

Influencing the affairs of the World – “A foodpackage for Life”

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By:

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Introduction

I am honoured and feel a great responsibility to be a speaker here today. Graduates of Concordia are privileged people in this world. It doesn't matter how you ended up here, but it is a privilege to have been part of this community, and it is also an obligation.

“The purpose of Concordia College is to influence the affairs of the world by sending into society thoughtful and informed men and women dedicated to the Christian life.”

Here we are on your Graduation Day where you are ready to go out into society and carry out this mission. I don't know if you have made this a personal mission for your life.

It is 115 years ago since Concordia started. I am convinced it came out of someone's call from God. I believe this is how God works. He gives us ordinary people, who are willing to dedicate our lives to him visions and dreams and through faith courage to carry it out. From my own experience of Concordia I feel that the vision has been kept alive and it therefore offers a unique environment for students to truly develop their gifts and talents and to explore who they are as God's creation, and also to see themselves as who they are in relation to others and the society. There is a great need in the world for men and women of this kind.

My Own Concordia Experience

21 years ago I came to Concordia for the first time. I was 22 years old. As a true Norwegian I came with my backpack, with a Norwegian flag sticking up. I brought with me very few things that had a value to me, my guitar and my Norwegian folk-costume and a poster with the name of a mission called Star of Hope that I had a dream to work for. I also had other

dreams and visions about life, my life experiences up to then and a foundation of values in my backpack.

One of these values was I believed God had a special plan with my life. I always wanted to find this plan. So every decision I took I felt I had to ask God what to do.

Another value was I always believed that whatever I do in my life I do it for God. So my talents or all I am I had to use for him.

I also believed that if I am given a lot, more is expected of me, referring to the story in the bible about the master who gives his servants talents that he expects them to multiply.

Studying at Concordia was to be in an environment of peace and love and freedom to be myself. It was room for my faith and developing my whole being. It was people helping and giving their time to help me succeed and develop. It was like someone was cheering me on to give all I possibly could. The atmosphere was inclusive and one of fellowship. Not before nor after have I been in an environment like this.

My Work

I had a dream to work for a mission called Star of Hope and I came to Star of Hope faster than I had believed. Star of Hope is a Mission and Development Aid Organisation founded in Sweden. We work in 15 countries around the world. In my work I felt that all of me as a person, all my skills, all my talents and my education was needed. I did not get to work with just one project or one small orphanage, but with hundreds of projects around the whole world. The studies I had taken at Concordia helped me practically every day to carry out my work and develop the work for the children. The children of this earth are suffering and there are endless needs.

I have now been working for Star of Hope for twenty years. There is a lack of well educated and intellectually competent people dedicated to Christian life in this field. Because so many people when getting good academic skills go for making a career and making money.

I had a dream about influencing the affairs of the world before I came to Concordia and through the work in Star of Hope I might have been able to contribute. However, more than what I feel I have contributed, I feel I have learned what is needed for you and I to create a good life for both ourselves and others on this earth that we share.

My Calling

I have found that no matter rich or poor, no matter status, education or lack thereof, there are some fundamental values that can make life good for oneself, people around and the world, and the lack of these values I have experienced and seen the damages and suffering from.

Therefore 1989 I started to do the first educational materials for children. I felt I needed to give children values they need for their life, and give it to the small children, when they form their foundation for life. Things you learn when little, naturally becomes a part of you, like breathing. I felt these values are going to help children become good leaders when growing up, it is values needed for making right decisions through life, it is values needed for people to interact with love and understanding, with respect and appreciation of others.

I want to remind you of a happening in the Bible, in Jesus life. Once he made a miracle with fishes and bread he was given from a little boy. He made it multiply to feed five thousand people, and there was still a lot of food left over. Most of the time this story is related to us in

the context that Jesus has the supernatural power and he can do this awesome miracle because he is also God. However 15 years ago this message was given to me in a sermon and in a different way. The preacher talked about how Jesus could do this miracle because the boy had the fishes and the bread. So she said, someone sent this foodpackage with this boy, maybe his mother or someone. The person is not mentioned in the story, but we know that small children most likely don't prepare a lunchbag themselves.

While she was giving this sermon I felt it was a confirmation of what I had started to do and it was also my real calling. The calling I felt was to give the children the foodpackage that God one day can use to make a miracle with. The foodpackage should be a foundation for life, to build life on. From which a good society can also be built.

However I did not know, what are all the ingredients of this foodpackage the children need?

Through life, through the hardest and most difficult problems I had to face I experienced I survived and could make it because of some values I had been given as a little girl as a foundation. I also saw that the reasons for problems I and people in the world suffered from was because of certain values lacking in the interaction and the foundation of society or peoples lives. I experienced how the values were crucial to life.

It was like some gold was washed out of the sand in my backpack. I realised these are the ingredients of the foodpackage the children need.

So what I am doing most of right now is to lay a foundation in childrens lives, through teaching them these values. In making school-materials that schools can use for free, together with the Exhibition Children of the Same Earth, where schoolclasses come for study days with their teachers, I teach them these fundamental values along with the trip around the

world, for them to learn about how children and people in other parts of the world live. I want them to get a feeling of all the variety of people and customs and ways of life, through all their senses. Also I want them to hear and see they can make a difference. I don't want them to start accepting the wrongs that we see in the world, but give them the sense that they can change it!

I strongly believe that if we want to influence the affairs of the world, we have to influence the children. They are the future of any nation.

A foodpackage for life

2003 I was honoured as a Queenmother in Ghana. This is not merely a diploma to put on the wall. It is a role to fill in the society, according to their Traditional Rule, to be a leader and see to the wellbeing of the people, both materially and spiritually, with special responsibility for children and women. As a symbol of my duties and responsibilities in society they gave me an empty foodbasket. This symbolizes my responsibility to feed the people both with physical and spiritual food.

So today I have brought my foodbasket, and I have made a "foodpackage" for each one of you graduating.

All the essentials that I have needed in life and that I feel is needed as a foundation for life no matter where you live or who you are and what you do, is gathered in this golden box. It is what I have found has helped me and guided me and what society and every action needs to build on. I hope you have this foundation and that the content will help you to remind you to hold on to it and give it further wherever you are.

You will now face other tests in life. And unlike in school you will not know when the tests comes. Through everyday life your values will be tested and with your every day act you will influence others wherever you are.

- You need to remember you are valuable and a unique creation of God. You are not meant to be anything but yourself. God has a special plan with your life.
- You need faith and to hold on to it when it is tested. Maybe sometime it will be all you have. God will not fail those who put his trust in him..
- Never give up hope.
- Never give up on love. Even if you feel no-one else loves you, God does.
- Control your words. Words can change minds, beliefs, the world.
- Every person have the same value and you need to work for equality for all.
- Appreciate diversity instead of fearing it.
- Maintain integrity. It is not your words but your actions that will show who you really are and what you really value.
- Protect your heart and let it be the home of faith, hope, love and forgiveness.
- Remember the Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.
- Forgive. Only this way you can keep a sound heart and be a reflection of Gods love to the world.

God Bless you on your graduation!