

God Calls Writers

Jorge Enrique Díaz, of Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, offers steps publishers can take to discover, develop and cultivate good Christian writers.

Forty years as a pastor, and over a quarter century in the evangelical publishing industry, lead me to a simple conclusion: good writers are not born: the Lord calls them and they dedicate themselves to writing.

Discover spiritually-gifted writers

A careful reading of the Bible allows us to see God calls some to write. The Bible itself is the result of obedience to this call that God gave to some of his servants. Thus, you can be certain that in the country where you live, the Lord has called and enabled some with the spiritual gift of writing. But, just as with other spiritual gifts, the gift of writing

Good writers are not born, they are called by God. Seek those whom God has blessed.

must be dedicated and developed to reach its greatest potential. God uses people who cultivate their spiritual gift.

To find writers, follow the same process a pastor uses to help church members discover their spiritual gifts. I am firmly convinced that it is in the local church that spiritual gifts are discovered and proven. If you discover someone who with humility has begun to write and benefit people in their church, this person will undoubtedly be a good writer whom the Lord will use. Therefore, you must assist them in developing their skills.

Develop those called to write

Writers must develop skills in four areas: organization of their ideas, mastery of the language, a focus on the

audience, and literary style. You may wonder, "How can I help writers with these four basic disciplines?" If you represent a publisher, there are several ways in which you can help.

Write or obtain a good writer's manual. Such a manual should be useful to your potential writers for self-study, in small groups or in writer's workshops. Discuss the material offered in your manual. Provide participants opportunities to practice what they've been taught. Participants can critique one another's manuscripts and help each other.

Seek competent editors to serve as mentors. Ask them to read and respond to the work of potential writers. Mentors can share their reactions, suggestions and ideas for improving a manuscript by writing in the margins. Ideally, writers should receive mentoring shortly after completing their work. The flame of interest in writing is quickly extinguished if left unattended.

Offer opportunities for new authors to see their work in print. New authors dream of publication. If their church has a weekly or monthly bulletin, encourage them to take responsibility for it. If it does not, encourage them to start one. If the church is too poor to produce a bulletin, your author can use a bulletin board to post articles. Others may also be encouraged. In this way, a publisher can begin a "seedplot" for new writers.

Offer attractive financial incentives. Usually, publishers offer two possibilities. One is paying an author a fixed sum for what is written. This quantity

can range from two to five cents per word. Another possibility is providing writers a percentage of sales income, ranging from 5 to 15 percent. Sometimes you can combine both methods and offer authors both a fixed sum, and royalties. New writers do not worry too much about finances because they are most interested in seeing their work in print. They greatly enjoy seeing their name on a four-color book cover. This euphoria soon passes. Be fair to new and inexperienced writers.

Promote new authors. We live in a day of publicity, promotion and novelty. If you publish a new author, make him or her known in the evangelical community, in your country and abroad, through radio, television, newspaper announcements as well as promotional fliers and signs.

Sponsor events where your new authors can present seminars on their books. Follow these with an opportunity for authors to autograph books for those present. The author's family, friends, church and denomination can provide a good foundation where you can promote these events.

To discover, cultivate and develop good writers: remember good writers are not born, they are called by God. Discover who has the gift of writing. Seek people whom God has blessed. Help them develop their skills in the basics of good writing. Assist them in finding avenues to be published. Reward and promote new writers at every opportunity. ❖