need to think about the words Alice Bird chose when forming them. Because our organization was built on belief in God and the Bible, we embrace the practice of including devotionals, scripture, and prayer as an important part of our meetings.

Throughout this devotional series we are going to explore how our Founders connected their goals and ideals to the words within the Bible. We will be encouraged by the words Christ spoke in Matthew 5:16 when He said, “...let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” The good deeds are our projects. That light is our star.

Let us pray...

II “To Seek Growth in Charity”

There was a reason one of the first objects and aims mentioned by Alice Bird who penned them, was “To seek growth in charity.” The dictionary describes “charity” as “a provision of help for the needy, or relief to the poor.” But when we connect charity to our organization, I wonder if Alice had a different take. We learn in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.” I think that Alice wanted to embody the concept of charity within the oath we recite, to impress upon our sisters that the commitment to projects and to each other as sisters, gives us ample opportunity to do just that... “To seek growth in charity.”

Let us pray...

III “A Just Comprehension of and Adherence to the Qualities of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth.”

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2nd Corinthians 8:7, “But since you excel in everything....in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you...see that you also excel in this grace of giving.” Comprehension means understanding, and adherence invokes a steady devotion. Our Founders wanted to make sure that we have a strong tie to each of the qualities that Paul spoke about: Faith in the God that created us; Love, not only for our PEO sisters, but for all that we come in contact with; Purity, the quality or condition of being pure or free from spiritual or moral defilement, pure in our thoughts and actions; Justice, the quality of being just or fair, having moral rightness in action or attitude in all of our interactions with our sisters; and Truth, which for PEO’s can be sincerity or integrity. As PEO’s we should have both an understanding and a devotion to each of these qualities: **Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth.**

Let us pray...

IV “To Seek Growth in Knowledge and in Culture”

Ecclesiastes 2:26 tells us, “To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness.” The “growth in knowledge” that we recite within our Objects and Aims, I am sure, refers to the commitment that P.E.O.s have made to ensure that young women are afforded the opportunities to attain a higher education through scholarships and loans. We tend to think of culture as being refined in the arts, but when Alice Bird included this phrase within our pledge, I think she was referring to culture as a set of predominating attitudes and behavior that characterize a group or organization. I can think of no other group that epitomizes culture more than P.E.O. sisters. When we pledge “to seek growth in knowledge and in culture,” we are pledging to our sisters and candidates our efforts to strive for the knowledge and culture afforded us, and to share it willingly with those we love and support.

Let us pray...

V “To Obtain All Possible Wisdom From Nature, Art, Books, Study And Society”

Psalms 90:12 tells us to “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Alice Bird tells us that we can find our “heart of wisdom” not only in the academic realm with classroom and teachers, but that we should search further and gain our wisdom from other sources. Within nature, we see God’s mighty creations and appreciate the connections in nature that have enriched our lives. She also asks us to seek wisdom from art. Although we often think of art as being only a visible form, art in Alice Bird’s thinking, might be considered a nonscientific branch of learning. We can experience ways to seek knowledge through conventional means such as books and study, but as her last thought she also reminds us that we can seek knowledge through society...in other words, through our association with others. I don’t know about you, but I have learned much from my fellow P.E.O. sisters...what a wealth of knowledge! As P.E.O. sisters, we should embrace the experience of seeking wisdom from each of these areas: art, nature, books, study and society.

Let us pray...

VI “To Radiate All Light Possible by Conversation, By Writing, and By The Right Exercise of Any Talent We Possess”

Matthew 5:14-16 tells us, “You are the light of the world.....let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” Don’t you know people that just light up a room when they enter? We are drawn to those people. We seek their company and their enthusiasm. That’s the kind of P.E.O. that Alice Bird was talking about...one who radiates so much enthusiasm that it’s infectious! This is what builds a good P.E.O chapter. She asks us to foster that ardent and lively interest and passion in our chapter through our conversations, not only with each other, but with prospective members as well.

I Peter 4:10 says, “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.” Our Founders set the tone for administering talent. They were each unique in the talents that they brought to that first chapter and modeled for us the idea that everyone has a talent in P.E.O. When asked to fulfill a part within the group, P.E.O. sisters are the first to say a resounding “yes” to any task they are asked to do! P.E.O. sisters not only radiate the true essence of P.E.O., but they continue to use their talents to further P.E.O. ideals.

Let us pray....

VII “To Aim at Self-Control, Equipoise and Symmetry of Character”

Titus 2:1 encourages us, “to be self-controlled and pure”. Self-control elicits an ability to control our emotions, where “equipoise and symmetry” evokes a balance or equal distribution. Balance and Control...P.E.O. sisters consistently demonstrate these traits in their interactions with each other. Our Founders knew that balance and self-control would foster a good and healthy chapter, one that cherishes the dignity and worth of each sister. When Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:6 to make every effort to “add to our faith ...self-control,” I am sure that Alice Bird was thinking to herself that these were qualities that should be instilled in each and every sister...to be self-controlled and balanced in temperament. She would encourage us not only to outwardly display these traits, but to put into practice these traits as we interact with each other.

Let us pray...

VIII “Temperance in Opinions, Speech, and Habits”

“Temperance” is described as “moderation and self-restraint in behavior or expression...the avoidance of extremes of opinion, feeling or personal conduct.” When we show restraint in our “opinions, speech and habits,” we are following the guidelines that Alice Bird set for all P.E.O. sisters. Being thoughtful of each other when expressing our opinions is what we should strive to do in interactions with our sisters. Ephesians 4:29 tells us... “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” By showing restraint in our “opinions, speech and habits,” we are showing love for each of our sisters.

Let us pray...

IX “Consider thoughtfully the Full Import of P.E.O.”

What does P.E.O. mean to us as sisters? In the P.E.O. book **Out of the Heart: A Century of P.E.O.**, it tells us that our Founders “were charmed by the idea of P.E.O. and by the magic of working together for the advancement of women.” In Galatians 6:10, Paul encourages us with these words, “So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.” As modern-day P.E.O.s, we have advanced past the “magic” and have taken up the mantle of service to others, dedication to our chapter sisters, and desire to promote education for all women. To us, those ideals are the “full import of P.E.O.”

Let us pray...

X “A Sincere Regard For Our Influence in the Community”

The dictionary defines “influence” as “a power affecting a person, thing or course of events.” I can imagine that each one of us can name several people that have influenced our lives...a parent, a grandparent, a Sunday School teacher, or perhaps a classroom teacher. These special people in your life influenced you to become the person you are. Christ spoke to his disciples in John 13:15, saying, “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” He was referring to the ceremony of washing their feet, but the greater lesson he was teaching was that we should be servants to each other, that we should set a good example. Now think back to those people that have influenced you. One of the things that made them a positive influence was the fact that they set a good example for you to live by. Paul writes in Titus 2:7-8, “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned.” I think this is what Alice Bird was thinking when she added the words “a sincere regard for our influence in the community.” Each P.E.O. is asked to set an example not only for our sisters, but for people in our community.

Let us pray...

XI “A Careful Consideration of Feelings When Speaking”

Paul wrote in Colossians 4:5-6, “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” Paul wanted everyone to know that speaking with others with grace meant that you speak with a disposition to be generous or helpful and if you season your speaking with salt, you will add a zest or liveliness to what you say. As P.E.O.’s we should always strive to be mindful of not only WHAT we say to our sisters, but also HOW we speak those words. Thinking before we speak using this acronym **THINK**, will help us to guide our tongues: **T**...is it True?; **H**...is it Helpful?; **I**...is it Inspiring?; **N**...is it Necessary?; **K**...is it Kind? Proverbs 15:4 (KJV) tells us, “A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.” What better guidance can we use when we apply the words from our Objects and Aims...“A careful consideration of feelings when speaking.”

Let us pray...

XII “A Determination to Do All We Can At All Times and Under All Circumstances to Express a Loving Concern For Each Sister”

In Romans 12:10, Paul tells us to “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

I believe that Alice Bird, the author of our Objects and Aims, used God’s words as a foundation for this Oath that we recite at each meeting.

The following excerpt is taken from **Out of the Heart: A Century of P.E.O.**

Thus it was that each girl searched her heart and made her vow. That was a dramatic moment: simple, restrained, precious. Yet with that simple ceremony P.E.O. was born.

This statement referencing the Oath, which is now our Objects and Aims, tells us that our Founders did not take their friendship or their purpose lightly. They were determined to build a bond that would stand the test of time.

Let us pray...