



## **Christian Writers for Life Monthly Digest**

### **June 2023: Publishing Your Book**

“He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

– Ecclesiastes 3:11

I love this Scripture verse because it reminds me that God has a plan and a purpose for everything, a plan and a purpose that are beyond our full understanding. As we enter the summer months of June and reflect on the beauty of His creation, this verse can inspire us to trust in God’s wisdom and timing, and to find joy and ideas in the beauty that surrounds us.

This month, our focus is on book publishing. Never before has it been a better time to write, publish, and promote a book. Why? There are so many great ways now to publish books!

Traditional publishers have long been the book publishing gatekeepers, giving the thumbs up or thumbs down to authors with book ideas. But with all the wonderful changes in the self-publishing industry, authors now have choices in how they want to publish. We are also seeing a rise in hybrid publishers--book publishers that combine parts of traditional publishing and self-publishing to help the author publish a book.

We’ll talk about these changes, how they work, and what we as authors need to know as we celebrate our gift of writing, trust God’s wisdom for

needed book ideas, and thank God for the publishing opportunities He gives us this summer.

God bless you as you write for Him!

*Denise George*

## June's Writer Profile: Karen Kingsbury

Karen Kingsbury started her writing career as a freelance writer and self-published her first book, *Missy's Murder*. The book received a positive response from readers, helped her gain recognition as a novelist, and paved the way for her career as a renowned Christian author.

Her writing breakthrough happened when she wrote her bestselling novel *Redemption* and published it with the traditional Christian book publisher Tyndale House Publishers.

Kingsbury relied on local marketing strategies such as book signings, speaking engagements, and promoting her work through her church community. As her book gained popularity, she used a website and social media to connect with readers and share news about her upcoming projects.

Many believe that Kingsbury's success is based on her ability to connect with readers through her stories, which often deal with themes of faith, family, and love. She also has a talent for creating relatable characters and emotional, inspiring storylines that resonate with readers around the world. She has worked hard to build a strong and loyal fanbase over the years.

Karen Kingsbury can teach us wonderful ways to write, promote, and become successful novelists.

## Read Like a Writer

A potential author's primary tool is the annually-published *The Writer's Market*. It is updated and revised each year in order to stay up-to-date with the rapidly changing publishing marketplace. The guide offers thousands of publishing opportunities for writers, including listings for book publishers, magazine markets, contests and awards, and literary agents. These listings include contact information, submission guidelines, what the publishers are looking to buy, and so much more. It's exciting to see all the many opportunities to write and get published available to authors today! *The Writer's Market* gives information on:

- **Traditional Publishing:** *The Writer's Market* contains a wealth of information about traditional publishers, giving authors a sense of the size and specializations of different book publishers, the types of books they're interested in, and submission guidelines to follow.
- **Self-Publishing:** While *The Writer's Market* primarily focuses on traditional publishing opportunities, it also provides resources for those interested in self-publishing. This includes listings for self-publishing companies and information on various aspects of the self-publishing process.
- **Hybrid Publishing:** *The Writer's Market* can help writers understand hybrid book publishing by providing lists of hybrid publishers, along with information on how these publishers operate and the types of authors they work with.

Just remember that *The Writer's Market* is a tool that can provide lots of useful publishing information, but it's up to you, the author, to do the necessary research and to make the best decision for your individual publishing needs and goals. The publishing industry is rapidly changing. Always study the writing guidelines for all the listed publishers before you submit an enquiry or book proposal.

## Think Like a Writer

Thinking like an author is important because it allows you to develop your craft and create meaningful work. Here are some suggestions to help you think like a book author:

- **Observe the world** around you, finding inspiration as you observe and notice details, big and small, in your surroundings. Book ideas are everywhere.
- **Ask questions**, of yourself and others, about the world, other people, other people's work and background, etc. Questions will help you develop your ideas and refine your writing. One of my favorite

questions to ask is, “What if ...?” That simple question can bring lots of good writing ideas to mind. For instance

- “What if ... she had married him instead of turning down his marriage proposal?”
- “What if ... he had decided to become an engineer instead of a dentist?”
- “What if ... the child’s parents had helped him secure a good education?”

That simple question can certainly make our mind light up with creativity and new book ideas!

- **Think creatively** and outside the box. Challenge yourself to come up with unique and original ideas. Brainstorm your ideas with other writers and get their input. Two brains are certainly more creative than just one!
- **Pray**, committing your thoughts and words to God, asking for His guidance when you analyze book ideas and choose your targeted readers. Every good book idea I’ve ever had has come through serious prayer. Remember, as Christian writers, we never write alone. We are given direction and wisdom by the One who has called us to write for Him. And never forget, dear friend, that your writing is a powerful ministry guided by God, the *real* Keeper of the publishing gates. Know that you and I, as Christians who write, “can do all this through Him who gives [us] strength” (Philippians 4:13 NIV).

## Build Your Platform

Here are five good ways to start building your author’s platform before your book is published:

- **Create a website.** A website allows you to create a centralized hub for your work, making it easy for potential readers to discover you and

explore your writing. This also helps you build your personal brand and increase visibility in a competitive market.

- **Start a blog.** Writing a blog about the topics related to your book is an effective way for you to build an audience and showcase your writing skills.
- **Build an email list.** Email marketing is a powerful tool for you to connect with readers and promote your books.
- **Use social media.** Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and many others can be powerful ways to connect with readers and build an audience. Share content related to your book's subject matter with others who are interested in the same topics. Learn from their input and ideas.
- **Guest posts on other blogs.** Writing guest posts for other blogs can help you reach a wider audience and build your credibility. Look for blogs related to your book's subject matter and offer to write a guest post.

## Let's Get Published!

Here are some “do this first” steps and tips for book-writers:

- 1) **Find a great idea.** Know that editors buy book ideas that are fresh and unique and/or give a new perspective on an old topic.
- 2) **Choose your reader.** Make sure you have a targeted reader in mind before you write your book and/or book proposal. Audience targeting is the practice of tailoring your print and/or online efforts to reach a specific groups of users based on their demographics, interests, and behaviors.
- 3) **Check books already published** to see if someone has already written your book. Go to Amazon.com, type in your title and topic, and see what books are already published and sitting on the bookstore and online shelves. If you find a nonfiction book similar to yours, it is

competition. Give your idea/topic a new slant, or find a new idea. If you find a fictional book like yours, don't worry about the competition. Those same readers may become your new book's readers!

4) **Decide how you want to publish your book.** If you want to go with a traditional publisher, find one that accepts un-agented writers, and research their writer guidelines thoroughly. Or, find a literary agent to represent you. If you want to self-publish, research self- and/or hybrid-publishers. Learn what they want, what they charge, and then check them out and make sure you understand exactly what they offer.

5) **If you want to traditionally publish:**

- If you are writing a novel, go ahead and write the entire book. If the publisher likes your book proposal and the plot/storyline, he may want you to send him the finished book.
- But, if you are writing a nonfiction book, write a professional book proposal and the first few book chapters. You can write the rest of the book after you sign the traditional publisher's contract.

## Let's Make Some Money!

By teaching classes on the topic of your new book, you can make money as you research and write.

Let me give you an example.

Several years ago, I contracted with Zondervan to write four inspirational books on forgiveness, prayer, fear, and past healing using the theme of gardening throughout all four books to illustrate my spiritual points. I had always loved to garden, but as I did in-depth research into seeds, destroying weeds, planting flowers, etc. for my books, I learned much more about gardening than I had ever known.

When friends asked me about my latest writing project, I told them I was researching gardening, and that I had made some astounding discoveries. Soon, to my surprise, I had numerous invitations inviting me to speak at community garden clubs, churches, schools, and to other groups in order to share my newfound gardening knowledge. It was fun, and I learned so much from the people in the audience. And each time, I was paid after I spoke. It proved a good way to earn some income, and, at the same time, to promote my upcoming books.

Other book topics could also lend themselves to speaking and teaching invitations while researching and writing a book, including: travel and interesting places you've visited; fascinating facts on history you've discovered; a craft you've learn to do; new self-help strategies or techniques you're experimenting with; scientific discoveries you've made, etc.

And don't forget that writing magazine articles on these new discoveries also bring in payment and help promote your upcoming book releases.

Don't miss our new course for June 2023, "How to Make Money While Marketing Your Book!"

## June's Writing Tip: Writing a Book Proposal

Here are six essentials you will want to include in a book proposal in order to pitch your book idea to a traditional publisher. Know that the book proposal for nonfiction books is different from the book proposal for fictional books/novels. But basically, you should include:

- **Overview:** A brief summary of the book's content, target audience, and genre.
- **Market Analysis:** A description of the book's target audience and how the book fits into the current market.
- **Author Bio:** Your bio that includes your relevant writing experience, education, expertise, and previous publications, awards, etc.



- **Chapter Outline:** A detailed outline of the book that includes the main themes, plot points, characters, and gives the publisher an idea of how the book is structured.
- **Sample Chapters:** In the nonfiction book proposal, include several chapters to showcase your writing style and the book's tone and voice. In a novel, include the plot, story line, and characters. Unlike the nonfiction book, be ready to send the completed novel if the publisher requires it.
- **Marketing Plan:** The publisher's sales team will want to know how you will help promote your book. List target media outlets, social media strategies, potential speaking and book-signing events, etc.

If you're already a member of our Christian Writers for Life masterclass student group, the course "**Publishing Your Book with a Traditional Publisher**" includes my own personal book proposal template, along with a detailed, step-by-step process for filling out your own book proposal. This is the same book proposal template that I've used to sell books to some of the biggest publishers in the world.

## How to Market Your Book

Marketing your book begins early in the book-writing stage. Here are three great ways to begin book promotion early in the process:

- **Author Platform:** Building an author platform involves creating a brand around yourself and your work to connect with potential readers. It can include a website, social media profiles, email newsletters, engagement with readers in an online presence, blogging, etc.
- **Research Your Target Audience:** Research your ideal readers' demographics as you create a book to meet their needs and expectations. Learn all you can about your potential readers. And write directly to them.

- **Build Networking Relationships:** Get to know other authors and professionals in the publishing industry as a way to learn the latest marketing trends, get feedback on your writing, and gain exposure to a wider audience. Attend writing conferences, join writing groups, and connect with others who love to write.

## The Writer's Toolkit

If you are planning to self-publish your book, consider buying the popular book design software called Vellum. It is specifically designed for Mac users and is known for its ease of use and its ability to produce high-quality results.

With Vellum, you can import your manuscript in Microsoft Word or other file formats and then choose from a variety of book templates, which provide pre-designed layouts for different book types such as novels, non-fiction books, poetry, and more. You can also customize these templates to suit your own specific needs.

Vellum's main feature is its "Instant Preview" function which allows you to see how your book will look on different devices such as Kindle, Nook, or iBooks. This will allow you to make any necessary changes to your book's layout, font, spacing, or other elements to ensure that your book looks great across all platforms.

Once your book is formatted in Vellum, you can export your book files in various formats and then upload them to online retailers or print-on-demand services to publish and distribute your book.

Vellum can be a useful tool for you to create professional-looking books without having to hire a designer or spend a lot of time learning complex design software. Check it out to see if Vellum is something that would be helpful to you.

## Industry Lingo

Here are some terms and definitions you'll need to know as a book author:

- **Book proposal:** A document that outlines the key elements of a book project to pitch to potential publishers or literary agents. It typically includes a summary of the book, an overview of the target audience, an analysis of competing book titles, and information about your credentials and platform.
- **Literary contract:** A legal agreement between you and a publisher that outlines the terms of the publishing agreement, including the scope of rights being granted, the payment structure, the timeline for delivery and publication, and all other important conditions.
- **Advance royalty:** An upfront payment made by a publisher to you while you are writing the book and before the book is published. It is based on many things, including your track record as an author, the anticipated books sales, and the publisher's budget. The advance is typically deducted from the on-going royalties that you'll earn from the book's sales once it is published.

## How to Work Well with a Literary Agent

- **Communication:** As in any successful partnership, communication about expectation, goals, and concerns is key when you work with literary agents.
- **Collaboration:** You, as an author, and your book agent should work together as a team, with each one of you bringing your own unique expertise to the table. Agents can offer valuable insight and advice on everything from manuscript revisions to marketing strategies. As authors, we must be open to feedback and be willing to make changes based on the agent's suggestions.
- **Professionalism:** Professionalism means being respectful and responsive in a timely manner. A professional relationship helps to

build trust and confidence between you and your agent, and can lead to a successful and long-lasting partnership.

## The Marketplace

Very few traditional publishers will work with authors directly who have no literary agent. Some, however, will accept unsolicited book proposals in some departments. Here are some of them. Be sure to check them out thoroughly and follow their submission guidelines.

- **Zondervan** is currently accepting unsolicited (without agents) book proposals from authors for the following imprints only: Zondervan Reflective books and Zondervan Academic books. To learn more about these two imprints, please see <https://www.zondervan.com/about-us/manuscript-submissions/>
- **Moody Publisher** does, on occasion, accept unsolicited manuscripts from author. For more information, please see <https://www.moodypublishers.com/About/faq/submitting-proposals>
- **Crossway Publisher** will accept a book idea from an author without an agent. Read this website to find out what types of books they want and what/how to send it: <https://www.crossway.org/submissions/>
- **Kregel Publications** will not accept manuscripts from an author without an agent, but they will regularly review summaries from The Writers' Edge and Christian Manuscript Submissions. These manuscript-screen services provide an opportunity for you to share your book proposal with over 40 Christian publishers simultaneously for a moderate fee. To learn more about these services, please see [www.WritersEdgeService.com](http://www.WritersEdgeService.com) (or email them at [info@writersedgeservice.com](mailto:info@writersedgeservice.com)) and [www.christianmanuscriptsubmissions.com](http://www.christianmanuscriptsubmissions.com).

(Note: I have not personally used these services, but they are recommended and used by both Kregel Publications and Baker Books.)

- **Westminster John Knox Press** accepts manuscripts from authors without agents. Find out what they want at this website: <https://www.wjkbooks.com/Pages/Item/58410/Manuscript-Guidelines.aspx>
- **Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.** accepts un-agented proposals. Read their submission guidelines at <https://www.eerdmans.com/Pages/About/Submission-Guidelines.aspx>
- **Wipf and Stock Publisher** accepts submissions from authors. Please see submission guidelines at <https://wipfandstock.com/submitting-a-proposal/>
- **Abingdon Press** is currently accepting nonfiction submissions. For more information, read their guidelines at <https://www.abingdonpress.com/submissions/>

Note: These publishers are currently working with authors who have no agents, but their policies can change in a heartbeat. Be sure to check out each publisher's website to stay up-to-date on their policies.

## Q&A

**Question:** As an author who wants to publish a book with a traditional publisher, what are the top three reasons I should consider acquiring a literary agent?

**Answer:** There are many reasons an author who wants to publish books with traditional publishers should consider acquiring a literary agent. Here are the top three reasons:

- 1) **Access to Publishers:** A literary agent will have access to book publishers and can get your book proposal in front of editors. Many traditional publishers no longer work directly with authors, but require a literary agent to represent the author.

- 2) **Experience and Expertise:** A literary agent understands the publishing industry, market trends, and contractual agreements. An agent can negotiate the best terms for an author's book deal, including rights, royalties, and advances.
- 3) **Editorial Guidance and Career Development:** A good agent is invested in an author's long-term career. They can provide their clients with editorial feedback before the book proposal is submitted to a publisher. They can also guide the author in making wise publishing decisions and help him navigate the complexities of the publishing industry.

## What Book Editors Wish Writers Knew

If you want to impress a book editor, here are some important tips to keep in mind. Book editors wish writers knew:

- **The importance of editing:** Editors want manuscripts that are thoroughly edited and proofread. Editing involves double-checking your research, fine-tuning your word choice and sentence structure, organizing your thoughts so that they are clearly understood by your readers, and making sure your article is creative, interesting to read, and will benefit your readers.
- **The importance of structure:** Editors want a well-structured manuscript for novels, organized in a clear, logical way.
- **The importance of grammar and punctuation:** Writers who impress a book editor use proper and consistent grammar and punctuation.
- **The importance of conciseness:** Editors wish writers knew how to express their ideas in a clear, concise way without unnecessary repetition or wordiness.
- **The importance of reader engagement:** Editors want writers to engage readers with their writing through compelling plots, relatable characters, and vivid descriptions.

- **The importance of research:** For nonfiction writers, editors want writers to thoroughly research their facts, ensure accuracy, and cite their sources properly.
- **The importance of meeting deadlines:** Book editors often work on tight publishing schedules. They want writers to submit their work on the scheduled timeline.
- **The importance of constructive feedback:** Editors help writers improve their book manuscripts. Writers must be open to constructive feedback and willing to revise and improve their writing.

## Stay Savvy

When dealing with potential book publishers, please protect yourself and your work. Here are some ways to stay savvy when working in the book publishing industry:

- **Research publishers.** Before contacting or submitting your manuscript to a publisher, check to make sure the publisher is legitimate and reputable. Research the publisher's website, read reviews, and ask for recommendations from other writers or industry professionals.
- **Read contracts carefully.** Before signing a book contract, read it carefully and seek advice from a literary agent or attorney or publishing consultant. Be sure to understand all the contract terms and conditions, including payment, royalties, and rights to your work.
- **Protect intellectual property.** Writers should copyright their work before submitting it to publishers and/or agents. While I have personally not had my work stolen, I know other writers who have. Research ways online to help protect your intellectual property.
- **Beware of scams.** Be aware of common publishing scams, such as vanity publishing, where you are required to pay large sums of money to have your book published. Be aware of literary agents who want to

charge you upfront fees. Be aware of unsolicited offers or emails from publishers or agents you haven't personally contacted.

- **Trust your instincts.** If something seems too good to be true or doesn't feel right, trust your instincts and proceed with caution. Network with other writers, stay informed and up-to-date on industry news and trends, and find out everything you need to know before making book publishing decisions.

## June's Template: Writing the Book's Back Cover

As a Christian writer preparing to embark on the self-publishing book journey, you are not only an author but also an entrepreneur, responsible for every aspect of your book's creation, promotion, and distribution. Self-publishing puts you, the author at the helm of your ship, the captain who makes the decisions and calls the shots.

If you decide to self-publish your book, you'll be responsible for writing the information for the book's back cover. Here are some tips about what you'll need to include:

- **A catchy tagline** or hook to grab the reader's attention.
- **A brief summary** or synopsis of the book that gives the reader an idea of what the story and/or book is about.
- **Endorsements or quotes** from reputable sources, such as other authors or publications, that praise the book or your previous works.
- **Information about** the book's genre, intended audience, or any themes or topics it covers that may be of interest to your targeted readers.

In short, the back cover should be concise, engaging, and informative, providing readers with enough information to entice them to purchase the book.



## **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:**

#### **June 2023**

- June 27, 2023: Helen Keller Day
- June 27, 2023: National PTSD Awareness Day

#### **July 2023**

- July 4, 2023: Independence Day (United States)
- July 11, 2023: World Population Day
- 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):**

### **June 2024**

- June 1, 2024: Global Day of Parents
- June 6, 2024: 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of WWII D-Day
- June 12, 2024: World Day Against Child Labor
- June 14, 2024: Flag Day (United States)
- June 16, 2024: Father's Day
- June 19, 2024: Juneteenth
- June 20, 2024: World Refugee Day
- June 26, 2024: International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking
- June, 2024: FIFA World Cup (exact June date to be determined)

### **July 2024**

- July 4, 2024: Independence Day (United States)
- July 20, 2024: 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Moon Landing
- June 20, 2024: World Refugee Day
- 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

## **September 2024**

- September 2, 2024: Labor Day
- September 8, 2024: Grandparents' Day
- September 10, 2024: World Suicide Prevention Day
- September 11, 2024: Patriot Day
- September 16, 2024: Stepfamily Day
- September 18, 2024: AIDS and Aging Awareness Day
- September 21, 2024: International Day of Peace
- September 25, 2024: National Daughter's Day
- September 28, 2024: National Son's Day

## **What's Ahead**

### **Helpful Writing Courses**

If you're already a member of the Christian Writers for Life Student Group, you can learn everything you need to know to pitch your book to a traditional publisher.

Consider adding “How to Publish Your Book with a Traditional Publisher” to your list of courses to take.

This course, and so many more, are included with your Monthly or Lifetime membership!

### **New Course: July 2023**

Next month, Christian Writers for Life will release our brand new course, “**Writing Devotions.**” Learn everything you need to know to write and sell your devotional writing! If you’re already a member of the Christian Writers for Life Student Group, you’ll receive this course as part of your membership.

If you’re not yet a member, visit <https://christianwritersforlife.com/plans/signup/> and use the code DIGEST for 10% off your Lifetime membership.

## **Our Prayer for You**

Dear fellow scribes, may we leave you with a prayer thanking God for your partnership with us, asking Him to bless your writing ministry, and letting you know that we are always remembering you in our prayers? We appreciate you and your valuable writing ministry.

“Father, we pray that you will inspire us to write the books, both fiction and nonfiction, for those readers who could be encouraged, inspired, helped in practical ways, and be brought closer to You through our carefully-written words. Help us to seek Your wisdom as we pray for book ideas and topics that the world needs to hear. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”