

Devoted to Devotions: www.AvaPennington.com

- 1. Thursday, 1:30 – 3:45 – Session 1: Strategy**
Passion, 3 Qs, Theme, Types, Structure, Style, Benefits
- 2. Friday, 9:15 – 11:15 - Session 2: Style, Content, Tools, & Tips**
Beginning, Tools, Components, Dos & Don'ts, Bonus Tips
- 3. Saturday, 9:15 – 11:15 - Session 3: Self-editing**
Writing tight, Weasel words, Clichés, Christianese
- 4. Sunday, 9:15 – 11:15 - Session 4: Submitting & Selling**
Critiques, Queries, and Proposals

SESSION 1: Strategy

Passion, 3 Qs, audience, theme, types, structure, style, benefits,

Passion →

“The only book that should ever be written is one that flows up from the heart, forced out by the inward pressure.” (A.W. Tozer)

Are you feeling that kind of pressure to write?

Three Questions Every Author Must Answer

Suzanne Kuhn, CEO, Brookstone Creative Group www.BrookstoneCreativeGroup.com

- 1. So What?**
- 2. Who Cares?**
Audience
- 3. Why You?**

THEME:

- 1. Identify a felt need**
- 2. If a devotional, identify a title that encapsulates your theme**

TYPES of devotions:

STRUCTURE:

WRITING STYLE:

“We approach the topic we’re writing about as fellow travelers, instead of judges ordering readers around.” ~ Joyce K. Ellis

Didactic vs. Inductive

Didactic →

Inductive →

Examples:

Show vs. Tell

The Power of Story

Why write devos?

- ✓ **Benefits to readers**

- ✓ **Benefits to the writer**

Devotions ARE:

- ✓ Encouraging -
- ✓ Fresh -
- ✓ Relevant -
- ✓ Broad appeal -
- ✓ Focused -
- ✓ Gentle -

Session 2 – Beginning, Tools, Components, Dos & Don't's

How to begin:

- ✓ **Personal Preparation: Cultivate intimacy** with the Lord

Recognize you're on the **same spiritual journey** as your readers.
We are walking **with** them, not preaching **at** them!

- ✓ **Collect ideas:**

- ✓ **Tools:**

- Bible translations
- Concordance
- Bible dictionary AND English dictionary
- Christian Writers Manual of Style
- Christian Writers Market Guide
- Writers' guidelines
- Sample publications

- Critique Group

- ✓ Pray before you start writing!

Components (various combinations of the following)

1. Limited **word count** →

- ✓ Tip:

2. Title →

- ✓ Tip:

3. Bible passage →

- ✓ Tip:

4. Key verse →

- ✓ Tip: Use the translation specified in the writer's guidelines.

5. Body**A. Beginning →**

- ✓ HOOK
- ✓ Tip:

B. Middle →

- ✓ BOOK & LOOK

We filter our experiences through Scripture.

We don't filter Scripture through our experiences!

- ✓ Tip:

C. End →

- ✓ TOOK
- ✓ Tip:

D. Importance of transitions:

6. Summary statement →

✓ Tip:

7. Application/Challenge →

✓ Tip:

8. Prayer →

✓ Tip:

Organization →

SAT test:

Scripture
Anecdote
Takeaway

Dos and Don'ts

Don't's

1. Don't Preach →

✓ Marti Pieper: "Approach the subject as someone who partners with the reader in pursuit of the Father."

2. Don't restate the entire Bible passage in the body

3. Don't be superficial

4. Don't use Christianese or clichés
5. Don't criticize
6. Don't make it about you
7. Don't overuse writing techniques
8. Don't mishandle Scripture → keep it in context
9. Don't be controversial:

Dos

1. *Read* devotions if you are *writing* devotions
2. Know your audience
3. Follow the writer's guidelines
4. Maintain continuity in formatting
5. Include a story/illustration

6. Permeate devotion with excellent writing
7. Edit, edit, edit!
8. Verify accuracy
9. Ensure every component relates back to your main point
10. Be true to yourself

Bonus #1 – from Crystal Bowman

- Language
- Tense
- Second person

Bonus #2 – from Cecil Murphey

- Reasons for rejections:

Session 3 – Self-Editing

“Any good book is the result of inspiration,
followed by hours of grueling work.” ~ Dave Fessenden

Examples from Kathy Ide’s book, ***Proofreading Secrets of Best-selling Authors:***

- Revise multiple-word phrases to single words.
- Eliminate unnecessary words.
- Eliminate weak words
- Eliminate redundant modifiers.
- Don’t use two words that mean the same thing.
- Reduce adverbs
- Ferret out the **weasels**
- Get **active!**

Kick out **cliches**.

What are they?

Why do we use them?

How to avoid them:

Exercise:

1. avoid him like the plague
2. dead as a doornail
3. faster than a speeding bullet
4. fight like cats and dogs
5. flat as a pancake
6. good as gold
7. happy as a lark
8. hard as nails
9. like a bull in a china shop
10. pretty as a picture
11. quiet as a mouse
12. stuck out like a sore thumb

Christianese = Christian Clichés

Kick out **Christianese**

Christian clichés →

Have you encouraged readers to watch and pray, staying in the Word while walking the straight and narrow so the world will not tarnish their trophy of grace? Is it your fervent prayer to carry your cross, live an abundant life, and let go and let God in the midst of your wilderness experiences?

How many Christianese phrases and clichés did you find in the above paragraph? Whether you're writing for believers or unbelievers, learn how to kick out clichés and Christianese for more effective writing.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. abundant life | 17. in the world not of it |
| 2. ask Jesus into heart | 18. it blessed me |
| 3. backsliding | 19. lift it up to the Lord |
| 4. born-again | 20. my witness |
| 5. bound by sin | 21. prayer warrior |
| 6. burden on my heart | 22. put on my heart |
| 7. enemy territory | 23. quiet time |
| 8. fellowship | 24. sanctified |
| 9. get into the Word | 25. saved |
| 10. God laid you on my heart | 26. schemes of the devil |
| 11. God revealed to me... | 27. Spirit-filled life |
| 12. going down a slippery slope | 28. traveling mercies |
| 13. grounded / rooted in the faith | 29. unspoken needs/prayers |
| 14. head vs. heart knowledge | 30. victory in Jesus |
| 15. I need time in the Word | 31. walk with God |
| 16. I'm wrestling | 32. washed in the blood |

Session 4 – Submissions: Query and Proposal

1. Selling Individual Devotions

- ✓ Market resource → Christian Writer's Market Guide
- ✓ Markets:
 - CBN.com
 - ChristianDevos.us,
 - church Take-home papers
 - church bulletins
 - The Quiet Hour
 - The Upper Room
 - The Secret Place
 - Keys for Kids
 - Unlocked (teens)

- ✓ Writer's guidelines

- ✓ Submission processes:
 - Website submission
 - Query
 - Proposal

- ✓ Rights: be aware of the rights you are selling. For example:
 - All rights
 - First rights
 - Reprint rights

2. Approaching traditional publishers and agents for a devotional

Query

Research the publishing house

Goal =**Format**

- One page, single space, standard fonts and margins
- Business Letter format
- Be professional
- Name, address, phone, email at the top
 - Address agent or editor by NAME
 - Proofread!
- Greeting

Components:

P.1 - Hook

P. 2 – Synopsis:

P. 3 - Your qualifications

P. 4 – Word count, completion date or completed

P. 5 – Close:

What NOT to do:

* * *

“The proposal process helps you nail down the book.... When it comes time to sit down and write the book, your proposal is your blueprint.”

~ Wendy Lawton, Books & Such Literary Agency

PROPOSAL

Cover letter

Title page

**Header
Text**

Sell sheet

- Hook
- Theme and Purpose
- Short book summary
- Special features
- Audience
- Length, availability

Overview/synopsis

Author bio

Comparative analysis

Marketing plan

Promotion:

Speaking/Building a Platform:

Internet Marketing:

Networking:

Chapter outline/summary

Sample of your manuscript

Recommended Resources

Books:

- *Christian Writers Market Guide*
- *Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, Robert Hudson
- *Writing the Christian Non-Fiction Book: From Concept to Contract*,
Dave Fessenden
- *Chicago Manual of Style*
- *Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors*, Kathy Ide

Websites:

- Books & Such Literary Management:
<http://www.booksandsuch.com/blog/>
- The Steve Laube Agency: <http://www.stevelaube.com/blog/>
- The Write Conversation: <http://thewriteconversation.blogspot.com/>
- Word Weavers International: <https://word-weavers.com/>