



Christian Writers for Life Monthly Digest

July 2023: The Art of Writing a Daily Devotion

As we step into the bright sunlit days of July, the season of growth and abundance, let's use our creative writing skills to express our faith in Jesus Christ and to share it with the world.

Writing daily devotions gives us the opportunity to be beacons of light and hope, guiding and encouraging others in their spiritual journey. The words we write can provide comfort in times of hardship, lend strength during moments of weakness, and inspire a sense of spiritual connection with God and with each other.

When we write daily devotions, we serve as messengers who announce and help fulfill the Great Commission, as stated in Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." By penning these brief daily insights, we can reach hearts worldwide, all the while growing and deepening our own faith.

Daily devotions are concise, spiritually-focused writings that provide guidance, encouragement, and biblical insights for readers on a daily basis. They serve as a spiritual nourishment tool, fostering a closer relationship with God and a deeper understanding of faith, Scripture, and hope.

As a Christian writer, when you write daily devotions, you have a remarkable opportunity to touch millions of lives, inspire faith and spiritual growth, and ignite a Christ-centered transformation in the minds and hearts of people around the world.

Let's enter July with renewed commitment and dedication, echoing God's love and wisdom in our daily devotions and working fervently in His service.

God bless you as you write for Him!

Denise George

July's Writer Profile: Oswald Chambers

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) was a prominent early twentieth-century Scottish Protestant Christian minister, teacher, and writer. Born on July 24, 1874, and raised in Aberdeen, Scotland, Chambers committed his life to Christ and to evangelistic efforts at age fifteen.

After he received God's call to ministry, in 1897, he enrolled at Dunoon College. After 1901, his teaching and preaching ministry took him throughout England, Ireland, Scotland, the United States, and Japan. On May 25, 1910, he married Gertrude (Bidly) Hobbs. The next year, he started the Bible Training College in London.

Bidly gave birth to his only child, a daughter, in 1913. Chambers served as a chaplain to British Commonwealth troops during World War 1, assigned to Zeitoun in Egypt, where he ministered to Australian and New Zealand troops who were later part of the disastrous Battle of Gallipoli.

Chambers accomplished much for God in just a few years of life. On November 15, 1917, while in Egypt, he suffered the extreme pain of appendicitis for three days before seeking medical attention, refusing to take a hospital bed needed by wounded soldiers. He died at the young age of forty-three of complications from his ruptured appendix.

While more than thirty books now bear his name, he only penned one book, *Baffled to Fight Better*. During his time teaching at the Bible College and at various sites in Egypt, Bidly, a stenographer, took dictation, keeping verbatim records of his lessons.

Bidly spent her remaining thirty years of life compiling her records into his published works. It was ten years after Chambers's death that Bidly compiled and published her husband's transcripts into his most famous book, *My Utmost for His Highest*. The daily devotion book, selling more than thirteen million copies, continues to be read today, challenging and encouraging people all over the world.

"Shut out every other consideration and keep yourself before God for this one thing only—My Utmost for His Highest. I am determined to be

absolutely and entirely for Him and for Him alone.” (Oswald Chambers)
(Some information/quotes from <https://utmost.org/oswald-chambers-bio/>,
and <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/chambers>)

Read Like a Writer

Before you write for a daily devotion magazine, be sure to read the magazine from cover to cover, as well as the magazine’s back issues. This will help you to understand what types of devotions editors need, topics they use, and the magazine’s format, voice, and tone.

If you decide to write a book of daily devotions, here are some successful daily devotion books you might want to read. These books will give you many ideas about how to plan, outline, format, and write your own daily devotion book.

- *My Utmost for His Highest* (by Oswald Chambers)
- *Morning and Evening: Daily Readers* (by C. H. Spurgeon)
- *Unto the Hills: A Daily Devotional* (by Billy Graham)
- *Pathways to His Presence: A Daily Devotional* (by Charles Stanley)
- *Hearing from God Each Morning: 365 Daily Devotions* (by Joyce Meyer)
- *Experiencing God Day-By-Day: Devotional* (by Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby)
- *Devotions for a Sacred Marriage: A Year of Weekly Devotions for Couples* (by Gary Thomas)

- *The One Year Devotions for Preschoolers: Little Blessings* (by Crystal Bowman, author, and Elena Kucharik, illustrator)

Think Like a Writer

As you go about your everyday life, watch for concrete, tangible images you can use to make a spiritual point within the body of a daily devotion.

Writers today often communicate to readers using abstract concepts such as love, joy, forgiveness, etc. A tangible image, like the concrete birds and lilies images Jesus used when explaining the abstract concept *worry*, helps the reader or listener to better understand the abstract concept. (See Matthew 6:25-34.)

Make a note when you happen upon an object that will give your devotion a tangible, concrete lesson.

Build Your Platform

Working well with a number of daily devotion editors can help you build your writing platform, reputation, and your writing resume. A vast writing resume shows other editors that you can write well, follow writing guidelines, submit the material before the deadline, and work well with an editor.

Writing devotions for daily devotion magazines can also help you promote your published books. It depends, of course, on if the editor will allow you to put your book title, or other book information, under your name in the byline. When that happens, oftentimes millions of readers will be made aware of your book and may purchase it in an online or brick-and-mortar bookstore.

Let's Get Published!

One of the best ways to get published by writing daily devotions is to write and publish a book of daily devotions. Give it a certain time period (an

entire year, a month, a holiday or special season), a creative and unique theme, and make each devotion fit into the same format, style, voice, and tone. Be sure to target your readership carefully. You can write a daily devotion book for any age group, people in all stages and seasons of life, and for people with specific interests or vocations or hobbies.

You can choose to publish your book of daily devotions with a traditional publisher, a hybrid publisher, or self-publish it. The traditional publisher will pay you a royalty based on the number of books they sell. If they accept and contract your book, they may pay you a royalty advance.

A hybrid publisher will help you in certain ways, like with editing, proofreading, etc., but it will also require you to pay upfront money for many of their services.

Self-publishing can be done for free with Amazon's KDP publishing platform. With KDP, you can make from 60% to 70% royalties on the e-books and print books you sell. Your royalty income will be deposited into your bank account each month.

When you self-publish your book of devotions, you'll be responsible for editing, proofreading, formatting, designing the interior and cover, and for promoting your book to make it visible and accessible to readers/buyers.

Let's Make Some Money!

Daily devotion magazines usually pay between \$20 and \$50 for each devotion they buy and publish. When editors contract you to write six or more devotions at one time, the money can add up.

Editors know the writers they can depend on to meet deadlines and send in good material. A writer who does a good job writing the devotion and honors the writing guidelines has a good chance of writing for that particular editor again and again.

July's Writing Tip

Many daily devotion magazines serve an international community of readers. What should we know, as writers, about writing for different races, ethnic groups, and cultures?

Here are some suggestions:

- We must avoid complex vocabulary, idioms, or slang that might not be easily understood by other cultures.
- We never want to use language that excludes certain groups of people or assumes a certain demographic, making some readers feel marginalized or unconsidered.
- We need to always be aware of global issues and avoid making insensitive remarks or assumptions. Certain topics can be particularly sensitive in some cultures, and we must address them with the utmost care and respect to avoid embarrassing or angering readers.

How to Market and Sell Your Daily Devotions

Daily devotion magazine editors work in many different ways. Some editors don't accept unsolicited manuscripts, but rather have inhouse writers who do the work.

Other magazines, such as *The Upper Room* and *The Secret Place*, accept unsolicited manuscripts and explain how to submit them in their writing guidelines.

Some allow you to send one devotion, and others, like *The Secret Place*, allow you to send up to six finished devotions at one time.

Some editors, like the editors at the Southern Baptist denomination's Lifeway, who publish daily devotion magazines such as *Open Windows* (for

adults), *Journey* (for women), and *Stand Firm* (for men), work on a contracted assignment basis with writers.

If you wish to write for Lifeway's daily devotion magazines (listed above), you'll need to contact the individual magazine's editor, ask if you can write on assignment, and receive and sign a contract. The editor may give you an assignment of three or six or more devotions to write and will also assign you a certain time of year to cover.

Be sensitive to time zones and seasons when you write because readers live in different time zones and hemispheres. References to specific times of day or seasons might not resonate with everyone.

For instance, if you are a writer in the United States and your devotion will be published in winter, remember that while you may be trudging through snow somewhere in South Dakota, your Australian readers will be playing on a sunny beach.

Each magazine is different even though they are all daily devotion magazines. That's why it is essential to read the writing guidelines for each magazine, as well as to read the magazine itself, before you attempt to write for it.

The Writer's Toolkit

What tools do you most need when writing daily devotions?

- **A computer** to write your devotion, and the Internet in order to submit it to the editor by email. Know that some editors will allow the writer to hand write the devotion and submit it by regular mail, but most require a typed version and email submission.
- **A copy of *The Writer's Market*** is helpful. This literary guide will list the daily devotion markets, each one's writing and submission guidelines, as well as other needed information. Available through Amazon.com, *The Writer's Market* is updated and revised with new information each year.

- **A Bible.** Many different Bible translations exist, and each daily devotion magazine makes specific requirements about which translation they want their writers to use. Please see the list and descriptions below of some of the most recommended Bible translations.
- **A quiet, private place** to spend time in prayer and deep contemplation. Writing daily devotions take Bible study and solitude time to ponder the Scripture and its meaning in order to teach its message to readers around the world.

Industry Lingo: Bible Translations

All daily devotions should be based on Scripture, keeping true to the teachings of the Bible. As devotion writers, we serve as God's tool to bring His Word to the world and explain it in clear and simple ways that people can understand.

Daily devotion editors usually require different Bible translations that will communicate well to their targeted readers. When the writing guidelines ask for a particular "Bible translation," they want Scriptures used from a specific translation of the Bible.

These translations might include:

- **King James Version (KJV):** The English translation of the Bible commissioned by King James 1 of England in 1604 and completed in 1611.
- **New King James Version (NKJV):** A modern translation of the Bible published by Thomas Nelson in 1982. It retains much of the traditional interpretation and style of the KJV, but with updated vocabulary and grammar.

- **New International Version (NIV):** Published in 1978, this is a popular modern English translation that attempts to strike a balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation. It uses plain, everyday language that is easy to understand.
- **English Standard Version (ESV):** This is a relatively recent translation (2001) and is a revision of the Revised Standard Version (RSV). It's known for its "essentially literal" translation philosophy, maintaining a word-for-word approach while still being readable.
- **New American Standard Bible (NASB):** Completed in 1971, the NASB is widely considered the most literal translation available in English. Its goal is to render as closely as possible to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.
- **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV):** An update to the Revised Standard Version, the NRSV (1989) is known for its accuracy and readability. It also uses gender-inclusive language.
- **The Message (MSG):** This is a paraphrased version of the Bible translated by Eugene Peterson and published in segments from 1993 to 2002. It's intended to capture the tone and rhythm of the original languages in contemporary English.
- **New Living Translation (NLT):** First published in 1996, the NLT is a dynamic equivalence translation, which means it prioritizes clear, natural English and conveys the thoughts of the original authors over a word-for-word accuracy.
- **Contemporary English Version (CEV):** The CEV is a modern English Bible translation that was first published in 1995. It's designed to be easy-to-read and is often used for children or ESL readers.

- **Good News Translation (GNT):** Originally known as Good News for Modern Man and later as Today's English Version, the GNT is a translation that aims for ease of reading and understanding, making it popular for outreach purposes.

Tip: A wonderful website for finding and quoting from these different translations is BibleGateway.com.

How to Work Well with Industry Professionals: Eight Essential Ways to Please a Daily Devotion's Editor

Working with magazine editors who cater to different readerships involves knowing the elements most essential to that magazine's particular genre. Writers must strive to keep certain elements in mind when working with different types of editors. Here are the eight elements that are most important to the editor of a daily devotion magazine.

- **Timing and Seasonality:** Daily devotions are often tied to specific dates, seasons, or events in the liturgical calendar. Be aware of significant holidays or seasons that are coming up and be prepared to write content that corresponds with them.
- **Audience and Tone:** Different devotion magazines target different audiences. Understanding the audience will help you to tailor the tone, language, and content appropriately.
- **Format:** Most daily devotion magazines follow a specific format that includes a Scripture passage, a reflection on that passage, and a prayer or application for the reader. Be sure to understand and follow this format. Study the writing guidelines for more information on format.
- **Word Count:** Because devotions are designed to be read in one sitting, typically at the start or end of the day, they are usually quite

short. Make sure you're aware of the word count guidelines and stick to them.

- **Bible Translation:** The magazine will likely have a preferred Bible translation that they use for all their Scripture passages. Make sure you know which one to use when writing your devotions.
- **Consistency:** Consistency is key in a devotion magazine. Your style, tone, and approach should be in harmony with previous and future entries. Study back issues of the magazine.
- **Deadline:** Since a daily devotion magazine has a tight production schedule, deadlines are extremely important. Make sure you're clear on when the submissions are due.
- **Theological Alignment:** Ensure your content aligns with the theological beliefs and teachings of the magazine. Devotions often serve specific denominations or theological perspectives, so it's important that your writing reflects those views.

Note: A daily devotion is not just about imparting knowledge; it's also about inspiring and guiding readers in their faith journey. Each devotion should offer a balance of instruction, inspiration, and personal application.

The Marketplace for Daily Devotion Magazines

Numerous magazines are devoted to monthly or quarterly daily devotions. Check out *The Writer's Market* for listings of those magazines. Here are a few daily devotion magazines to consider:

- **The Upper Room:** This global ministry is dedicated to supporting spiritual formation, publishing daily devotion guides. They welcome submissions from freelance writers, who may send up to six devotions at a time.

- ***The Secret Place***: A quarterly devotional magazine with a worldwide readership of more than 250,000, *The Secret Place* is published by Judson Press, American Baptist Home Mission Societies. Written solely by freelance writers, devotions are meant to provide a way to draw Christians closer to Christ and to one another. They pay \$20 for each devotion, work 9 to 12 months ahead of schedule, and advise writers to send fewer than six devotions at one time.
- Some of Lifeway's (Southern Baptist denomination) daily devotions magazines include:
 - *Open Windows* (for adults) A quarterly devotional magazine that leads readers to delve deeper into their bibles and spend more time with the Word. Each issue offers individual daily readings and selected Scripture passages universal enough for use with any curriculum.
 - *Journey* (for women): *Journey* equips women to develop a daily walk with God and serve Him in their churches and communities. Each quarterly issue includes daily devotions with Scripture and prayer, regular columns, and access to digital devotional content through the Lifeway Women mobile app.
 - *Stand Firm* (for men): A quarterly devotional magazine for men filled with practical ways to apply biblical truths and designed to fit easily into a man's busy schedule. Each quarterly issue includes: daily devotions with Scripture, prayer, and discussion questions, and articles that address the spiritual needs of men.

Q&A

Question: Why is the word count for daily devotions so limited?

Answer: Today's daily devotion readers are busy people who want to be guided in a brief Bible study in order to connect with God and grow spiritually each day. Most daily devotions are only 250-300 words long, just

enough words to fill one side on a magazine's published page. The total word count includes everything written within the devotion, including the title. The magazine's guidelines will explain and number the word count allowed.

Question: I have written a book of daily devotions for a general audience. I want to publish it with a traditional publisher, but I can't find a publisher who is interested in it. What should I do?

Answer: The book marketplace is filled with daily devotion books that are written for an unspecified general audience and have no particular theme. Here are some suggestions that might interest a traditional publisher:

- Target a particular audience and then write directly to that readership. For instance, target specific groups like mothers, fathers, grandparents, teenagers, seniors, singles, students, or specific professions such as teacher, nurses, artists, and others. This will allow you to provide tailored content to your chosen readers that resonates with their unique experiences.
- Write a daily devotion book with a special theme. For instance, find an interest or hobby you personally enjoy and choose your readers from those who might also enjoy it. Themes might be: Daily Devotions for Gardeners; Daily Devotions for Musicians; Daily Devotions for Photographers, and hundreds more. Your devotions can be a unique blend of spiritual teaching and reflection while, at the same time, engaging readers in an interest or hobby they enjoy.
- Center your devotion book around specific seasons and holidays such as Advent, Lent, summer, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, the New Year, and others.

What Daily Devotion Editors Wish Writers Knew

Daily devotion magazine editors like creativity within the devotions they accept or assign, but only within the scope and guidelines of their devotion's specific format. Readers depend on and expect each devotion to be presented in a familiar style. Editors appreciate the writer's attention to the format as well as to the other details she lists in the magazine's writing guidelines.

Be sure to read and study the guidelines carefully, read the devotions published in current and back issues of the magazine, and become acquainted with the style, voice, and tone contained in each devotion. In doing so, you'll make the editor's job much easier.

Stay Savvy

As an author who decides to publish a daily devotion book, here are some scams to be aware of:

- **Promotion Scams:** Some companies may promise to promote your book at book fairs, on TV, etc. for a hefty fee but fail to deliver on their promises. It's important to do your research and check their reputation before giving them any money. Thanks to social media, most self-published authors can promote successfully their own books.
- **Copyright Scams:** Companies might offer to copyright your work for a fee. However, your work is automatically copyrighted to you upon creation. In the United States, for example, you can register your copyright yourself through the U.S. Copyright Office for a small fee.
- **Excessive Agent Fees:** Legitimate literary agents make money by selling your work, not by charging upfront fees. They should not charge you for postage, office expenses, or anything else. Literary agents get paid (usually 15%) by the publisher only when you, the author, make money.

July's Template: The Daily Devotion

Here is the daily devotion template used by *The Upper Room*. I especially appreciate this publication because they work directly with writers from around the world. In fact, they buy and publish 365 devotions each year. They also accept unsolicited manuscripts, which means you can write and submit a devotion directly through their submission website.

Here is their specific template. Please study their writing guidelines, however, before you attempt to write for them.

- **Title:** (Keep the title brief.)
- **Suggested Scripture Reading:** (Suggest a Scripture passage they can look up and read by themselves.)
- **A Quoted Scripture Verse:** (Write out a verse of Scripture that the message will be based upon.)
- **Story/Anecdote:** (Choose a story from your own life.)
- **A Prayer:** (Write out a brief prayer for the reader to pray.)
- **"Thought for the Day"** (Provide a pithy, summarizing statement.)
- **A Prayer Focus** (Give a suggestion to encourage the reader to further prayer.)

Advice from Our Writers: Allison Lynn and Elizabeth Erlandson

Allison Lynn and Elizabeth Erlandson, two of our CWFL members, each wrote, sold, and had published this month devotions for *The Upper Room*. I've asked each one to give some tips on devotion-writing.

Allison Lynn:

A great devotion will focus on a single point. Sometimes, we're so inspired by a Bible verse that we want to say too much. But use your inner editor!

Craft and shape your devotion so that it only focuses on one single piece of insight. If you have more than one insight that moves you, great—use that to write a second devotion on the same verse!

(Allison Lynn and her husband, Gerald Flemming, form the award-winning music duo Infinitely More. Allison's devotions have appeared in *The Upper Room*, *The Niagara Anglican* newspaper, and several Warner Press bulletin lines. This summer, she'll have her fifth story published with *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. www.InfinitelyMore.ca)

Elizabeth Erlandson:

My advice is to think of the small, everyday events in your life that are common to most people. The goal is to connect with just one person at a time. Write like you're talking to a friend at church, a neighbor down the street, or a friendly person at the gym. Tell them your story. Tell her about a job that was so difficult, you wondered how you would accomplish it. Or tell him about an event that seemed insignificant at the time but turned out to have a profound impact on your life.

Here are some examples of my devotionals that were recently published in *The Upper Room*. I describe an experience and connect it to a message. After I write the story and the message, I choose a Scripture that works with the story and incorporate it into the copy.

- We needed someone to shovel our snow and our neighbor boys showed up without being asked. *God knows what you need before you ask and He will provide it.*
- I was so frustrated working on a difficult puzzle that I asked an online puzzle group for advice. *Do one piece at a time. You can only live one day at a time.*
- A neighbor invited me to her Christmas Eve church service and the message made a lasting impact on my life. *I asked God to give me the gift of love and laughter that night. He eventually did, and He gave me Himself as well.*
- My husband lay close to death from a ruptured aneurysm and a kind store clerk listened with her heart. *People need someone to listen. Be a good listener.*

No one escapes life on earth without suffering. Knowing that everyone experiences loss, fear, and loneliness helps me to connect with people. My unspoken message is, "I'm just like you, and God showed up for me. He'll show up for you, too." None of my stories are extraordinary. They are the everyday stuff of life. What makes them work as devotionals is connecting the experience to a truth from Scripture and praying that God will use His faithfulness in my life to encourage others.

(Elizabeth Erlandson is a writer and speaker from Lincoln, Nebraska. She served as a staff writer for Back to the Bible, an international radio ministry, for seven years. She has written hundreds of articles, brochures, direct mail and marketing pieces for dozens of organizations.)

Looking Ahead: Writing Articles for Future Events

Writers must always be looking ahead, searching for those significant anniversaries, scheduled events, observances, happenings, and holidays that will grab the world's undivided attention. Here are some great writing opportunities just around the corner:

For online magazines:

July 2023:

- July 18, 2023 - Nelson Mandela International Day
- July 24, 2023: National Parents' Day (United States)
- July 30, 2023: World Day Against Trafficking in Persons

August, 2023

- August 9, 2023: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples
- August 19, 2023: World Humanitarian Day
- August 23, 2023: International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

For print magazines (query editor at least 12 months ahead of publication time):

July 2024:

- July 4, 2024: Independence Day (United States)
- July 20, 2024: 55th Anniversary of the Moon Landing
- July 26, 2024: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Day
- July 30, 2024: International Friendship Day

August 2024:

- August 12, 2024: International Youth Day
- August 26, 2024: Women's Equality Day (United States)
- August 29, 2024: International Day Against Nuclear Tests
- August 30, 2024: International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

What's Ahead

New Course!

If you're already a member of the Christian Writers for Life Course Membership, be on the lookout for this month's brand new course, "**How to Write and Sell Daily Devotions.**" If you're inspired to incorporate devotional writing into your publishing repertoire, this course teaches you everything you need to know!

And remember ... this new course is included with your course membership!

If your membership doesn't yet include access to the CWFL courses, you can upgrade your subscription to a plan that includes all of our courses.

Through the end of the month, our Lifetime membership option will be available. Use the coupon code CWFL for 10% off your Lifetime membership.

Email us at christianwritersforlife@gmail.com if you need help upgrading!

Weekly Group Coaching Calls

Great news, CWFL Course Members and Monthly Subscribers! Your membership includes our **weekly Group Coaching Calls!**

We offer two options each week, both hosted by Rebecca George:

Mondays at 6:00 PM Central and Wednesdays at 12:00 PM Central.

You can attend one or both of the meetings each week!

These Coaching Calls are designed to help you personalize what you've learned in our Monthly Digest and our fantastic writing courses, and for you to receive guidance on your own writing projects.

If you have a question best suited for Denise George to answer, bring it to our Coaching Call and Rebecca will report back with her answer next time!

Also, if you're unavailable to attend the Coaching Call live, you can watch the recorded replay. Feel free to submit questions ahead of time via email (christianwritersforlife@gmail.com).

When you're ready to join each Coaching Call, click the link below:

Mondays at 6:00 PM Central

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81316875348...>

Passcode: 956026

Wednesday at 12:00 PM Central

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88602685801...>

Passcode: 201746

We look forward to seeing you there!

Previous Issues of the CWFL Monthly Digest

If you missed our May 2023 or June 2023 Monthly Digests, you can find them at <https://christianwritersforlife.com/monthly-resources/>

Our Prayer for You

“Father, thank you for the tremendous opportunity to reach millions of people around the world with your Word. Please direct us as we write daily devotions and approach magazine editors. Guide us as we outline and plan to write daily devotion books that will bring spiritual growth and transformation into the lives of our readers. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”