

If You Want to Write

by Jorge Enrique Díaz

I often meet people who are eager to write. If you want to write, here are a few simple steps to keep in mind before you begin.

Affirm your calling

First, pray. Tell God you want to write something that will honor and glorify his name, and ask God to confirm your calling.

Second, perform a test. Write a brief article that you think will be useful and beneficial to others. Make copies and distribute them among 15 to 20 members of your congregation.

Third, evaluate the test. Use two criteria: 1) after reading and distributing copies of your work, do you feel affirmed by God? If you do, 2) was the writing a blessing to anyone? Perhaps one of your readers said, “What you wrote ministered to me,” or “I really liked what you wrote.”

These criteria are valid for two reasons. First, God is the giver of spiritual gifts. Therefore, when we do what he desires, we feel his approval. Second, when we use the gifts the Lord has given, he blesses and edifies his people, because that is the purpose of spiritual gifts.

Organize your ideas

Writers must learn to organize their ideas. Some persons are very abstract in their thinking; others use many pictures and diagrams. In the organizing process there are three common patterns.

The first, called “linear”, starts with the broad ideas, narrows the focus, and gets to the point (in logic, this is known as the deductive process). Conversely, a writer can start with a narrow focus, enlarge it, and present a broad view (the inductive method).

Another way to organize ideas is the “diamond” pattern. Here the writer focuses on a topic from three or four different angles.

A third method is the “anchor” pattern, where the writer affirms a basic truth. The writer then discusses three or four elements that support or prove the thesis.

Master the language

Writers must learn basic grammar, spelling, sentence construction (syntax), and correct word usage. They should also seek to master the editorial style preferred by their publishers.

When I write, I compose one or two paragraphs with the basic message. I organize the ideas according to one of the patterns already mentioned, and begin writing without regard to grammar or spelling, allowing inspiration to flow from my heart and mind. Once

done, I revise the draft over and over again to tackle grammar, spelling, construction and style.

Consider your audience

Craft each article or book with a specific reader in mind. Remember, if you want to hit the target, you must focus. If you aim everywhere you will hit nothing. Decide whether you are writing for children, youth, adults, women, or men. Study the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual characteristics of your intended reader. Consider the audience in selecting techniques, sentence construction, figures of speech, sentence lengths, and vocabulary. For example, in Latin America most Christian writers are read by people who read at about a fifth grade comprehension level. Therefore, the language and degree of difficulty for abstract ideas must be within their reach.

Choose your style

Every style has its own rules and conditions. Writing a narrative of events, with dates and facts, is something quite different from writing a biography, crafting an essay or expressing emotions through poetry. Novels and drama are tools to help you communicate your message. Choose the style that works best.

Writing is a science, because one must follow certain rules, but it is also an art. Just as painters use different colors and brushes, writers choose different words.

Choose your publisher

Before you write a book, contact publishers to be sure there is interest in a book like the one you are proposing. Send an outline, the introduction, the first chapter, and information on your credentials and experience as an author. Propose a delivery time, length and style for the manuscript. I have worked for a publishing house for over 20 years. Sadly, every week I have seen manuscripts rejected. Most did not fit with the publishing house’s mission.

Seek progress

When you gain experience, you can submit your work to larger venues, such as denominational or local newspapers or national publications. As you see the Lord blessing your efforts, work on lengthier articles or even a book. If God has called you to write, use the gift he has given to you for the benefit of the Church.❖

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