

16 ways to create

Devotional Writing

to renew the spirit
and refresh the soul

David J. Sluka

16 Ways to Create Devotional Writing
to Renew the Spirit and Refresh the Soul

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Introduction

God's Word is alive and active! We can be reading the Scriptures and they suddenly begin to speak to us. It's like someone (the Holy Spirit) takes a highlighter and emphasizes a few words to get our attention. If we turn this illumination into a conversation with the Lord (prayer), we find ourselves abiding with Jesus.

Devotional writing is a powerful way to help others experience this illumination as you share with others what God has highlighted to you.

In my work with authors and also employed by two publishers, I've helped people take what God has shown them and share it with others in bite-size devotional readings. What follows are my top recommendations and what I inevitably share with authors if they ask enough questions about writing a devotional.

I've divided the chapters into three sections: prepare, write, and share. I'm guessing you're excited to start writing, or maybe you've already written a number of devotions and want to share them with others on a large scale. Either way, I encourage you to pause and *prepare*—do a little planning. I promise I won't waste your time and you won't regret any of the preparation I recommend.

I work with many creatives who wake up inspired and want to write without a plan. Others play the God card and tell me that they are going to pray and follow the Spirit, which also usually means they are not going to plan. God is a planner, and He wants to help you plan as much as He wants to help you write.

What you have to share from the Lord is precious, and you will be the best steward of it by thinking things through before you jump in. Within the safety and structure of a plan you will find greater creativity, and you will not struggle with content gaps, repetition, or writer's block once you start to write.

This short book is packed with information I hope you find helpful. The chapter titles state clearly my top recommendations for anyone writing a devotional. Each chapter explains those recommendations more in detail, and then I include one or more points of application at the end of the chapter—how to take what you've read and make it practical for your writing.

Let's dive into sixteen ways to create devotional writing to renew the spirit and refresh the soul. May God bless you as you explore the unlimited insight, hope, inspiration, and strength found in the Word of God—which is always to lead us into greater communion with Jesus.

Devotional Writing

Section 1

Prepare

1

Connect to Your Audience with Your Topic, Title, and Voice

In devotional writing, your priority is not only to communicate the message God has given to you, but also connect to your reader and help him or her connect to God. It is possible to communicate a message without making a trusted connection, but when you seek to connect with your reader, your message will get through and have an impact.

Do you know what you want to write about? Or are you still kicking around some ideas? To determine what would be best to write about, ask yourself these questions:

- *What is a life message that seems to emerge whenever I talk to others?* This is a message you've walked out with the Lord. Your passion and experience carry a special grace to share this message with others.
- *What is God speaking to me about?* If God is sharing something with you, He's likely sharing it with someone else.
- *What is coming alive to me as I read His Word?* What Scriptures do the Holy Spirit highlight as you read the Bible? What is alive in you will come alive in someone else.
- *What is happening in the culture right now that you care about, and what does God's Word have to say about it?* In times of fear and uncertainty, God wants to share messages of hope, faith, and encouragement.

No matter what topic and title you choose based on the questions above, remember that you are writing to a person, not just trying to write a book. There's a difference between *talking* about hope, faith, or joy and *connecting* people to God who is the source of these things. Both are important, so instruct about God and inspire the reader to connect with God.

To connect effectively with your audience, connect what you write to their felt needs. If you have a teaching gift, you probably get excited when you see principles in Scripture and you want to share those truths. Others like you will connect with those truths and love your writing. But I've discovered that fewer people connect to principles; instead, they focus on the need for that principle and may not see how the two connect.

For example, if you want to share about the topic of faith, you might define faith, give biblical examples of faith, and even tell your own story of faith. But what does faith look like to a typical reader? Most readers are looking for faith as it applies to a relationship, health, or finances. Connect the dots for the reader by connecting your message to their needs.

Also consider the needs of your audience with your voice. Be conversational rather than academic. There's something that happens when a person sits down to type. The writing can get rigid and feel formal. Devotional writing should feel like a person speaking from the heart. A reader will appreciate a devotional that feels like you both are sitting down for a warm, personal conversation.

What is your default writing style? Do you like to teach? Are you a storyteller? Does your writing appeal more to the head or to the heart? I encourage you to speak to both the

head and heart, and keep a specific reader in mind as you write. A devotional is different than a Bible study. Generally speaking, people do a Bible study to learn about God, but read a devotional to connect with Him. Both have their place, but for devotional writing remember to include both head and heart so the reader's heart remains engaged.

I encourage you to commune with Jesus as you write. As you touch Him and He touches you, your readers will meet Him through your writing. Yes, your devotional writing can help a reader learn more about a topic, but ultimately make it your goal to draw people into a closer relationship with Jesus.

Application

1. Ask yourself these questions to help determine the topic God has for you to share:
 - What is a life message that seems to come out whenever I talk to others?
 - What is God speaking to me about right now?
 - What is coming alive to me as I read God's Word?
 - What is happening in the society and culture right now that interests me?
2. Using the questions above and other thoughts you have, type or write out *everything* (yes, everything) you have in your heart, even if you don't feel it will fit in a devotional. Make a long list if you're a list person, or use a mindmap (Google *mindmapping* if you're not familiar with it). The goal of this exercise is to capture in single words and short phrases all that is in your heart.
3. Are all of your ideas related? If not, create separate groups of related thoughts. You may have more than one devotional in you.

4. Pick the concept that God is leading you to write about—the one that is the most interesting to you, or the one about which you have the most to share. How much content you have and how you break it down will determine how many days your devotional will be. Based on what you've discovered so far, how many days do you think your devotional should be?
5. Describe in detail the person who will get the most out of your devotional. Be specific with your description: male or female, age, interests, occupation, marital and family status, etc.
6. Think about what a typical week is like for the person you have described. What has gone well and what has been difficult? What are his or her most urgent needs? What desires and dreams does that person have? Paint a clear picture of who you are writing to. Then give that person a name.
7. As you plan, write, and promote your devotional, picture the person you describe above, and keep in mind the needs he or she has. Learning to connect with one person specifically will help you connect more personally with your audience as a whole.
8. What are a few working titles for your devotional that will appeal to your readers' interests and needs, not just the topic of your devotional? Share your titles with someone who is your audience demographic for this devotional and see which they prefer.

2

Plan before You Start to Write

Planning is writing, but is different because it's in outline form instead of in paragraphs. Planning will give you a better final product for your reader.

Warning. This is the longest chapter and may feel detailed and complicated. It's also the most important chapter and well worth the price of this book. Read through the information below and grab whatever you can from it. Stretch yourself and try to understand devotionals as a product. If you start to feel overwhelmed, take a step back and just make a simple plan for your devotional. The application section at the end has what you'll need to put together your plan.

I meet many people who don't like to plan because they feel it puts them in a box. They just want to be spontaneous and follow God's leading. The right kind of planning will never get you stuck in a box. Planning creates a box into which you can pour out all God has given to you. The good news is that the Holy Spirit can make your planning as inspired as your writing.

God is structured, organized, and clear. Anyone who just wants to follow God's leading can also learn to plan with Him, so that the inspiration has somewhere to go when things start to flow. Otherwise, you just end up with a mess on the floor that you have to pay an editor a lot of money to fix. I would argue that you will increase your creativity

when you have a solid structure in place. Boundaries allow for creativity. No boundaries lead to chaos.

I never used to be a huge advocate for making an outline for devotional writing until I started tackling 31-day, 40-day, 52-week, 90-day, and 365-day devotionals. Being able to look at a complete devotional plan prohibits overlaps or gaps in content. Without a plan, you will most assuredly have unnecessary repetition and missing content.

Let's put together a basic plan for your devotional.

Format

How long should your devotional be? As long as it takes to share your message. You can write a devotional of any size, but if you want to sell it, it should have enough pages to feel like a valuable product. (Even if you're going to do an e-book only, I still recommend a consistent format.) Self-publishing offers freedom to do what you want, but I recommend sticking with a format people are familiar with.

Hint! Do a little research on Amazon.com to find a "mentor book" in a format you like. My book won't answer every question you may have about number of devotions, book trim size, number of pages, word count, and pricing, so do a little research and emulate what is doing well in the market.

A traditional publisher will generally need a book to have at least 144 pages to be profitable. While your devotional can be fewer pages if you're doing it yourself, also consider the perceived value to a reader that is thinking about buying it. No matter who is going to publish your devotional, it is helpful to consider what you want the end product to be.

Based on your audience's preferences and what you have to say, what do you think would be a good number of

devotions to include in your book, and how many total pages do you think the book should be? A numbered devotional format is helpful for the reader to know how long it will take him or her to go through it. Common formats include 21, 31, 40, 90, or 365 days and 52 weeks.

The length of each devotional entry depends on the total length of the book. Let's look at a few common devotional formats:

Type of Devotional	Total Pages ¹	Page per Devotion	Extra Pages ²
21 days	144	6	18
31 days	160	5	5
40 days	176	4	16
52 weeks	160	2	4
	176	3	20
90 days	192	2	12
365 days	388	1	23 (11 for extras and 12 for one page to open each month)

¹ A traditional publisher prints in large quantities using a high-quality printer, which requires signatures (groups) of 16 pages. This is why these page numbers are all divisible by 16. There is more flexibility on page count when you self-publish using print on demand. The page count only needs to end with an even number of pages.

² Content that can go on the extra pages can include front and back matter (the elements before and after your devotional content) such as endorsements, a title page, copyright page,

dedication, foreword, table of contents, an introduction, a page to introduce a group of themed devotions, a page to introduce each week or month, designed pages with a featured quote or Scripture, illustrations, journaling lines (I don't recommend journaling lines), acknowledgments, and information about the author.

A traditional publisher often chooses a non-standard book size for a devotional—something that feels giftable. Common sizes include 4.25 x 7, 4.5 x 6.5, 5 x 7, 5 x 8, 5.25 x 8, and 6 x 8. The standard book sizes of 5.5 x 8.5 or 6 x 9 usually don't cut it for a devotional, just because they are so common. With a smaller book size comes fewer words per page—usually 150–230 depending on page and font size.

(If you are going to publish a devotional on your own through Kindle Direct Publishing, see kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G201834180#trim for acceptable sizes for their Expanded Distribution option.)

Example 1

Let's walk through a sample format for a 31-day devotional. Let's make it 5 x 7 with 160 pages, which means each day will be 4 or 5 pages depending on how you want to fill the extra pages. If you choose for each day to be 5 pages long (31 x 5 = 155), then you have 5 extra pages for the title page, copyright page, 2 pages for the table of contents, and an about-the-author page at the back.

Based on what we've discussed so far, let's brainstorm a bit about your book's format:

- How many days would you like your devotional to be? (This can change; we're just having fun brainstorming.)

- What size would you like for it to be—physical size and number of pages? (Imagine what you might like to receive as a gift.)

Seasonal devotionals

If you want to write a seasonal devotional (Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, etc.), consider that there is more risk selling a book that has a specific and limited selling window and then stays in a warehouse for another year. Seasonal devotionals can be very biblical and helpful, so if you've considered your audience's need and have strong packaging and content, then it could be a great product. If you're a beginner in the devotional genre, seasonal content might not be the best place to start unless that's where God is leading you. Start where God is leading you because that message will be alive in you and will be the biggest blessing to your readers.

Journaling Lines

As a general rule, I do not recommend journaling lines in devotionals. Some people enjoy devotional journals, but I've found most people want to use their own journal due to ease of writing and a journal's personal nature.

Day Template

Based on the devotional product you want to make, create a template that will use the same features and similar word count for each day's devotion. Let's go back to our sample 31-day devotional with 5 pages per day. Below is what a day template could look like, including the word count or number of pages for each element (remember with a smaller book trim size you will have 150–230 words per page, depending on the page design). This is a suggested order, but you can mix up the content however you want. For example,

instead of having a Bible verse at the beginning, you put it at the end. Or maybe you start with a question and then answer it in your devotional reading. Do what fits your content best.

Item	Page
Day number	1
Creative title	1
Bible verse and reference (less than 50 words)	1
Devotional reading (3 pages with 600–700 words total)	1–3
Reflection question	4
Three additional Scriptures for further meditation	4
Prayer or prayer starter (25–75 words)	4
Application options or quote page	5

Application Options

Some application options to consider are:

- Practical action step or challenge
- A declaration of truth
- Discussion questions
- Summary of main points or primary takeaways
- A relevant quote to go along with theme of the daily reading
- In the template above, page 5 could also be a nicely designed page with a Bible verse or quote from the daily content
- Another idea

As you consider practical application at the end of the

devotion, make it doable for a day. Don't make it something that will take a year to accomplish. One step implemented is better than a big step never taken.

Keep it simple, meaningful, and practical. They should be little steps closer to the desired outcome. You want your reader at the end of each day to feel like they've taken a step closer to God's plan for their life. Most people don't come to Christ in the moment, but rather step by step as God calls them to Himself.

Example 2

Let's do one more example, which you can follow or change for your template. I've provided a blank sample template for you in the application section at the end of this chapter.

Devotional Plan Example

- 90-day devotional
- Book trim size of 4.25 x 7
- 192 pages (this is a multiple of 16 for a large-run printer, but with print on demand, you only need to have an even number of pages)
- 2 pages per devotion (180 pages of devotions with 12 extra pages)
- 2-page day template:
 - ▶ Day number—page 1
 - ▶ Title—page 1
 - ▶ Scripture—page 1
 - ▶ Devotional reading (under 200 words)—page 1
 - ▶ Application—page 2
 - Reflect
 - Pray
 - Declare
 - Act

- 12 extra pages
 - ▶ Title page—1 page
 - ▶ Copyright page—1 page
 - ▶ Table of contents—4 pages
 - ▶ Introduction—2 pages
 - ▶ Let's split the 90 devotions into 3 sections, so we'll have 3 section introduction pages—3 pages
 - ▶ About the author—1 page

Create a Basic Plan for Your Entire Devotional

To create a spreadsheet for Example 2 above, you do not need to outline the entire day template. Just outline key elements of each devotion to make sure you don't duplicate anything. A basic spreadsheet should include the day number, the title or theme of the devotion, and your primary Bible verse with the translation you want to use if possible.

Day	Working Title/Theme	Scripture
1	Shine <u>Let your light shine</u>	Matt. 5:16 (TPT)
2	Comfortable or Comforted?	2 Cor. 1:3–4 (NLT)

Personally, I would also add Reflect and Act sections on the spreadsheet (to the right of what is above):

Reflect	Act
What may be keeping the light of Jesus from shining at full strength in my life?	Ask God to show you one person or situation He wants to shine on through you today, then follow His leading.

What do I do—or where do I go—when I need comfort?	Reach out to comfort someone today with the same comfort God has given to you.
--	--

Sometimes it's hard to project the application points from the content until after you write the content. The reason I like to have a tentative plan for application ahead of time is 1) it gives you a target as you write, pointing your content toward a practical application to meet a felt need, and 2) it helps you avoid duplicating reflection questions and recommended application. Without a plan, it's easy to start saying the same thing after you've done ten devotions.

If you choose to stay simple with your plan, I encourage you to copy all your application sections in a separate document back to back after you're done writing. Then review the content and check for repetition.

When you complete a spreadsheet for your entire devotional, you will see at a glance if you have gaps or overlaps. It's hard to see this once you start to write, and you don't want to miss anything important or have unnecessary repetition. Your spreadsheet plan is a container for your words to flow into so you can see the overall vision and content of your devotional.

Whew! How are you feeling? Are you excited or overwhelmed? If you're feeling overwhelmed, keep it simple, but dig in and take a shot at it. When you finish your plan, you will be excited to see all you will share with your readers. This will also be your biggest aid against writer's block.

Write a Sample and Share It

After the application section in this chapter you will see a sample devotional reading for number 1 in the spreadsheet

above, which follows the day template of example 2. After you have put together your plan, write two or three devotions. Then ask friends to be sample readers of your writing. This makes room to receive encouraging words and critiques on your writing.

Other fresh eyes may notice something that you missed or have great insight that could be beneficial to readers. After you've looked at the content for so long, it can be easy to miss things that might be obvious to others. It's so helpful to have fresh eyes looking at your content. Read chapter 13 for more on this.

Let the Lord lead and breathe into your structure. You will not regret any moment you spend planning.

Application

1. Determine how many days your devotional should be based on how much content you have to share.
2. Regardless of how you will publish, guesstimate the information in the graphs below.
3. After you have created a basic plan for your devotional, create a few samples using your template. Chapter 13 recommends that you send out these samples to a few others for their feedback.

Format	_____ days of devotions
Size (choose one)	4.25 x 7 4.5 x 6.5 5 x 7 5 x 8 5.25 x 8 6 x 8
Total pages	_____ pages
Pages per a day's devotion	_____ pages
Front and back matter	_____ pages

Day Template Options	Yes or No	Word Count
Day number	Yes	
Creative title	Yes	
Bible verse(s)		
Devotional reading	Yes	
Reflection question(s)		
Additional Scripture(s)		
Prayer or prayer starter		
Practical action step or challenge		
A page with a Bible verse or quote from the daily content		
A declaration or confession of truth		
Discussion questions		
Summary of main points or takeaways		
A relevant quote to complement the theme of the daily reading		

Front and Back Matter Options	Yes or No	Number of Pages
Title page	Yes	1
Copyright page	Yes	1
Dedication		
Table of contents	Yes	
Foreword		
Introduction		
Section introduction pages (to introduce a theme, week, or month)		
Featured Scripture or quote		
Illustrations		
Journaling lines		
Acknowledgments		
About the author		

Simple Devotional Spreadsheet Sample		
Day	Title and Theme	Scripture Reference
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
...		

1

Shine

“Don’t hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others, so that the commendable things you do will shine as light upon them, and then they will give their praise to your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16 (TPT)

Jesus wants you to *let* your light shine. Have you ever been tempted to dim or hide His light?

Hindrances that get in the way of shining God’s pure light include not wanting to be proud or draw undue attention to yourself, and not knowing or discounting your true potential in Christ. Shame and fear of rejection are also tools the enemy uses to keep you in the dark.

Jesus said shining draws attention to the Father. So shine brightly, just remain humble. Light can bring welcomed illumination, but it can also be a startling interruption for those comfortable in darkness. No matter the response you receive from others, God wants you to shine.

There are many ways to shine. Share a gift or talent He has given to you, be a person of excellence, tell someone what God has done in your life or serve behind the scenes unto the Lord.

Letting the Holy Spirit shine the light of Christ through you is to be who God has created you to be. Fight the temptation to turn down the intensity of His radiance.

You are God’s light to the world. Shine!

REFLECT

What may be keeping the light of Jesus from shining at full strength in my life?

PRAY

Father God, forgive me for hiding or dulling the light of Jesus in any way. Make Your face shine upon me and give me courage to shine brightly at home and at work, personally and professionally, with who I am in You and what I do for You. I want my life to inspire others to praise You.

DECLARE

Jesus shines through me to influence my world.

ACT

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one person or situation He wants to shine on through you today, then follow His leading.

Devotional Writing

Section 2

Write

3

Say Only One Thing

Have you noticed that it is easier to say a little about many things than go deeper about one thing? As you write, don't try to accomplish too much in each day's devotional reading. Make it your goal to say one thing. Make only one point and encourage the reader to do just one thing.

Think about how many sermons you've heard in your lifetime. How many do you remember? Most people I've surveyed typically can remember a handful of thousands of messages heard over a lifetime, despite many wonderful teachers who invested countless hours of preparation. Why don't people remember more? Because they're being asked to remember too much.

Keep it simple. Instead of making three or more general points in a day's devotion, go deeper with one point. Decide the one thing you must say—what God wants you to say—for that day, and say it. Help your reader go deeper in one area, and you will help him or her be able to go deeper in any area.

God's Word is "alive and active" (Hebrews 4:12), so it's easy to get inspired once you dig in. When that inspiration hits, avoid expanding that day's message too far. You don't have to squeeze all you have to say into one entry. You have the entire devotional to lead a reader through a process. Bring the new inspiration into the devotion for the next day. If God continues to inspire as you write, you may need to expand your initial plan to a devotional with more entries.

As you write about your one point for the day, stay true to God's Word in tone and message. Think about the context and how it is delivered in Scripture. It is easy to bend a word or passage to fit the circumstances of what we want to say, but we must always bend towards the Bible.

Do some research about the passage you're writing about, your one thing. To go deeper, ask questions such as who, what, where, when, why, and how. Look at the context of the verse, and the original intent of the verses as they were written. Ask the Holy Spirit how He wants to apply the passages to the reader while maintaining the integrity of the Scriptures.

Tone is also important to consider as you share your message. Think about Job's friends who approached him with their words. If your reader feels scolded after your entries, they aren't likely to keep reading. The Father has a tone in the way that He shares His heart with your readers, and we want to emulate that as authors.

Your writing is not an avenue to get out your own angst. Writing is a great way to convey your heart, but you may need to settle some things with the Lord in your heart so your devotional writing for others reflects the Father's heart. Job's friends said some true things, but they didn't represent the Father's heart. Look at the context, watch your tone, and write with a teachable heart.

Avoid writing in absolutes, using words like *always* and *never*, unless you're talking about indisputable attributes of God. We all only see in part in this age—"dimly" 2 Corinthians 13:12 says, but "then face to face." Write with a humble and teachable spirit, leaving room for the reader to put in his or her own perspective and experience. Remember the goal is not to share how much you know, but to share the one thing

that God has put into your heart to draw your reader into a more intimate relationship with Christ.

Application

1. Before you start to write each day's devotion, on a piece of paper write the one purpose or point of that day's reading.
2. Then place it on your computer screen or next to your computer. Keep an eye on your one thing and stick to it.

4

Make the Reader's Needs Your Focus

The focus of writing a devotional is not about you, your story, or the principle you want to teach; instead, it's about your readers and drawing them into a closer relationship with Christ. Let's look at a few ways to do that.

Be a Pastor

When you write a devotional, you are taking the role of a pastor or shepherd like in Psalm 23:1–3. Jesus, through you, is letting readers lie down in green pastures, leading beside quiet waters, refreshing souls, and guiding along right paths for His name's sake. When pastors counsel someone or sit down to talk with a friend in need, everything they share is to help them with what they're going through. So think of yourself as a pastor as you write. Work on crafting daily entries that help your reader connect with Jesus in the same way that you've connected with Him through studying and living the content.

Relate to the Reader

If you include something about yourself, only include it to the degree that it relates to what the person is going through or what you want to help them through. Keep the reader the main focus rather than telling your story. There's a difference between all you could say and what you need to say. It can be easy to get lost in the minutiae of your own or someone

else's story. Avoid too many personal stories unless it pushes the point forward and inspires deeper connection with Jesus.

As you edit your writing, ask yourself questions like, *Does this push the one purpose or point forward?* and *Is this analogy or story bringing my reader to deeper connection with Christ?* Your goal is to craft deeper life content for the sake of the reader.

The Father sent Jesus in the form of a human to relate to us. In much the same way, God wants to help you appear to your reader in a form he or she can relate to. Be authentic as you relate to your reader. Jesus didn't say, "Dude! That's so rad!" to try to appeal to children. Instead, He got down on the ground and played with them. Figure out what authenticity looks like for you so that you can connect in a natural way and make your content accessible to the reader.

Title Chapters Effectively

Use a title focused on a reader's needs or benefit, not the topic or a story. When prospective readers browse your book online or at a book table, they will often turn to the table of contents to see if the content appeals to them. You have under a minute to get their attention. Do your titles draw them in? If so, readers will feel like your devotional will be a good fit for them or someone they know (if they're considering it as a gift to give away).

For example, perhaps you have a devotion titled "Betrayal." This title gives the *topic* of your devotion. Or maybe your title is "Joseph in the Pit." This title foreshadows the Bible *story* you'll tell. But a title like "Overcoming Rejection" speaks more directly to a *felt need, promise, or benefit* for the reader.

As you title, consider the interests and needs of your readers. Think creatively and reach past the head to the heart. If you are more principle oriented, continue to consider and pursue the reader's heart. Let even your titles pastor a reader and lead them to Jesus.

Application

1. Ask yourself, *What is the need I'm trying to meet with today's reading? What has my reader gone through today that I can help them with?* Keep this in mind as you write or edit.
2. Look at your day titles. Word them in a way that appeal to the reader.

5

Give Your Readers Fresh Bread

There is nothing new under the sun. The Bible has been around for thousands of years with scholars and millions of ordinary people writing on the same biblical topics repeatedly. What more can be said?

There's a lot more that can be said about the living, immutable, eternal God; the Scriptures He has entrusted to us; and His work in our daily lives! If you have a regular practice of reading the Bible and have it read it faithfully for many years, you know that you can read a passage and wonder, *Why haven't I seen this before?* God continues to reveal Himself to us and He is always raising up voices with fresh perspective, insight, and application. You can be one of them.

Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life. Giving your readers "fresh bread" is giving them insight that is still "warm," not cold or old. What is God currently speaking to your heart? What Scriptures represent a life message for you and continue to come alive every time you read them? What message touches your heart deeply or gets you so excited that a spouse or friend has to remind you that you're repeating yourself? This is the spark to write about—the fresh bread that will feed your readers.

A person who writes a devotional needs to be partaking of the Bread of Life himself or herself. You can't give away what you don't possess. There are plenty of people

regurgitating other people's content because they don't take time to get bread fresh from Jesus. There is a difference between relaying information and imparting a message. The ability to impart a message comes after wrestling with God. You've talked with God; you've walked with God; you've cried with God. You may have even shouted at God. But you've drawn near to Him and He has drawn near to you.

Have you ever watched a singing competition? You can tell when a person connects with the song and the message versus those who are just singing the lyrics. The judges wipe away tears or point to the goosebumps on their arms, or they give critique that the song was nice but felt empty. Their advice for the latter is to choose a song that connects with the heart.

In the same way, choose the words that have touched your heart. Write about what is alive inside of you. Give away something divine, something that transcends your talent. Give your readers a fresh look at Jesus through your devotional writing.

Application

How current is your relationship with Jesus? Is the "bread" He's given you from this morning? Months ago? Open the Bible and ask the Lord to speak to you. Write from the fresh bread God gives to *you*, not what you have heard from others or heard years ago. Nurture your relationship with Him. You will never lack content when you are plugged into God.

6

Be Creative

God is creative. If you are a follower of Jesus, God is in you, so you can be creative too. Let's look at some ways to be creative in your devotional.

Use Different Bible Translations

What is your favorite Bible translation? Do you read from more than one? There are many reliable Bible translations that offer a slightly different look at familiar passages.

One way to be creative is to use different Bible translations that bring out your message more clearly. Do your homework on BibleGateway.com and see which translations amplify your message.

Grow Your Vocabulary

If you've been writing for a long time, do you seek to improve your writing skills continually? A great way to improve your skills is to read books from other authors. The more you read, the more you're able to increase your vocabulary, internalize what you're learning, and adapt it to your own style to keep your writing fresh.

Professional writers and editors regularly reach for a thesaurus to find the best word choices. They read over and tweak their content repeatedly until it comes alive. Challenge yourself to remain teachable and grow in the gifts God has given to you.

Make Your Titling Interesting

Chapter 4 asked you to consider the reader's needs with titles that point toward the reader's felt needs. But there's nothing wrong with being interesting or entertaining too!

Surprise your reader (in a good way) with your title and subtitle. Your book's title is the hook that draws people in, like the title of a song or poem. The book's subtitle should state your promised benefit to the reader—what they can expect from your book (hope, joy, peace, comfort, wisdom, insight, healing, etc.).

Describing who the devotional is for in the subtitle is often effective (new mothers, women, pregnant women, teens, cancer survivors, retired men, business people, entrepreneurs, busy moms, etc.). I also recommend putting the number of devotions in the subtitle, such as *21 Days of Grace for Busy Moms*. Notice there are three elements in this subtitle: the number of days, the promised benefit, and the specific audience.

Spice up other titling or headings. Your chapter titles are often the first thing a reader sees, so compel them to want to read what follows. Call elements in your application section something more than *Application*, although that's what I did in this book. Sometimes simple works best, so don't overdo it too much. Ask a few people who represent your audience, "Does this book look interesting to you at first glance?"

Be More Positive than Negative

The reason why Christians have good news to share is because there is bad news. "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Sometimes you have to start with the bad news so the good news is great! "The

gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). But as a general rule, I encourage you to focus on the positive as much as possible.

Moments ago, the section above called “Grow Your Vocabulary” used to be “Avoid Old Vocabulary.” I asked myself, How can I say this differently to make it a more positive statement? and then made the change. A former boss of mine used to say, “The one who shares the most hope wins.” Help your reader think upon things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

Provide Creative Application Suggestions

At the end of each devotion, provide a way for the reader to apply what he or she has read. Assume you are writing to an intelligent audience who’s tried everything and wants to try something new.

Or, if you are going to make a general application, go at it from a different angle. You have the Holy Spirit working with you as you write. Ask Him for advice. He knows your readers and is more than willing to give you ideas that will resonate with your readers.

Application

Find one way to stretch yourself and be creative in one of the five areas mentioned in this chapter.

7

Avoid Over-Personalization

Minimize *I*, *me*, and personal stories. Devotional writing is different than a memoir or a diary.

People buy devotionals to grow closer to God, not closer to the author. It is okay to tell a personal story, but the more you insert yourself into your writing, the more opportunity there is to distract the reader from connecting with God.

Share about yourself only to the degree it helps readers learn more about God through learning more about you and your story.

Application

1. Review your writing and ask yourself, *How can I say less about myself and have the reader experience the same benefit of the purpose or point of the content?*
2. Where you see *I* or *me*, rework the text, or at least minimize the use of *I* and *me* throughout your devotional writing.

8

Stay Evergreen

“Evergreen” devotionals contain content that remains in season all year every year. They stay focused on God Himself, His attributes and eternal Word, and practical ways we can live out our faith. It’s important to use content that doesn’t date your book too quickly. Let’s look at three areas to keep evergreen.

Stories, Illustrations, and Examples

Using stories, illustrations, and examples brings principles to life by keeping them relevant and fresh. Possibly you’ve heard a story for the first time, passed it along on social media, and then found out it’s an urban legend that’s been floating around in slightly different forms for a decade. Do a little research on the content you want to include to make sure it’s accurate and will feel current into the future.

Current Events

Avoid excessive content focused on current events that will date your book in a few months or even five years from now. If you write about a local or global event as you’re going through it, someone who reads your devotional two years later will feel the content is dated. It’s okay to talk about these events because they are life changing and many lessons can be learned from them. But position them in a way so people can’t identify the specific point in time when your devotional was written.

Language

There are great books available today that were published years ago but remain in demand because the content is timeless. A book written in the 1800s may have some dated vocabulary, but the language remains rich and applicable to today's reader. Writing devotionals is its own craft, so take your time and shape what you want to say for this generation and the next. Remain relevant to today's reader while still considering the timelessness of your writing for the future.

Application

Keep in mind the evergreen nature of your content so your devotional doesn't date itself too soon after its release.

9

Keep Your Application Doable and Connected to Jesus

James 2:17 says that “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” Devotional writing can give readers the opportunity not only to be inspired by the Word of God, but also motivated to implement the Word for a changed life. Let’s look at how to keep your application doable and connected to Jesus.

Challenge, not Overwhelm

As I’ve helped people write devotionals, especially long ones, the author inevitably gets tired and a bit lazy with his or her application ideas. This leads to less creativity and application that is too general or not possible. As you consider how to write suggestions for application of your content, keep the actions doable and meaningful for that day—one step closer to the desired outcome.

For example, instead of “Get a vision for your family and help them walk in the calling of God,” try “What is one thing you can do today that will tell your spouse, in his or her love language, you care?” Keep your application simple, specific, practical, and doable with the right amount of challenge.

Just Do Your Part

As I’ve written this book on devotional writing, I’ve been tempted to write more and more, sharing with you all I know. But I resolved early on that I don’t need to share with

you all I know, just more than you know right now. This is what you can do with your devotional writing. You do not have to ensure your readers measure up “to the full and complete standard of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13 NLT). God doesn’t expect you to take a person all the way there. Just do your part to connect your reader to Jesus a little more each day.

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. He is going to walk with that reader, so avoid the temptation to accomplish too much at once. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:6–9 that one plants and another waters the seed. Your words are offerings. See your entries as seeds and then trust that God will nurture those seeds so they bear fruit in the reader’s life.

Allow Space to Ponder

Allow space for your readers to ponder what God is saying to them through each devotion. There is a need for quiet meditation. We don’t do that much in today’s busy world. So allot time for reflection. For every five days of devotions (during the work week), consider two days of reflection or something that shifts the pace a bit over the weekend to let the message sink in.

Or perhaps choose to write on one theme a week and just talk about a small aspect of that theme every day. An approach like that allows your readers to take the message in and meditate on what you’ve written while giving space for God to speak as they are drawn closer to Jesus.

Make questions and reflection a part of your application. Ponder the content with your readers. Sit beside them, as it were, to hear from the Lord together. It’s okay to leave the reader wondering a bit. You don’t have to know it all. Having an open-ended approach gives room for the Holy Spirit to move in the life of your readers.

Inspire Action that Changes Mindsets and Grounds Our Faith

Attending a seminar or reading a book on marriage doesn't automatically make a spouse a better partner. For information to be effective, we must have a change of mind and heart so that the information translates into our outward actions.

As much as you can, help a person through the meditation process and help them think differently than the way they're thinking right now. Take your time and pastor people through your application sections. They can be extremely powerful for helping a person know what to do with your content.

When I used to work as a trainer, my role was to wrap up after someone else's presentation and bring application to the content the audience had just heard. One day a guy approached me and said, "We heard the talk. Why do we need you to regurgitate it all over again?" The way he said it was nicer, but that was basically the message. I replied, "Just because you heard it doesn't mean you become it."

How easy it is to have a powerful message come and go without taking action. Action is what grounds our faith. Bits of inspiration don't stand long in a crisis. Faith that's rooted deeply on a history of God's faithfulness helps and sustains people in a crisis.

Ask Questions that Require Discovery

Avoid questions that have a yes or no answer. Ask a question that encourages the person to meditate or think. For example, if you ask, "Are you hungry to know God more?" every reader would answer yes. This is why he or she has your devotional in the first place. Instead ask, "How does your daily routine demonstrate your hunger for the Lord

and your desire to know Him?” or “In what area of your life do you feel dry and want to see God break into right now?” Choose questions that lead a person toward self-discovery and God-discovery.

If you’re a parent, you know the difference between a child that self-discovers and one that is told what to do. For the child who self-discovers, that knowledge and experience last much longer. As you help make application for your readers, remember the words of Hebrews 10:24 and “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

Application

1. When you write your application section, keep your action steps practical and doable—something the reader can start and complete today.
2. Shape your application so that it leads the reader to a relationship with Jesus.

10

Schedule Time to Write, and Enlist Others to Support Your Schedule

For many people, scheduling does not sound fun and feels like a hassle. But a schedule is a primary tool to unlock your creativity and make your book happen!

Intentionally schedule time to write. Look at the date you want to be done with your devotional and work back from there, planning out what and when to write so that you hit your deadline, or at least get close. (If you're working with a publisher, you absolutely need to hit your deadline.) Be aggressive yet reasonable. It's better to shoot for a star and be off a little than to shoot for nothing and hit a skunk.

Plan short or long writing days depending on what your schedule allows. Determine how long you want to write or how many words you want to complete during each writing time. Most professional writers average about 1,000 words per hour once they get into their groove. Once you start to write, you'll discover your own groove and what you're able to accomplish. If you don't self-edit as you write, you should be able to hit about 500 words an hour.

When I say, "I'm going to write my book now," you probably picture me at a computer typing out new content. I've had a few writing clients come to me discouraged because they didn't meet their word count goal for the week. But one of them had spent a few hours doing research, and

another one had developed an entire brand. I encourage you to broaden your definition of writing so you don't get discouraged if you don't meet your word count goal for the day.

As you create your schedule, consider allotting time for writing, research, administration (looking up Bible verses, formatting your document, creating an outline), editing, and even thinking. And if you have a blast of inspiration on a research or editing day, by all means use it to write new content instead of looking up Scripture on BibleGateway.com.

Consult others about your writing schedule, especially if it affects a spouse, kids, or close friends. It helps to have empathy and cooperation from others, whether it be inside or outside your home.

Lastly, communicate with those around you when you're in writer's mode so they can give you the space you need. The writing process can be intense. A devotional is a marathon, not a sprint. Setting aside time for the project allows you both to enjoy the process and end up with a good product.

Application

Grab a calendar—digital or physical. Decide when you want to be done. Divide the work you have to complete by the number of days you have to work. Mark your goals on your calendar, and share that calendar with those who will support your writing.

Don't Self-edit or Research as You Write

As a general rule, do not waste inspiration and creative energy on editing or research. I recommend writing new content when you feel inspired, and editing what you've written or researching new material when you don't feel inspired. There's plenty of science that says multitasking is a myth. So when it's time to write, freewrite as quickly as possible—following your plan, of course. Do not try to research and self-edit at the same time. Learn to write without restraint!

When you feel inspired, take it as a sign from the Lord that it's time to write, and go write. If you've been writing for any length of time, you've probably found yourself being inspired at inconvenient times. That inspiration is so clear it's easy to think you'll remember it later. Wonderfully brilliant ideas have fallen into the pit of forgetfulness because they were not captured in the moment. Inspiration cannot be scheduled and doesn't always come around when you're ready to write. Whenever you feel inspired, do your best to capture it somehow—on a piece of paper, on your phone as an audio message to yourself, or at least write down the general idea if you can't write it all out.

On days you don't feel inspired, edit or research. This keeps your book moving forward. I've found that editing something I've already written often sparks creativity, and I soon find myself ready to create new content again.

After you've created the structure for your devotional, one of the fastest ways to find a good flow and write your content quickly is to sit down and write like you are having a conversation with a friend over coffee. Allow the Lord to speak through you in the same tone you'd speak to that friend in a casual setting. This helps the reader feel comfortable and listen to your words. When talking to a friend, you share your heart openly and freely, not calculating every word. Do that when you write. Sit down and freewrite the content you have planned.

Application

When you sit down to write, follow your plan and freewrite. Make it your goal to get as many words out of you as fast as possible.

12

Recruit a Prayer Team

There is a negative spiritual swirl that happens when you sit down to write content that will affect another person's spiritual growth. I recommend reaching out to a few people you trust and ask them to pray for you.

Be selective about who you ask because negative comments from others can get discouraging. Find those who will celebrate you and the risk you are taking by writing. Let them know the times you are scheduled to write, and you will find the air clearer to hear from the Lord and write your devotional.

Application

1. Make a list of who you can trust and want to ask to pray for you.
2. Reach out to them and ask them to pray for you.
3. Give them a few specifics to pray, and remember to thank them, especially when your writing times go well.

13

Do a Few Samples, Get Feedback, and Adjust as Needed

Don't wait until you're completely done with your devotional to share your writing with others. After you have written two or three devotions, share them with a few people who represent your audience and hear what they have to say.

As a writer, asking for advice feels a bit like taking off your clothes and standing in front of people asking what they think. Yikes! So vulnerable! As you ask others for their feedback, you'll learn who will give you advice you can use. Some will blow up what you've done completely so you feel like starting over, and others will say "that's nice" and not provide any valuable input. But others will offer a nugget of wisdom that will make your day and improve your writing.

Be sure to specify what kind of feedback you're looking for so your friend with a semicolon addiction doesn't add 122 semicolons to your manuscript. Explain it is a rough draft, you're not looking for a proofreader right now, and ask questions like:

- What do you like the most?
- How does the content meet a felt need in your life?
- What is missing that you'd like to see?
- What format changes do you recommend, if any, like the number of days, length of readings, or type of application?

Talk to God about the feedback you receive, make wise adjustments as needed, and then get back to writing.

Application

Send out something you've written to a few people you trust so they can give you helpful feedback. Be specific about the feedback you are looking for.

14

Edit Wisely

There is a difference between what you *could say* and what you *must say*. *Stick with what must be said.*

Beware of editing that makes things different but not better. If you're not sure your editing is making your writing better, it's time to stop editing, give yourself a break, and come back to it later with fresh eyes.

As you get into editing, if you find yourself getting annoyed with your writing, stop. It's easy to get into a cranky mood and edit the life out of your content. Then the enemy starts yapping and whispers, *What is this content anyway? Who is going to read this? This isn't any good.* The purpose of pruning is greater growth. Prune those things that are hindering growth, but don't hack off a paragraph because it no longer feels inspired.

When you are done editing, hire another person to edit and proofread your manuscript. It can be hard to see errors yourself when you're so familiar with the content. Errors can be a distraction for people, so add an extra degree of excellence and be sure to have your work proofread.

If you can't afford to hire an editor, try Grammarly, which is a tool some writers like. It's not perfect, but it allows you to see redundant words, monotonous passages, and other common problems. At a minimum, use grammar and spell check in your word processing software like Word, Pages, or Google Docs.

Lastly, one thing I do regularly as I edit (not when people are around but when I'm by myself) is talk to the reader. I'll talk to myself. I'll talk to God. I ask questions to God or the reader about a particular issue to help me process the content and to put myself in the shoes of the person reading my content. This also helps when writing or editing prayers.

The trick is not to write a prayer but to talk to God and transcribe the prayer as you're talking to God. Having some kind of conversation with yourself, the reader, and God while you're editing really helps to clarify your thoughts and sharpen your words. Give it a try.

Application

1. Pray before you start to edit. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your editing so what He wants to say remains and you have wisdom for what to change.
2. Get help. Everyone needs an editor.
3. Try talking out loud as you edit.
4. Mostly, keep your heart connected to the Lord and your content will turn out just fine.

Devotional Writing

Section 3

Share

15

Let What God Is Showing You Mature

When you have a message or story to tell, certainly write it down, but know it may not yet be ready for public consumption. Sometimes messages need go on the back burner and simmer for a while.

I've worked with authors who wrote content and then sat on the material for five-plus years because they knew it was not yet time to release it. In the waiting the message matured and became better and more powerful. It's easy to get so excited to get published that writers don't consider timing. They just want to get it out and into the hands of readers. Just because God is speaking to you about something doesn't mean He wants to speak through you about it just yet. Knowing when it's time to share your message takes wisdom and restraint. Let's look at three reasons to wait.

Healing

When you go through a crisis or experience trauma, writing is a helpful tool to process what has happened and begin healing. Years ago a friend asked me to read his manuscript and provide feedback. He had written about a difficult childhood and was still very wounded and angry. His perspective was valid, but the writing was mostly venting, unhelpful to the reader (unless the reader wanted to stay angry too), and toxic.

Edge is good. A good surgeon's knife cuts for the ultimate purpose of healing. But anything with an unrelenting toxic

tone is not helpful toward a good end. My friend ended up putting the manuscript aside, but years later went back to it after he experienced some healing and perspective. The end result still had his story, but since he was in a better place, the impact on the reader was redemptive.

When writing from personal experience, especially if you've walked a hard path, realize your words may carry an unhelpful sharpness if the message is still too raw. Telling a story too soon leads to regret. Readers feel the sharpness of what you're writing if the message is too raw. If this is you, reach out to a few trusted people who are healthy spiritually and gather perspective. Use writing as a healing tool and capture the unfiltered thoughts and emotions of the moment, but be wise about when to share what you have written with a wider audience.

Maturity

Parents don't expose a newborn baby to the world right away. They take in the blessing of a new child and let all that has happened sink in. Luke 2 gives an example of two different ways to respond to a message from the Lord. After Jesus was born, angels appeared to shepherds and announced the appearance of the long-awaited Messiah. The shepherds went quickly to Bethlehem, and "when they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:17-19).

Although the shepherds and Mary responded differently, they both responded correctly. The timing was now for the shepherds to go, see, and share. But Mary's role was to care for what God had entrusted to her. Mary showed a similar

response after Gabriel announced that she was to conceive and give birth to Jesus—she went to Elizabeth’s house and stayed with her for about three months.

Sometimes the time is now to get your message out. Or you may sense God encouraging you to meditate on what He is giving you and not to share it too quickly. Allow your message to marinate and mature in your own heart so that you can present the fullness of it to your readers at the time God releases you to do that.

Privacy

Discern what God is giving you to share with others versus what He is sharing with you because you are His child. A trusted friend doesn’t share another friend’s secrets with everyone. God may share some things with you that may be just for you. Be led by God for what He has for you to ponder and treasure in your heart, or share with others.

Application

Cherish your time in the Word of God and don’t be too quick to shout out all that God is showing you. Allow yourself time to contemplate the message you have been given. Balance this with the next and final tip.

16

Share What God Has Given to You

John 3:16 begins, “For God so loved the world that He gave.” God’s giving nature inside of you will naturally motivate you to give away what He has given to you.

God plants seeds in your life so they grow and multiply, so share what God has given to you. It’s your testimony and the power of the gospel for another person. Let’s look at five reasons why people don’t share what God has given to them.

Waiting for the Perfect Moment

A former leader of mine used to call some authors “Cadillac polishers.” He usually attributed this title to an author after he created world-class content, but then would keep refining it over and over. There’s time to polish, and there’s time to be done. Your content doesn’t have to be perfect. It will never be perfect. But it can be what it needs to be for now.

I know this book on devotional writing is far from perfect. You may have even found typos that sneaked through somehow. But the core information I’ve shared has helped many people, and perhaps it has helped you too. Sometimes you need to turn down your perfectionism superpower a little bit and help people with what you have now, not endlessly try to make it all that you wish it could be.

Complacency

A grown man living comfortably in his mom’s basement playing video games all day needs to be politely but soundly

booted out of the nest. So if you need a push, I encourage you to get out of the house and explore the new things God has for you.

Fear of Failure or Criticism

It's hard to be a communicator today where every word is stored permanently on the internet, open to the criticism of every hater on the planet. You can painstakingly belabor your words, measuring exactly what you want to say, and someone can still get offended and be critical about your hard work.

While it's good to keep a tender heart, it's helpful to develop tough skin. Be courageous and say what you have to say. Those who need to hear it will listen. Consider those who poke holes in what you've done not your audience. And remember Jesus' words in Matthew 5:10–11.

Comparison

Don't be discouraged by all the writing that is already in the market. You have your part. You may have asked yourself, *Who needs one more devotional in the world?* When I've been in conversation with authors who have asked me that question, I reply with another question, *"Why do parents choose to have a child? Aren't there enough kids in the world?"* The reason parents have a child is because that child is a unique product of their relationship. There are plenty of other kids in the world, but there is no kid like your kid, even if the neighbor has the same haircut, braces, and physical features.

Why do you write? Because your writing is a unique product of what God is doing in your heart in relationship with you. His Spirit is moving within you and you are being called to share that with someone so they too can be changed by the Word of God.

Content Fatigue

I've been asked by prominent leaders in the middle of working on a book, "Is my book anything special? Will it really help people?" I read what they're writing, experience the transformative power of their words, and wonder why they would have these doubts. But they have been so immersed in their writing that it has created temporary nearsightedness that keeps them from seeing the depth of their message.

You may have "fresh bread," but after you're in the kitchen a while, you stop smelling the pleasing aroma. Know that fatigue comes to all authors at some point in the process. God brought you to this moment with a message on your heart to share. Don't give up. Persevere as you craft your message for your reader.

* * * *

While there will always be something to get in your way, you have so much going for you! Your number one fan is God Himself, and if He is for you, who can be against you?

You won't know until your life is over the seeds your book sowed into the heart of someone else. Maybe one person read it who gave it to someone else who went on to change the world. We have to remember that outcomes are in God's hands; the offerings are in our hands. These offerings are meant to be released and sown in faith.

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) says, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." There is a place and a space in this world for you because God deemed it so. He has you living and breathing on Earth for such a time as this.

Your voice matters. God expects you to steward what He has entrusted to you. Look at the parables and what

happened with the one who was afraid and buried his talents in fear.

My challenge to you is to value what God has entrusted to your care, offer it back to Him, and take the next steps to share it with others. There is a place for you and your devotional.

Application

Re-read the Shine devotional example from chapter 2. This is God's encouragement to you!

Resources

1. If you want to self-publish your devotional, check out the many resources at Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP). kdp.amazon.com
2. Two print on demand resources I use are
 - www.bookprintondemand.com. A great price, excellent quality, and they print and ship in three days. I prefer getting books here than from KDP.
 - www.48hrbooks.com if you need books super-fast. Their prices are more expensive, but they have great quality and wonderful customer service.
3. See my book *Write Your Book: Your Step-By-Step Guide to Write and Publish a Great Nonfiction Book* available on Amazon.com.
4. I highly recommend the Northwestern Christian Writers Conference yearly in St. Paul, Minnesota. www.northwesternchristianwritersconference.com

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You, the reader. I hope you recognize that your voice matters and are now better equipped to share the message God has given to you.