

How to Write a Successful Christian Book

God has given you a Word and you want to bring it to fruition. You open up the document and begin to type, but the words just don't flow the way that you want them to flow. Backspace is now a major key to you as you try to find a way to release to the world what God has dropped inside you.

Don't fret. Your problem is a common one. Most authors make the mistake of trying to make their books read the way they think a book should read, based on a book authored by someone else. This takes away from the book because we, as human beings, have an uncanny way of detecting 'fake.' So, when your words don't match who we can feel that you are, your book doesn't read well. That means, your problem is simple. You have allowed yourself to be shaped by commonality. What makes an author a best seller is the ability to share who they are in the book. In doing so, they appeal to people who can not only relate to them, but they appeal to those who cannot relate and are fascinated by the mysterious nature of them. Your personality helps others to relate to the real you and not the character you are portraying yourself to be.

Many Christian authors don't sell many books. They start off the same. They are excited about the opportunity to be called an 'author.' They are excited about the opportunity to create another income source. But, many trip over the same stumbling blocks and this, of course, costs them hundreds, thousands and sometimes millions of sales. You should be excited about serving the living wisdom of God to a dying nation. This is when you will put your heart into that book.

Listed below is 14 things you should and should not do with your book.

1. Flow into the book. As you write, put yourself in the character's shoes, if the book is fictional. If the book is non fictional or an advice guide, speak as you speak every day. Your personality should be felt in that book. Maybe you're laid back or a little on the silly side. There are many layers to who you are and every book that you publish should reveal another layer of you. Think of it this way. If you're in a relationship and the person you're in the relationship with is boring you, you would more than likely break off that relationship. But, if that person continues to intrigue you, you will want to stay around to discover more and more about them. Your readers are the same.
2. For a fictional book, never uncover the whole story at the beginning. The beginning of the book is to introduce the characters and their situations. It is not good to confuse the reader by starting off in drama, unless that drama leads to some answers. Confused people get headaches and walk away. For non fictional books and advice guides, never share the best of the book in the beginning. The whole book should be good and draw the reader to another chapter, but as they read more, the book should always intensify their need to read.

3. Know your target audience. Who is more likely to buy your book? What's the age range, race, social status, etc? Believe it or not, these factors are very important when selling your book. The average author tries to market to everyone and as a result, their books wound up crashing. You may have written the book to reach everyone and that's what you should do. But, a book about knitting won't have too many 25 year old readers, now would it?

4. Please invest in your book. One of the best and worst things that ever happen to Christian books is self publishing. Personally, I love self publishing. But, self publishing means that anyone can publish a book. Therefore, many open up a Word document, type in it, get their nephew to draw them a cover and they publish it. These books come out with misspelled words all around the board, missing punctuation, bad grammar and extreme wordiness. If you don't invest in anything else, invest in an editor and a graphic designer. (And please, for the sake of your book, look at the designer's portfolio before you hire them.) You can research how to format the book or find an editor who offers formatting services as well. Books that are not invested in usually get a few sales from friends, family and a few strangers. If you want to be a best seller, you have to act and think as a best seller.

5. Before you start to write and during the time when you are writing the book, save money to invest into the book. Let's say it takes you 12 months to complete your book. What if you had saved \$50 a month towards your book the entire time? You will have saved \$600 towards the publishing of your book. This isn't a lot, but it may afford you an editor or a graphic designer. And if you'd saved \$100 a month for 12 months, you would have \$1200. The more you save, the better.

6. Don't be in a rush to finish the book. I know, I know. You're excited and you want to hurry up and finish it. This could cause you to throw together a book that, to you, sounds good, but once it gets out there, reads like a drunk man trying to figure out where he is. Take your time. The average book can take a year or more to finish.

7. Get a jotting pad and carry it around with you. Let everything around you minister to you and take them down as notes for your book. There will be many times when an idea comes to you in the middle of nowhere and by the time you get home, it's gone. If you're at the dentist's office, for example, and the act of drilling gives you a revealing message, as soon as the dentist takes a break, add it to your jot pad.

8. You don't have to name the book just yet, let the content speak to you. Sometimes, authors rush to the first catchy name that tickles their ears, but their book's content bleeds outside of the title. It's okay to have that catchy title that you just have to use. But, if you must, write a book just for that title! However, it is better to write a book and flow without restrictions and then

come up with a name for it.

9. Use the Bible as a reference. Believers like to know where you are getting your information from. You should be able to provide them with the book and chapter that it can be located in the Bible. In addition, do not abbreviate the books of the Bible. Not everyone knows that Eph. stands for Ephesians because there are people that are new to reading the Bible.

10. Tell the truth and shame the devil. Books about opinions generate strongholds. Don't allow yourself to be the devil's tool. Tell the truth!

11. Don't write on emotional days. So, your day probably wasn't the best. And now you want to blow off some steam in your *ahem* Christian book. Wrong move. Wisdom flows through calmness, but comes only after the waters have been stilled from trouble. Don't wound up writing something that may compromise the entire message of your book.

12. Find a relaxing place to write your book. Some rooms in your home may have too much family traffic or the room itself is too crowded. It is better to find a place and a time that is more relaxing for you. If you find a place in the house, you may be able to move the furniture around in a way that lets in more light and feels more relaxing. If you can't find a place at home that is relaxing, go to a local library, friend's house or park where you can freely express what God has given you.

13. When buying your ISBN number, buy at least 10 of them. 1 ISBN costs \$125, whereas 10 costs \$250. You will need an ISBN for your print book and a different ISBN for your e-book. Not to mention, if you plan to publish more books in the near future, you will need more ISBNs. Save money by buying more.

14. Talk to other authors. First time mistakes can be avoided when you find someone that's already made them.

By Tiffany Buckner