

The background is a close-up of a stained glass window. It features a network of dark, thick lead lines forming irregular shapes. The glass panes are filled with various colors and textures: light green, teal, and blue. Several circular leaded glass joints are visible, each containing a clear, faceted glass stop. The overall effect is a complex, organic pattern of light and color.

**DEVOTIONS
FOR LUTHERAN
EDUCATORS**



OUR PROMISES OF A LUTHERAN EDUCATION

The Lutheran faith and theology, initiated by Martin Luther's study of the Holy Scriptures and his discovery of the clear message of God's forgiving grace in Jesus Christ alone is the cornerstone of Concordia University, Nebraska's mission. Luther, a German professor of theology, priest and former monk who helped drive the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago, suggested that higher education is the richest and most complete when it builds upon a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

Today, Concordia continues to emphasize the Christ-centered message of the Gospel in the higher education we deliver to our students. The four foundational promises seek to ensure that Concordia will always deliver a Lutheran, Christian higher education and that our students will be equipped not only with a set of skills and a degree, but also a sense of Christian vocation and purpose for the future.

As you fulfill your mission in service to your students and community, we pray these devotions, uniquely crafted around each of the four promises, equip you with strength through Him.

More resources available at [cune.edu/promises](https://www.cune.edu/promises)

**GUIDANCE FROM FAITH-
FILLED MENTORS**



**GRACE FREELY GIVEN AND
RECEIVED**

SCRIPTURE VERSE

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up,
just as you are doing (1 Thess. 5:11).

MESSAGE

Written by: Carrie Kober '97

“Where Everyone Knows Your Name” was the theme song for a popular 80’s sit-com. The story-line for the show demonstrated how the patrons to a certain bar in Boston were a tight-knit group who called out each other’s names as they came in. It was a place to get away and feel supported. They gathered together and shared in one another’s lives and troubles: A COMMUNITY. This desire to be in a community is an innate part of all of us. God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone. God created us all to be with and around people. He created us to work with others in community. “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24-25).

Where do you look for and find this desired community? There are many groups that offer that feeling of belonging. We search for acceptance in a variety of places. A kid might crave this connection on his winning baseball team. A college student hopes she will finally enjoy this closeness when she joins the top sorority at her school. A young couple hunts for that perfect social group to feel a sense of inclusion. Often these groups come with expectations or a price. Are principles compromised to fit in? How many sacrifices of authenticity are made to not look out of place? Have priorities slowly shifted trying to keep up? Has the church community been forgotten in the process? We often get community wrong when we seek it where there is not the common ground of faith. Only where the center is Christ is there true community. “And all who believed were together and had all things in common” (Acts 2:44).

The Christian community is not without sinful faults. We can forget and even neglect the importance and meaning of true community and let others down in the process. The lack of community in a person’s life can have devastating results. An adolescent girl, Emma, found herself being ignored and left out during her

seventh grade year at a Christian school. Her self-confidence started to plummet. She doubted her every move. She asked, “What have I done wrong that no one wants me around anymore?” Emma’s Christian community failed her because the flightiness and selfishness of pre-teens had gone unchecked. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov. 17:17).

The James family tragically lost their child to a drug overdose. Their church felt uncomfortable with the circumstances and therefore did nothing and said nothing. In the time of their biggest need, the church was silent. Instead of being embraced and supported, the family felt judged and alone. Christians neglect their duty when they forget to live in community.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where have you seen in your life or in those around you the replacement of Christian community with others such as social, sporting, activity or special interest type groups?
2. Recall a time that you felt left out of a community.
3. How can we better recognize and reconcile the sinfulness that can happen even in a strong, Christian community?

MESSAGE CONTINUED

The Christian Community starts with the base – the Rock of Jesus Christ. We build from the same common faith, spirit and beliefs. “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock” (Matt. 7:25). We come together in worship, confession and the Lord’s Supper. We gather outside of worship in fellowship and grace. Christians walk side by side loving, encouraging, growing, repenting and forgiving one another on a regular basis. This community should be a place that we grow and flourish in our strengths and use these for the good of

our neighbor. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ”(1 Cor. 12:12).

Six-year-old Graham summed up what a community should feel like one night at his summer swim meet. “Mom, when I hear everyone cheering I feel like I have the power to finish!” Our community of believers are here to be together cheering one another on so that we may all finish together and live in perfect community one day when Christ comes again. God has the names of all believers in the Book of Life. As we enter in His courts, we will hear our names being called out in welcome that we have arrived to where we belong.

PRAYER

Thank you Lord for giving us one another to live in community. Help us to show one another your love, grace and forgiveness as we live and work together. Forgive us when we forget to encourage and lift up fellow Christians. Continue to strengthen the Christian community to be a light to one another and the world around us. Amen.

CALL TO ACTION

Make your Christian communities a priority. Find ways to share your gifts and talents. Look around and find a hurting or struggling person in your Christian community. What can you do to help cheer them on in their trials?



VARIED PERSPECTIVES OF THE WORLD, ITS INHABITANTS AND CULTURES



BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES TO BRING MEANING AND UNDERSTANDING

SCRIPTURE VERSE

One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple (Psalm 27:4).

MESSAGE

Written by: Lisa Clark '04

Inquiry may not be a common word today, but we likely take the nature of inquiry, of questioning, for granted. A family can walk along a beach and see a new creature. “What is that?” After a quick click of a smartphone camera, a flood of answers are available in less than a second, leading to videos, articles and a wealth of information. Many homes have devices with one key function: to answer inquiry. “How far away is Rome from here?” “How large is the moon?” “Who won the big game two years ago?”

Our days are filled with inquiry, but that was not always the case. There were times in classrooms when students simply took notes, furiously listening to whatever their teachers contributed to their *tabula rasa*, or “blank slate.” There were times when believers did not have their own Bible to read and were warned to not question the authority of church leaders for any reason.

Today, there is great freedom for inquiry. How do we use it? With a wealth of information at the click of a button or the sound of a voice, can we sometimes take inquiry for granted? Students in class groan when given the opportunity to research a topic of interest for a project. “Any questions?” is often met with icy silence—even in professional development sessions. There are times when we are too apathetic for inquiry.

Another danger, of course, is discernment. We can get virtually any answer to any question. That is, if we don't like the first answer, we can keep searching until we find the one we like.

In the Old Testament, “inquiry” comes up often in the English Standard Version. Many of those instances are encouraging, as the common phrase “inquire of the LORD” repeats throughout many Books of the Bible. Tragically, just as often, there are instances of God's people inquiring of idols, necromancers and false prophets. In a world full of answers, where do we turn with our questions?

May the Lord lead us by the Spirit so that we turn to God's Word. In the passage above, David is filled with the desire to be in the Lord's house and to seek God's counsel there.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How can inquiry provide insight into all the wonders of God's creation?
2. What are ways in which we can explore knowledge through the lens of God's Word?
3. What are ways that we can demonstrate the phrase "inquire of the Lord" for our students?

MESSAGE CONTINUED

Inquiry has been a distinctive trait of Lutheran education since the days when Luther translated Scripture into the language of the people and framed his Small Catechism through questions such as "What does this mean?" There is great joy in inquiry! The tools we now have at our disposal can be an incredible blessing as we are able to show our students how to learn in ways never imagined generations before. As we coax our students (and ourselves) out of disinterest and into discovery, we can do so by shining the light of God's Word into everything they learn. What a gift!

In Lutheran education, we are blessed with the ability to ask the most important questions. In Mark 8, we see Jesus ask His disciples the key question: "And [Jesus] asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?'" By the grace of God, you can proclaim the clear answer to all whom you serve this year: "Peter answered Him, 'You are the Christ'" (v. 29). As the Spirit works in the hearts and minds of all within your community this year, may the answer of Jesus' identity be clear to all who ask: Jesus is the crucified and risen Savior for all.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, the Word made flesh, You taught the people and answered their questions. You have given us Your Word and Your Spirit, so that we may inquire of the Lord with joy and understanding. Strengthen us for a new year of showing the students in our care the wonders of creation, crafted by a loving Father. Guide us to teach that You are the truth, and the way to eternal life. In Your name we pray. Amen.

CALL TO ACTION

Write down two questions. The first question should be one you want to know and plan to research in the next week. It can be about evidence-based classroom observation or the best way to cook bacon: anything that you wondered about but haven't taken the time to research. The second question should be one that you want your class to consider. Write it somewhere prominent in your room. By the end of the month/quarter/semester, did you all answer it?



**GRATEFULLY UTILIZE TALENTS IN
SERVICE TO OTHERS**



**FULLY DEVELOP GOD-GIVEN GIFTS
AND TALENTS**

SCRIPTURE VERSE

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ (Col. 3:23-24).

MESSAGE

Written by: Pete Jurchen '04

In many ways, life is a continual, ongoing search for finding purpose and meaning in what we do. This begins at a young age at home or in school. As small children we played make-believe. We dressed up in costumes. We were asked what we wanted to be when we grew up, and we envisioned ourselves in different roles and careers. We pretended and shared and considered what we might one day do out there in the world. Dream big, we heard, and there's nothing that's not within reach.

We learned that just because we have trained for and want to have one specific career after college or vocational school does not mean that it will be available for us. Almost all aspiring childhood athletes will never become professionals. Just because we are passionate about one thing does not mean that we will be able to make a living doing that one thing. That's just not how the world works. There are circumstances out of our control. There are forces at play in the world that often upset our plans and our desires. Things just aren't always the way we'd like. You've seen this in your own life and you've witnessed this in the lives of your students.

In the end, we often end up taking careers or paths in life that we did not originally desire. As we transition through different chapters in life it may feel like we have little or no purpose outside of just trying to make some money to support ourselves and others. What we thought would be our epic destiny seems, well, just usual life along a typical track and nothing exceptional.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When you were a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? How did this work out for you?
2. When is it easiest and most difficult to see purpose to your life and career and why?

MESSAGE CONTINUED

The truth is that, regardless of how we feel or what we are doing at any given moment, our lives and work do have purpose and meaning. This applies both to you and the lives of your students. God has made us, He has redeemed us in Christ and He has called us by Word and Sacrament into the one true faith. You mean so much to the God of the universe that He sent His Son into our human flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. You have value, both as God's creation but even more critically as His redeemed creation in Christ. You mean so much to Him that one day Christ will return to raise you and all the dead and give to you and all believers a new creation.

You also have purpose. As God's people in Christ we do not need to prove anything to God. God's grace to us is not contingent on our worthiness, our passion for our work or our sense of destiny. No, instead as God's chosen and redeemed people we have purpose in being God's hands and feet to love and serve others in the world.

As Christians we see whatever responsibilities we are given as opportunities to love and serve our neighbor. Whatever we do, as long as it is in line with God's will and desire for us as revealed in Scripture, is our purpose. Others in the world, our neighbor, our families, our coworkers, our fellow Christians, depend on us. God uses us to care for creation and fellow creatures in ways we both realize and do not realize. Teach this to your students because it changes everything.

The doctrine of vocation transforms our perspective on who we are and why we are here. This is a core promise of Lutheran education. The truly epic in life is not found in great acts of spiritual service to God, but in the simple acts of loving our neighbor. Some people can use their gifts and talents to serve others in certain ways in Church work fields, but this does not make their purpose any more holy than anyone else. The marketer or business person that serves through his or her work, someone in retail or the service industry that assists others in need, the farmer who dutifully works the fields, the father or mother who loves and serves children and yes, the teacher who faithfully teaches students, this is purpose.

Rooted and grounded in Christ and His redemption, Lutheran education equips individuals to see that loving and serving their neighbor is actually their epic destiny. Our roles and responsibilities, or vocations, will constantly shift through life. We train others for work, and we encourage and inspire them to pursue their passions, but we know that regardless of what we are chosen for in life, we have a purpose. We teach others to love and serve their neighbor wherever they are, whatever they do or wherever they go in life. We constantly learn to love and serve and grow. This uncovers the epic in the ordinary, and transforms everything we say, do and teach.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You have called us to Yourself in Jesus. We thank You for Your great mercy and grace to us. We ask that You would bless us this year. Help us to see the epic purpose to our lives, both as those whom You have redeemed but also as those You have called to serve others. Help us to faithfully and joyfully serve those whom You have called us to serve at work, at home, in Church and in the world.

CALL TO ACTION

Consider how you talk with your students and with others about purpose in life. Keep a notepad handy, and every time this week you catch yourself talking to others about how people are supposed to treat each other, what God wants us to do or what our purpose is in life, make a note. What words do you use, and what is your attitude? Challenge yourself to see your purpose as loving and serving your neighbor in the simple things you are called to do. Share this with your students and help them to see how everything we do and will do in life is transformed from ordinary to epic as we love and serve our neighbor as God's people.



**APPLY SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE IN
HARMONY WITH CHARACTER AND FAITH**



**NAVIGATE THE INTERSECTION OF
FAITH AND CULTURE**

SCRIPTURE VERSE

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will
be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.
(Matt. 7:24).

MESSAGE

Written by: Christina Hergenrader '96

Consider this quote from Miles Kington: “Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.”

Doesn't this feel truer than ever?

Never have we been so surrounded by so much knowledge. Social media, 24-hour news, and the wonderful internet keep our society informed on exactly what has happened, what is happening and what might happen. As teachers and life-long students in the Information Age, we are bombarded constantly with information, as well as new ways to access and share it.

But is all this information really wisdom? Like the quote suggests, botanists classify a tomato as a fruit because it has seeds and grows from the plant's flower. Yet, we know better than to add a diced tomato to a bowl of strawberries, pineapple and bananas. Yuck.

Wisdom is living out knowledge. As teachers we understand the crucial difference between giving our students knowledge and teaching them to live out Christian character that's rooted in Biblical wisdom. We navigate this as our students not only learn facts, but they learn to apply their identities as Christians to everything they do.

This is the distinction that Jesus describes in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7. In this scene, we see our Savior teaching the crowds among the hills and valleys of northern Israel. Jesus's students would have looked out to see both the terrain of shifting sand and solid rock. Here, the master Teacher reminds His students not to build their houses—their identities—on the flimsy sand of simple knowledge. Instead, go deeper and construct your identity on the rock-solid truths of God's Word.

With this comparison, Jesus urges His people to practice a life rooted in the rich identity as His beloved children. This means we learn to understand the character of the Creator, not just His creation. We don't idolize popular opinion—instead, we worship

the real Savior who died out of true compassion for us. We make decisions that reflect both the wisdom of the Ten Commandments and the love of Jesus' death and resurrection.

As our society becomes increasingly dependent on information, let us continue to build our houses on the rock of Christian wisdom. Let us discover and learn and research—all while understanding this knowledge in the context of who we are (and whose we are).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How is wisdom different than knowledge? Give a specific example of a decision you could make that reflects Christian wisdom.
2. What does it mean to “build your house on a rock”? Where do you see pressure in society to build your life on the shifting sand of modern culture?
3. What are ways you can demonstrate the phrase “building your house on a rock” to your students?

MESSAGE CONTINUED

Lutheran education has always provided excellent knowledge and deeper Christian wisdom.

Not only is our world filled with astonishing marvels that science is just beginning to understand, but Christians understand the love and innovation that God buried in every part of His creation. Not only do we teach the history of our world and our nation, we also understand the context of this in the unfolding of God's majestic plan for redemption. As our students learn wisdom—and not just knowledge—they learn to articulate what they believe using language and images to share our stories.

In the Reformation tradition of analyzing, challenging and changing norms in church and world, we equip students with character for leadership. Most of all, we understand that

everything we learn is rooted in the epic story of our Savior and His love. We equip students with Luther's legacy to challenge, preserve or reform.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You love us, equip us, strengthen us and inspire us to live in Your wisdom. When we're confused or weary, you provide the discernment and power we need to build our lives on the Rock, Your Son, Jesus. As we prepare our students for a lifetime of learning, help us to show them Your character through Your Word and the life and ministry of Jesus. Keep us close to You until we can be with you forever in heaven. In Jesus' name. Amen.

CALL TO ACTION

Explore the tension between knowledge and wisdom with your students. Investigate a current issue in the media. Depending on the age of your students, the issue can be as simple as a new scientific discovery or as complicated as a nuanced social issue. First, gather facts about this issue. Next, question how this phenomenon looks in our lives as believers. Throughout the next several weeks, add more to your understanding by looking at how we apply and interpret God's wisdom in light of this question. What decisions could you make based on these facts and application? What do Christian service and justice look like here?



