

A CANDIDACY DEVOTIONAL

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Before an Interview

PSALM TEXT

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. (*Psalms 139:1-5 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (*Luke 4: 16-19 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Direct, control, suggest, this day,
 All I design or do or say,
 That all my pow’rs, with all their might,
 In thy sole glory may unite. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #557, v. 4*)

PRAYER

O Lord, I do not know what to ask you. You alone know my real needs, and you love me more than I even know how to love. Enable me to discern my true needs which are hidden from me. I ask for neither cross nor consolation; I wait in patience for you. My heart is open to you. For your great mercy’s sake, come to me and help me. Put your mark on me and heal me, cast me down and raise me up. Silently I adore your holy will and your inscrutable ways. I offer myself in sacrifice to you and put all my trust in you. I desire only to do your will. Teach me how to pray and pray in me, yourself. Amen. (*Vasily Drosdov Philaret, 1780-1867*)

When Undertaking Theological Study

PSALM TEXT

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (*Psalm 19: 7-14 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. (*First Corinthians 2: 1-5 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
 No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
 No angel visitant, no op'ning skies;
 But take the dimness of my soul away. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #800, v. 2*)

PRAYER

Creator of all things, true source of light and wisdom, origin of all being, graciously let a ray of your light penetrate the darkness of my understanding. Take from me the double darkness of sin and ignorance. Give me a keen understanding, a retentive memory, and the ability to grasp things correctly. Grant me the talent of being exact in my explanations and the ability to express myself thoroughly and thoughtfully. Point out the beginning, direct the progress, and help in the completion. I ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Thomas Aquinas, 1225-1274; adapted*)

When Seeking a Renewal of Commitment

PSALM TEXT

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name forever. (*Psalms 86: 11-12 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes through the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. (*Philippians 3: 7-16 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Take my life, that I may be consecrated, Lord to thee;
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #685; v. 1*)

PRAYER

Merciful God, through the mouth of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you said to us, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest." We respond to your divine command, O Lord, and sincerely beseech you to richly bestow the Holy Spirit on all of us who are called to your ministry that we, with a great multitude, may be your evangelists, true and steadfast against evil. So may your name be hallowed, your kingdom come, and your will be done. Hear this prayer through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns throughout eternity. Amen. (*Phillip Melancthon, 1497-1560; adapted*)

In Times of Doubt or Disappointment

PSALM TEXT

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.
(*Psalm 131: 1-2 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.” (*Jeremiah 1: 4-7 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Lord, you bless with words assuring: “I am with you to the end.”
Faith and hope and love restoring, may we serve as you intend
And, amid the cares that claim us, hold in mind eternity. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #579; v. 5*)

PRAYER

Lord, in every need let me come to you with humble trust saying, “Jesus, help me.” In all my doubts, perplexities, and temptations, Jesus, help me. In hours of loneliness, weariness, and trials, Jesus, help me. In the failure of my plans and hopes; in disappointments, troubles, and sorrows, Jesus, help me. When others fail me and your grace alone can assist me, Jesus, help me. When I throw myself on your tender love, Jesus, help me. When my heart is cast down by failure at seeing no good come from my efforts, Jesus, help me. When I feel impatient and my cross irritates me, Jesus, help me. When I am ill and my head and hands cannot work, Jesus, help me. Always, always, in spite of weakness, falls, and shortcomings of every kind, Jesus, help me and never forsake me. Amen. (*Anonymous; adapted*)

Celebrating Growth and Achievement

PSALM TEXT

Let those who desire my vindication shout for joy and be glad, and say evermore, "Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant." Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all day long. (*Psalm 35: 27-28 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (*Luke 10: 17-20 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

For you alone, O God of might, have done amazing things for me.
Your mercy flows; your name like light remains in time perpetually. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #573; v. 2*)

PRAYER

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying to self that we are born to eternal life. Amen. (*Attributed to Francis of Assisi, 1182-1226*)

In Times of Life Transition

PSALM TEXT

Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; turn to him, and he will act. (*Psalm 37: 4-5 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (*Matthew 4: 18-22 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Praise the Almighty, who prospers your work and defends you;
See from the heavens the showers of mercy God sends you.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do;
Infinite Love here befriends you. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #859; v. 3*)

PRAYER

Lord, help me now to unclutter my life, to organize myself in the direction of simplicity. Lord, teach me to listen to my heart; teach me to welcome change, instead of fearing it. Lord, I give you these stirrings inside me. I give you my discontent. I give you my restlessness. I give you my doubt. I give you my despair. I give you all the longings I hold inside. Help me to listen to these signs of change, of growth; help me to listen seriously and follow where they lead through the breathtaking empty space of an open door. (*Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*)

When Seeking Clarity of Vocation

PSALM TEXT

Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. (*Psalms 25:4-5 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. (*Romans 12:1-8 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Holy Spirit, truth divine, dawn upon this soul of mine;
Breath of God and inward light, wake my spirit, clear my sight. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #398; v. 1*)

PRAYER

Lord, my God and my loving Father, you have made me to know you, to love you, to serve you, and thereby to find and to fulfill my deepest longings. I know that you are in all things, and that every path can lead me to you. But of them all, there is one especially by which you want me to come to you. Since I will do what you want of me, I pray you, send your Holy Spirit to me: into my mind, to show me what you want of me; into my heart, to give me the determination to do it, and to do it with all my love, with all my mind, and with all of my strength right to the end. Jesus, I trust in you. Amen. (*U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*)

Anticipating Assignment and Call

PSALM TEXT

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. (*Psalm 16: 5-6 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (*First Corinthians 9: 19-23 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey;
I'll tell ev'rybody about you wherever I go;
You alone are our life and our peace and our love.

Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey. (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #808; v. 1*)

PRAYER

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Holden Village*)

Maturing as a Leader in Ministry

PSALM TEXT

With my whole heart I seek you; do not let me stray from your commandments. I treasure your word in my heart, so that I may not sin against you. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes. With my lips I declare all the ordinances of your mouth. I delight in the way of your decrees as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts, and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. (*Psalms 119: 10-16 NRSV*)

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE TEXT

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (*Isaiah 55: 10-11 NRSV*)

HYMN VERSE

Come with the vision and the strength I need to serve my God and all humanity;
Fulfillment of my life in love outpoured: my life in you, O Christ, your love in me.
(*Evangelical Lutheran Worship, #402; v. 3*)

PRAYER

Almighty God, who it has pleased to withhold from me a perfect knowledge, deny me not the grace of faith by which I may lay hold of things unseen. Thou hast given me little power to mold things to my own desire; therefore use Thine own omnipotence to bring Thy desires to pass within me. Thou hast willed it that through labor and pain I should walk the upward way; be Thou then my fellow traveler as I go. Let me face what Thou dost send with the strength Thou dost supply. When Thou prosperest my undertakings, let me give heed that Thy word may prosper in my heart. When Thou callest me to go through the dark valley, let me not persuade myself that I know way round. Let me not refuse any opportunity of service which may offer itself today, nor fall prey to any temptation that may lie in wait for me. Let not the sins of yesterday be repeated in the life of today, nor the life of today set any evil example to the life of tomorrow. Amen. (*John Baillie, 1886-1960; abbreviated*)

Acknowledgements

Prepared 2016 by the Regional Coordinators for Missional Leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:

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Margy Schmitt-Ajer, Region 2
Paul Baglyos, Region 3
Herb Palmer, Region 4
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Nancy Gable, Region 8
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