

Nonfiction Nuts and Bolts

Session 1: Strategy

Passion, 3Qs, Audience, Concept, Premise, Theme, Research, Structure

Session 2: Planning and Preparation

Research, Structure, Content, Style

Session 3: Periodicals and Devotions

Writing magazine articles and devotions

Session 4: Self-editing

Weasel words, Christianese, Clichés, Writing tight

Session 5: Queries and Proposals

Session 1: Strategy:

“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

Passion

Genres:

Purpose → why are you writing this book?

Three Critical Questions

1.

2.

3.

Concept

Premise

Theme

Session 2: Planning and Preparation

Research

- libraries
- museums
- government agencies
- internet searches → but verify!
- interviews

Structure

Front matter

Back Matter

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

Content

Beginning

Middle

End

Style: Didactic vs. inductive

Didactic

Inductive

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

Principle, Illustration, Application

The Power of Story: Narrative Nonfiction

Session 3 – Magazine articles and Devotions

Magazine articles

Why write for magazines?

Why you?

How to find ideas?

Types of articles

Special features:

Rights:

- **First rights**
- **One-time rights**
- **Reprint rights**
- **All rights / exclusive rights**

How:

Structure:

- **Introduction: hook**

- **Middle: body of the article contains several sub-points that support, explain, and confirm your main takeaway**

- **Conclusion: wrap up with a satisfying conclusion**

Submissions:

- **Christian Writers Market Guide**

- **Read past issues**

Why write devos?

- ✓ Benefits to readers
 -
 -
 -
- ✓ Benefits to the writer
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 -
 -
 -
 -
 -

Devotions ARE:

- ✓ Encouraging reflections →
- ✓ Fresh →
- ✓ Relevant →
- ✓ Have broad appeal →
- ✓ Focused →
- ✓ Gentle →

How to begin:

- ✓ **Cultivate intimacy** →
- ✓ Recognize you're on the **same spiritual journey** →
- ✓ **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**

- Not just friends & family →
e.g. Word Weavers

Components (various combinations of the following)

1. Limited word count →
✓ Tip:
2. Title →
✓ Tip:
3. Bible passage →
✓ Tip:
4. Key verse →
✓ Tip:
5. Body
 - A. Beginning →
✓ Tip:
 - B. Middle →
✓ Tip:
 - C. End →
✓ Tip:
6. Summary statement →
✓ Tip:
7. Application/Challenge →
✓ Tip:
8. Prayer →
✓ Tip:
9. Organization →
✓ Tip:

Dos and Don'ts

Don't's

1. Don't Preach →
2. Don't restate the entire Bible passage →
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 →
9. Don't be controversial → .

Dos

1. Read the genre you write.
2. Know your audience →
✓ Tip:
3. Follow the writer's guidelines →
4. Maintain continuity in formatting →
5. Include a story/illustration →
6. Permeate devo with excellent writing →
7. Edit, edit, edit →
8. Verify accuracy →
9. Practice, practice, practice
10. Be true to yourself →

Session 4 – Self-Editing

“Write to communicate, not to impress. Justify every word and every sentence.”
~ Cecil Murphey

Revise

Polish

Cut Out Fat

Simplify multiple-word phrases

Eliminate unnecessary words

Eliminate weak words

Eliminate redundant modifiers

Reduce adverbs

Ferret Out Weasels

Get Active!

Kick Out Clichés

What are they?

Why do we use them?

How to avoid?

Kick Out Christianese

Show vs. Tell

Session 5 – Submissions: Query and Proposal

Book projects

Approaching traditional publishers and agents

Query

Goal:

Format:

Components:

Hook

Synopsis

Qualifications

Word count & completion date

Close

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

~ Wendy Lawton

Book Proposal

Cover letter

Title page

Sell sheet

Overview/Synopsis

Author bio

Comparative analysis

Marketing plan

Chapter outline

Sample chapters

Recommended resources:

Books:

Christian Writers Market Guide

Christian Writer's Manual of Style

Writing the Christian No-fiction Book: From Concept to Contract, Dave Fessenden

Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors, Kathy Ide

Writer to Writer, Cecil Murphey

Unleash the Writer Within, Cecil Murphey

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/>