

Portals of Prayer

Guidelines: Standards

Section 4: Writing Guidelines

Portals of Prayer is thoroughly biblical and firmly grounded in Lutheran theology and practice. Authors should strive for basic, understandable language. Keep the style informal, interesting, and not “preachy.” “We” is preferred over “you.” Short sentences and paragraphs communicate best.

Understand your audience: the diverse readership of *Portals* includes both families and singles, from all age groups and a variety of ethnic groups.

Each devotion must have the Gospel freshly stated, but not as a formula using the same words over and over. Avoid constructing a devotion by merely stringing together Bible verses—but Bible verses may certainly be used to illustrate or establish truth. Briefly begin devotions with something familiar to the readers—something with which they can identify—and move on from there.

Devotions are to be scripturally sound, applying the message of Law and Gospel to the life of the reader. Each devotion needs a clear statement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The devotions should be specifically Christian in content, but not dependent upon Lutheran terminology. Don’t be afraid of sacramental writing, which is simply scriptural. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, as well as the Word, are God’s Means of Grace—*when these flow naturally out of the text and make solid connection with the subject of the devotion, they should be included*. They are not denominationally Lutheran.

It is tempting to develop a series of devotions by selecting interesting stories and incidents first, and then searching for Bible passages to go with them. Resist this. Work with the biblical texts first and develop their thoughts and concerns. Then illustrate them and connect them with life with appropriate materials that aid understanding and promote interest. Please remember that the strongest devotions grow out of the biblical texts; the weakest devotions let the illustrations dominate, so that the biblical text appears either as an afterthought or as an adage appended to the story.

Illustrations should be brief. Give each devotion enough room to address the biblical text upon which it is based. A good illustration supports the biblical text. It is a servant to help readers connect the meditation to his or her own life. The life application can be written following an illustration or by weaving an illustration into the devotion. Clinch the thought for the day with the last sentence and provide a short sentence prayer at the end of the devotion.

Be wary of a repeated “heaven is my home” mentality—that is, “things may be bad, but we’ll be okay in heaven.” This is true, of course, but becomes a pitfall for many devotional writers who overlook the grace and gifts God gives us for the journey.

Use the title to pique interest, but not at the expense of being sentimental, nor for shock value.

Too often we say exactly what we think someone expects us to say. Look for a fresh perspective that will give your devotion uniqueness.

One editor adds, “Be wary of the ‘yuck’ factor.” Writers should remember the readers

and hearers—small children, families at the dinner table, people ill with a terminal disease—and avoid graphic descriptions of gore, the smell of diapers, and other such unpleasant images.

Section 5: Production Standards

1. Technical Matters
 - 1.1. Before beginning to write, be sure that your electronic files will be acceptable to Concordia Publishing House. CPH's standard is Microsoft Word. If you do not have Word, confirm that you can translate a document into rich text format (RTF) for transmission to CPH. Then send the editor a test document to be sure it can be accessed.
 - 1.2. Font used should be Times New Roman or equivalent. Use the same font and font size throughout the manuscript.
2. Style
 - 2.1. If more specific direction is needed beyond the brief style notes in this document, the author should look to the 15th edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* or, for more concise direction in writing for biblical scholarship, the *SBL Handbook of Style*.
 - 2.2. Never justify your document; always leave text ragged right.
 - 2.3. Only one space is needed after any punctuation that ends a sentence and after a colon.
 - 2.4. Use italic, not underline, when emphasis is needed.
 - 2.5. Use the ESV exclusively for Bible quotations.
 - 2.6. When quoting Scripture, do not abbreviate Bible books. Always cite exact verses (John 1:1–14, not John 1:1ff). Upper case divine pronouns.
 - 2.7. At the end of a sentence that includes a quotation and reference, put the period after the parenthesized reference (for example, John 1–3).
 - 2.8. Use your word processor's spell check function on your document before submission and then double-check your word processor for incorrect substitutions.
 - 2.9. Use inline notes, not footnotes or endnotes. See 5.3 on how to include citations.
3. Submitting a manuscript
 - 3.1. The preferred format for submitting a manuscript is in electronic format by e-mail attachment. It is not necessary to submit a hard copy of your manuscript via post.
 - 3.2. If an e-mail attachment is not possible, please contact portals@cph.org for assistance.
 - 3.3. Authors should keep a copy of the electronic files they have submitted.
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is available to help with the permission research, but you may instead wish to rephrase quotations into your own words.

- 4.2. Permission to quote material should be sought from the copyright holder, which is not always synonymous with the publisher. The copyright holder should be indicated in the indicia of the work. Contact information for the copyright holder, if different from the publisher, may be found by inquiring through the publisher.
- 4.3. The permissions process can often take six to eight weeks (in some instances longer) to complete. Therefore, it is important to consider your permissions requests well ahead of deadlines.
- 4.4. Bear in mind that on occasion the copyright holder may charge a fee or royalty for use of their work. It is CPH policy that authors are responsible for any such fees or royalties.
- 4.5. When using quotations from the *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, please keep in mind that many of the texts are copyrighted by other publishing houses or individuals and will most likely require a fee. Therefore, when using *LSB* hymns, please ensure that the text copyright is either public domain or copyrighted by CPH.
- 4.6. CPH has standing agreements with the publishers of many Bible translations, such as the ESV; therefore, it is not necessary to seek permission for the use of biblical quotations.
- 4.7. Authors may assume that permission is not needed for use of Concordia Publishing House materials.
- 4.8. Permission is not necessary when paraphrasing or referencing another work. However, permissions should be sought when writing a work based entirely off of a copyrighted work (e.g., adapting an illustration from a book of compiled illustrations).

5. Documentation

- 5.1. In the interest of accuracy in fact checking and proofreading, CPH is now asking authors to provide photocopies or e-mailed files of any quotes or citations used. The exception to this request is any quote or citation from the following five categories:
 - 5.1.1. The five hymnals (*LSB*, *LW*, *TLH*, *HS98*, *AGPS*)
 - 5.1.2. The confessional books (*Concordia* and *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*)
 - 5.1.3. Luther's Works, American Edition
 - 5.1.4. The Lutheran Study Bible
 - 5.1.5. Scripture quotations
- 5.2. If quotations or citations are used outside of the above five categories, the author must provide either PDFs or photocopies of the following pages:
 - 5.2.1. The title page
 - 5.2.2. The copyright/indicia page
 - 5.2.3. The page(s) on which the quotation or citation appears
- 5.3. When citing journal articles, books, or other authorities, include bibliographic information within the text. Use this style: (Theodore Laetsch, *The Minor Prophets* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1956], 533).