

'I Lay Me Down to Sleep'

Many of you are familiar with the childhood prayer, *Now I lay me down to sleep*, but you may be surprised to learn that it is a shortened version of an Old English prayer.

Perhaps the earliest version was written by Joseph Addison (1672 -1719), an English essayist, poet, playwright and politician. Here is that version:

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
*Bless the bed that I lie on.
Before I lay me down to sleep,
I give my soul to Christ to keep.*

*Four corners to my bed,
Four angels there aspread,
Two to foot, and two to head,
And two to carry me when I'm dead.*

*I go by sea, I go by land,
The Lord made me by His right hand.
If any danger comes to me,
Sweet Jesus Christ, deliver me.*

*He's the branch, and I'm the flower,
Pray God, send me a happy hour.
And if I die before I wake,
I pray that Christ my soul will take.*

The prayer has an important refrain, that Christ is the keeper, the caretaker of our soul. And when we slip into the unconsciousness of the night, I suppose, on a daily basis, we are nearer death. It was out of this fear of sleep that this prayer was written.

At night, when we are vulnerable, we want someone watching over us. So, we prepare ourselves with a prayer.

The conclusion? We are to be prepared – whether for death or for the Lord's return – and to be busy in the mission to which He has called us. We are, as the Bible suggests, to keep our lamps burning.

Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning (Luke 12:35 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter