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TRAINING WRITERS



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Chapter 1

Why take time to do writer training?



- **Develop good writers.** You need people you can call on to write on the subjects important to your readers.
- **Social relevance.** Indigenous writers can write on subjects relevant to your society and circumstances.
- **Cultural relevance.** Extensive use of translation promotes the idea that Christianity—and your magazine—is foreign to your local culture.
- **Develop Christian thinking.** Local writers can strengthen and develop Christian thinking and discussion in your country and churches.



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- **Spiritual relevance.** Your readers want to read how God is real in the lives of people like them.

Chapter 2

Methods for training writers



Writer's groups or clubs

Writer's groups or clubs are informal groups of new or experienced writers who meet to share what they have written and to receive critique from one another and an editor.

Correspondence courses

Correspondence course organized and operated by the magazine.

Writing retreats

Writing retreats are opportunities for serious writers to get away and write under guidance of an editor.

Writing camps

Combination event of teaching and recreation combination to attract new writers. Works well for youth.

Tutorial /one-on-one

The following points will help you successfully work one-on-one with a writer during the re-write process.

- 1. Put all comments in writing.** Write on the manuscript, in a separate letter, or both.
- 2. Thank them** for all the work they put into the article.
- 3. Share a vision** for what the article can be or do.

4. **Tell what they did right first.**
5. **Say things gently and positively.**
6. **Don't just tell what to do**, tell why it would be better.
7. **Give them options.**
8. **Be specific.**
9. **Give examples of what you're looking for.** Send copies of a similar article. Point out things you would like them to do. (Example: "We liked the way this writer..." did this or that.)
10. **Close with more encouragement.**

Internships

Temporarily adding an individual writer to your staff as an intern for any length of time: one week to one year.

1. Advantage:

- **Prospective writer is focused on writing;** fewer distractions.

2. Disadvantages:

- **Takes considerable amount of editor's time;** more than any other method.
- **May be most expensive method,** if it is necessary to pay the intern. Somehow the intern must make a living during this period.

3. Considerations:

- **Selection process is important.** Considering time and expense, pick only the best and most committed prospects.
- **Editor must be sure he/she can give the necessary amount of time to training.** Otherwise, the intern will feel frustrated and bored.
- **May be wise for the intern to have some non-writing responsibilities,** so that there is not constant demand on the editor's time. However, non-writing responsibilities should not take the majority of the intern's time, unless there is also teaching value inherent in the tasks.

Workshops and courses

Conduct formal training in a workshop or course. Invite potential writers to attend. Workshops can be held in several different formats:

- **Intensive** one-day to one-week program
- **Several meetings** over a period of weeks or months
- **Combination:** Initial one-day meeting, followed by evening meetings over the course of several months.

1. Advantages:

- **Intensive commitment to a number of people at once;** less time commitment per person than when working individually.

- **Participants learn from one another**, as well as from the teacher.
- **May produce a number of usable articles** in a short period of time if adequate time provided for writing.

2. Disadvantages:

- **Can be more complicated** to arrange.
- **May be expensive** if it is necessary to provide lodging and meals.
- **Can be too theoretical** if inadequate time provided for writing and writing exercises.

3. Considerations for an effective workshop:

- **Invite the right people:** Those you would like to have write for your magazine. Make sure the workshop will be attractive to them.
- **Organize well in advance** and as thoroughly as possible so that meetings run smoothly and maximum can be accomplished.
- **Ask a couple of people to help** with logistics and organization so that the editor can concentrate on teaching.
- **Consider asking another magazine or two to co-sponsor** a workshop, sharing costs and teaching responsibilities, and inviting more potential writers.

- **Plan a meeting place that is neutral**, if you have people coming from different denominations.
- **Make sure the meeting place is functional**; not noisy or distracting, and that there are adequate chairs (tables, if possible), lighting, and a place project the presentation slides or samples.
- **Provide adequate time** for writing practice and writing exercises so that people can put into practice what they are learning—and perhaps produce articles you can use immediately.
- **Use PowerPoint or other type of digital presentation, white board, or flip chart** to reinforce your teaching. Distribute notes, if possible.

- **Plan to follow-up with the attendees** so that momentum is not lost and they continue writing for your magazine.

Cooperation with schools

Work with local Christian schools, universities, or seminaries that offer writing courses or any course where students write.

You may also choose to work specifically with the student newspaper at a local Christian school, university, or seminary.

1. Advantages:

- **Teachers or student newspaper sponsors may become allies**, helping to identify potential good writers for your magazine.

- **Editor may get to know some young budding writers** who may eventually become good authors for the magazine.

2. Disadvantages:

- **Teachers may not be able to understand your criteria** in article selection and may be disappointed or critical when you refuse to publish inappropriate articles.
- **Writing for academic purposes is often different** from writing for a magazine. The teacher would have to understand the difference.
- **Many young student writers**, especially seminary students, may adopt a know-it-all preaching style of writing which is offensive to your readers.

Offer to teach at a school or seminary

1. Advantages:

- **You have direct contact** with prospective writers.
- **You have an opportunity to influence** a broader sphere of people than you normally would.

2. Disadvantages:

- **Time-consuming commitment**
- **May not yield the type of mature writers** for whom you are looking.

Contests

Have contests or writing programs in your magazine. Invite current readers of your magazine to participate in a writing contest sponsored by your magazine.

1. Advantages:

- **Your readers are familiar with your audience** and may be able to communicate more effectively than an “outsider.”
- **It is relatively easy to sponsor a contest** through your magazine. Not a lot of time required on part of editor.

2. Disadvantage:

- **It is necessary to provide an attractive prize**, which probably will involve some expense for the magazine.

Chapter 3

Sample manuscript critique



What I love about Jesus: His invitations to “come”

“Be near me, Lord Jesus. I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray...”

So goes the tender Christmas lullaby our pre-schoolers sing. It’s curious that as adults we never outgrow the childish

habit of pleading with the Lord to be near us.

We encounter a difficult situation and pray, “Be with me, Lord.” When we are discouraged or frustrated we lift our voice to the sky and cry, “Where are You, God?”

We approach God in prayer as though He were distant and aloof and must be convinced that we are worthy of the interruption. We assume that He merely tolerates our presence and will be just as glad to dismiss us when the interview is over.

We can't assume all readers do this

The truth is that Jesus has been calling to us since the day we were knit in the womb. Have you ever shouted for someone you thought was on the other side of the house only to find they were standing right behind you? The startling fact is that Jesus is near us, with us, and in us. *vice*

I love Jesus for His desire to abide with me. I echo the psalmist's amazement, "What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?" In my soul I thrill to the same words which were spoken to blind Bartimaeus beside a Jericho road: "Take courage, arise! He is calling for you."

Working seems a bit archaic. Try for everyday language most readers will connect with.

How astounding that the Creator of the universe would single out one microscopic part of it; to reduce Himself to my size and form, to share my journey.

This is more about incarnation than about companionship. Delete?

The invitation, "Come", is written not on lavender stationery, but on bloodstained parchment. The address reads "where I am there you may be also." The RSVP is for today—and every day.

Develop this idea...it doesn't communicate enough as it is. It might be effective to talk about the price He paid for our companionship—who else would literally give their lives to be close to us?

My first invitation is tucked ~~in the pages~~ of John 3:16. Jesus and I fell into step thirty years ago and, just as He promised, He has never left my side. He

See next page

never changed His mind and wandered off toward a more worthy companion. In fact, I am the one who's prone to wander. *Good*

The cliché “If you don't feel close to God, who do you think moved?” is true in its stark simplicity. As illogical as it is, I turn away from my familiar companion and forget He is there. I stop talking to Him and wonder at His silence. But even as I wander after distractions and desires He pursues me, gently tapping my shoulder with more invitations to “Come”.

Keep your focus on Jesus, not your response

Come, Follow Me

When we first pray, “Lord, I accept You to come into my life” we are asserting that it is still our journey and He is joining us. We gradually get used to sharing time and space with Him. But as our feet fall into rhythm a curious thing happens. We become aware that the path is no longer ours, but His. He is the leader and we are following Him.

Be careful not to overdo the "fall into" language. (See also end of p.1.)

The disciples saw Jesus' footprints in the dirt. They knew that they were joining Him and leaving their paths behind. When they heard His voice call, “Come, follow me,” they dropped their nets and fell in line.

I'm not sure this section works. It's more about what it means to follow Jesus—be a disciple. It doesn't tell me about Jesus' desire to be with me.

My walk is by faith. Though I don't have the opportunity to see Jesus in the flesh, He invites me to walk through the gate of the Scriptures. As I read His words and thoughts, I abide in Him and His words abide in me. Vicariously, I sit on the hillside and listen to the teachings. I feel the hunger and feast on the Bread of Life. I enjoy the miracles as a remote disciple.

How does He know this?

I love Jesus for making Himself just as real to me as to those who bumped elbows with Him. ~~[As the Spirit within me communes with Him I can feel His closeness even more than the disciples could in the body.]~~

We can't know this.

Come and Linger

This is really important. Could you add a sentence or more about how Jesus wants to be with us ALL the time? (I doubt if even spouses want that much togetherness!)

[The essence of companionship is togetherness. A friendship can be maintained long distance but companions must be side by side.] Jesus never had a short term relationship in mind. "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," He promised. ~~Even when we wander He remains faithful.~~

← Already stated

Still, I have a problem with running ahead of Him. “You’re moving too slow. I’ll just get started and You catch up,” I carelessly offer. In my enthusiasm to please Him I design wonderful plans for furthering the Kingdom.

Focus on Jesus

Martha of Bethany was an eager one, full of ideas, plans and energy for serving Jesus while He was close by. Mary was a saturated sponge, sitting at Jesus’ feet, too heavy with reverence to do anything but sit and soak. Jesus pointed at Mary’s example. “Come and sit, Martha,” He urged. “Not only for a moment, not only for an hour. Never mind our stomachs. Sit here and soak in My presence until your soul stops its grumbling.”

Great!

Jesus knows that we can’t get well acquainted if we don’t spend time together. So He invites us to linger. To pull up a cushion and “sit a spell”. To be still and know that He is God.

Nice

Come into Battle

As surely as there is time for quiet rest there comes a time for action. Companions encounter a variety of experiences if the road is at all long. We

know that we need Him on the rocky places as guide and protector. We have no fear as long as we are confident of His presence. But the greatest honor of being Christ's companion is when He calls us to assist Him in battle.

When Jesus climbed the hill to Gethsemane He invited the disciples to accompany Him. At the midpoint He allowed only His most trusted soldiers to go on with Him. Peter, James and John had proven their loyalty to Jesus. He trusted them to support Him and fight by His side against the enemy. Unfortunately, Peter fought the wrong battle. He slept through the fierce encounter with Satan and woke up in time to slash away at a puppet in uniform.

Great thoughts

I have had the privilege of receiving an invitation to battle. Some nights I was awakened by a sense of urgency to pray. I had no idea for whom I interceded or what circumstances were at stake. But I was honored to be summoned by the One who has fought for me, to be counted worthy of standing shoulder to shoulder with Him. Brandishing the sword of the Spirit against the accuser I felt him fall with a relief in my soul.

How do you pray for someone if you don't know who they are or what to pray for? Clarify.

Nice

Closer Than a Brother

I love the heart of Jesus that has called me to His side. For there is no greater knowledge than to become aware of His presence. There is no greater honor than to be counted as one of His friends to linger and find rest at His side. And there is no greater joy than to return service to the One who graciously chose me to be on His team. I love Him for pursuing me until I finally followed Him. *Nice* ~~And even when I stand face to face with Him in heaven I know I can never be any closer that I am right now.~~

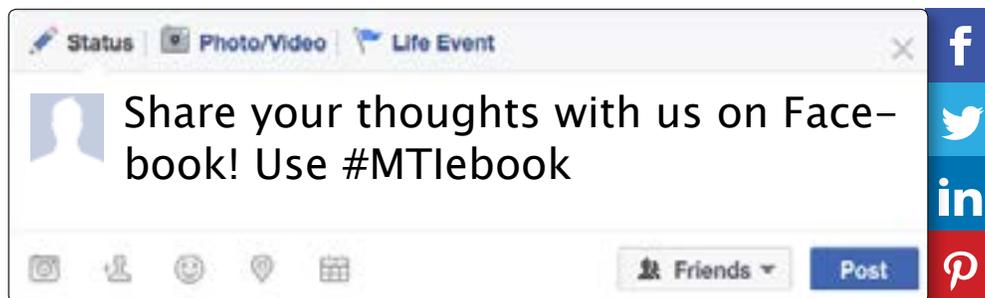
*Contradicts
2 Cor. 13:12*

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Beyond the book

What ways of training writers interest you? Which ones do you think you can implement?

More information on writing for magazines can be found in the “Writing Effective Magazine Articles” training manual. To purchase the complete manual, visit: www.magazinetraining.com.



About the author



Susan Maycinik Nikaido served as editor and senior editor of the award-winning *Discipleship Journal* for over 15 years. She has published articles in magazines such as *Today's Christian Woman*, *Decision*, *Leadership*, *Campus Life*, *New Man*, and *Christian History*. She has written for a daily newspaper and has worked as an editor at Purdue University, editing books and promotional materials, and at Indiana University, editing study guides for correspondence courses. She is the author of the Bible study guides *Growing Deeper with God* and *Building Better Relationships*. She served on the board of the Evangelical Press Association and drafted that organization's guidelines for working with freelance writers. Susan holds a B.A. in journalism from Indiana University and an M.A. in communications from Wheaton College Graduate School. She has taught writing and editing seminars in the U.S. and internationally, and has also written a manual on magazine editing for Magazine Training International.



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