



Christian Writers for Life Monthly Digest

May 2023

“May, more than any other month of the year, wants us to feel most alive.”
– Fennel Hudson

May is one of my favorite months of the year! I shake off the last remaining gray overcoat skies of winter, and I anticipate with awe emerging seedlings pushing their infant faces up through the soil to smile at the sun. Surely, I’m a gardener at heart.

May also gives you and me, as Christian writers, some exciting writing opportunities. I invite you to join me as together we share, reflect, dream, and just “sit a spell” to talk about the wonderful world of writing to publish.

I’ve chosen Colossians 4:23-24 for our May Scripture verse. The Apostle Paul writes, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord ... it is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

This verse reminds us that, as Christian writers, you and I never write alone. The Lord we are serving with our writing skills is our encourager, motivator, and lifetime guide. Like Paul, may we give Him our whole heart, seek to study and improve our writing skills, stay in deep and constant

communication with Him, and watch with a knowing smile as He directs the details of our writing lives. As you already know, writing to publish is a fulfilling, meaningful, selfless, and exciting way to live a life!

This month, we'll focus on the wonderful world of magazine article writing, how it can help you build your platform, market yourself and your books, make you visible to readers, establish you as an expert in your field, make significant money, and so much more!

God bless you as you write for Him!

Denise George

May's Writer Profile: Joni Eareckson Tada

Joni is a prolific writer who has made a significant impact in the literary world despite being paralyzed. Born in 1949, she suffered a tragic diving accident at the age of seventeen, which left her quadriplegic. Despite the immense challenges she faced due to her paralysis, Joni turned to her faith and found a renewed sense of purpose through her writing, art, and advocacy for the disabled community.

She is an amazing writer, producing numerous magazine articles, devotional books, children's stories, and authoring more than fifty books. Joni is also the founder of Joni and Friends, a Christian organization dedicated to extending the love and message of Jesus Christ to people affected by disability.

What does Joni teach us writers today?

She gives us valuable lessons about resilience, determination, and the power of faith. Her writing serves as a testament to the idea that physical limitations do not define one's ability to make a difference in the world. Joni's prolific writing career encourages us to persevere through our own challenges and to use our unique experiences as a source of inspiration and motivation for your work.

Joni has been a personal friend of our family for many years. She is one of my favorite role models. She writes, travels, paints, and speaks even though she endures constant chronic pain. A few years ago, she developed breast cancer and underwent treatment. But I've never seen Joni without a smile on her face, a glow and radiance from her deep love for God. I am amazed at how she and her faithful, loving husband, Ken, use their talents and abilities to make a positive impact on others, spreading the message of Jesus Christ, advocating for social change, and providing comfort and encouragement to her millions of worldwide readers.

I love this quote by Joni: “God has a purpose behind every problem. He uses circumstances to develop our character.”

This quote can remind us as writers to find meaning and purpose in our work, using our struggles and experiences to create Christ-inspired articles and stories that touch and encourage with hearts of our readers.

Read Like a Writer

Here are three helpful books to read this month as you write magazine articles:

[*The Elements of Style*](#) (by William Strunk, Jr. & E. B. White) is a concise guide to English writing that emphasizes clarity, brevity, and proper grammar to effectively communicate ideas.

[*The Emotion Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Expression*](#) (by Becca Puglisi & Angela Ackerman) is a comprehensive reference book that offers writers a wide range of descriptive tools to effectively convey characters' emotions, enhancing storytelling and reader engagement.

[*The Forest for the Trees: An Editor's Advice to Writers*](#) (by Betsy Lerner) is an insightful exploration of the publishing industry and writing process, offering guidance and advice to aspiring authors navigating the complex world of literary creation and publication.

Think Like a Writer

May can be nature's paradise with its inspiring spring temperatures and flower buds bursting into kaleidoscopic blooms.

- Take a stroll through a garden and jot down items of beauty around you, allowing each to springboard into an article idea.
- Ponder the idea, listing the ways it might inspire, teach, and encourage your reader. For instance:
 - How does seeing a rose's first bloom inspire within you a message of hope, joy, and a renewal of faith?
 - How can you write an article about that rose, inspiring within your reader a message of hope, joy, and renewal of faith?
 - Possible article title: "Resurrecting Hope: Finding Joy and Renewal in the Promise of Spring." What article topics and titles come to mind for you?
 - Write your article as a devotion for the *Upper Room* or as an inspirational article for *Mature Living*, a magazine read by senior-aged Christians.

Build Your Platform

Building your author platform helps you establish credibility, increases visibility, and enhances networking opportunities, ultimately leading to more writing assignments and career growth.

Here are three suggestions to get you started:

- **Create a personal website or blog.** Showcase your magazine article writing portfolio and establish a digital presence, making it easier for editors and readers to find you.

- **Engage on social media.** Connect with fellow writers, magazine editors, and readers, expanding your network and increasing your visibility within the writing community.
- **Post published articles/blogs on Facebook, and write and contribute articles to online publications.** Gain credibility and exposure by sharing your published magazine articles on reputable platforms like Facebook and other media, and by writing articles for online publications, demonstrating your expertise and writing style.

Let's Get Published!

The month of May brings us three specific observances to write about: Mother's Day (Sunday, May 14, 2023), Memorial Day (Monday, May 29, 2023), and Mental Health Awareness Month.

Write queries to editors of print magazines (which have an 8-12-month lead time) for publication in May 2024.

Sample Article Ideas for Mother's Day:

- "Mother's Day Reflections: Honoring the Spiritual Legacy of Mothers" (Share stories and insights about the unique spiritual influence that mothers have on their families and communities.)
- "The Proverbs 31 Woman: Celebrating the Virtuous Mother on Mother's Day" (Examine the qualities of the Proverbs 31 woman and how mothers today can aspire to embody these virtues in their daily lives.)

Sample Article Ideas for Memorial Day:

- “Honoring the sacrifices of Christian soldiers and their contributions to protecting freedom and values.”
- “The role of faith in providing solace and strength to military families during times of conflict and loss.”

Sample Article Ideas for Mental Health Awareness Month:

- “Faith and Mental Health: How Christianity Can Support Emotional Well-Being” (Discuss the role of faith in promoting mental health and explore ways that Christianity can provide solace and support to those experiencing mental health challenges.)
- “Self-Care and Spirituality: Balancing Mental Health and Christian Life” (Provide advice for integrating self-care practices into a Christian lifestyle, emphasizing the importance of nurturing both body and soul.)

Let’s Make Some Money!

Writing magazine articles is a great way to make money. One writer told me that it’s like having a money tree in your backyard. Need money? Write an article.

The amount of money a magazine pays for an article can vary widely depending on factors such as the magazine’s circulation, the writer’s experience, and the length and complexity of the article.

Here are some general payment estimates for different types of magazines:

1) Consumer magazines

These are magazines that target a general audience and cover a wide range of topics such as lifestyle, health, and entertainment. Payment can range from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars per article, depending on the magazine and the writer's experience.

2) Trade magazines

These are magazines that focus on specific industries or professions, such as business, finance, or technology. Payment for articles in trade magazines can range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

3) Literary magazines

These are magazines that publish poetry, short stories, and essays. Payment for literary magazine articles is usually low, ranging from a few dollars to a few hundred dollars per piece.

4) Regional magazines

These are magazines that focus on a specific geographic area, such as a state or city. Payment for articles in regional magazines can vary widely, but typically ranges from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars per piece.

These are general estimates. Some magazines may pay writers based on a per-word rate rather than a flat fee per article. It's important for us to do our research, read the writing guidelines for each magazine, and negotiate payment terms before agreeing to write for a magazine.

May's Writing Tip:

Crafting Your Magazine Article's Byline

At the end of your magazine article, you are given the opportunity to introduce yourself to your readers. As a book author, this is the perfect

place to promote your book. Clearly mention the title, showcase and establish yourself as an expert on your book's topic, explain how your book will help the reader, and share a bit of your personal background to help readers relate to you on a personal level.

Here are some additional proven ideas:

- **Aim for 50 to 150 words** and keep it concise, as most editors prefer short and punchy bylines.
- **Use third person voice** to maintain a professional tone.
- **Include a call-to-action**, encouraging readers to check out your book, seminar, etc. by providing a website link and/or social media handle.
- **Avoid salesy or pushy language.**

Be sure to follow the magazine's editorial guidelines and ask your editor's permission about what you can include in your byline.

How to Market Using Magazine Articles

In the first half-century of my writing career, I have discovered that one of the best ways to promote yourself, your writing style, your published books, the seminars you teach, your fields of topical interests, etc. is by writing magazine articles. There are thousands of magazines to write for! Most depend on freelance writers to supply the articles.

The secret is to write nonfiction articles for magazines that will reach the same people groups of readers you've targeted with your desired information. If you want to promote your book or seminar by placing an ad inside a magazine, you could spend thousands of dollars. But you'll have the same opportunity to promote them in the article's byline, giving your

name, vocational interests, topics you write about or teach, your published book titles, etc. Depending on the reader circulation of the magazine, you'll reach hundreds, thousands, or even millions of readers with your message. And the editor will usually pay you for writing the article.

Remember to:

- **Target appropriate magazines.** Research the magazine and read its guidelines to make sure the magazine's targeted reader matches the reader you wish to target.
- **Write relevant content.** Offer your reader valuable insights or information while relating to your desired goal, engaging readers and establishing your credibility as an expert in the topic.
- **Craft a compelling byline.** Your byline should clearly mention the relevant information and credentials you want to make visible to the readers. Keep it concise and impactful to grab the reader's attention.

The Writer's Toolkit

A writer needs to invest in a writer's toolkit to improve efficiency, enhance the writing process, and produce higher-quality work.

Here are four great tools to include in your toolkit:

- **Smartphone:** Enables on-the-go research, note-taking, photo-snapping, interviewing, GPS navigating, and communication with editors or sources, increasing flexibility and productivity for the writer
- **Grammar and spell checker:** Ensures polished and error-free writing, increasing professionalism and readability

- **Writing software or app:** Streamlines the writing process, offers organizational tools, and aids in formatting and structure
- **Style guides:** Provides a consistent framework for grammar, punctuation, and usage, improving clarity and cohesion across written work
- **[Writer's Market: The Most Trusted Guide to Getting Published](#)**
This reliable writer's publishing guide provides a plethora of information about how to navigate the industry, lists of magazines (and other publications) requesting articles and material, and specific guidelines for writing for individual publications.

Industry Lingo

- **A Query** is a concise and persuasive email or letter sent to an editor, proposing a specific article idea and showcasing the writer's expertise in order to secure a writing assignment from a publication.
- **On Speculation** refers to submitting a completed article to an editor without a prior agreement or assignment, in hopes that the publication will find it suitable and choose to publish it.
- **Reprint Rights** are the permissions granted by a writer or original publisher to allow a secondary publication to republish an already published article, typically for a reduced fee compared to an original piece.

How to Work Well with Industry Professionals

Working well with magazine editors fosters a positive professional relationship, increases the likelihood of repeat assignments, and enhances your reputation as a reliable and collaborative writer.

Here are three suggestions for working well with magazine editors:

- **Maintain open communication.** Respond promptly to editor inquiries, provide updates on article progress, and be receptive to feedback or revisions.
- **Adhere to deadlines.** Respect the editor's timeline by submitting your work punctually and making any requested revisions in a timely manner.
- **Familiarize yourself with the publication.** Understand the magazine's target audience, tone, and style to ensure your submitted work aligns with their needs and expectations.

The Marketplace

The Christian magazines listed below are freelance-friendly and are seeking material to publish.

Seeking True Stories:

- ***Guideposts***. Encourages the submission of true stories of hope and inspiration, focusing on faith, personal growth, and overcoming challenges (<https://www.guideposts.org/writers-guidelines>)
- ***Today's Christian Woman***. Accepts true stories that empower Christian women to live out their faith and engage with contemporary

issues, covering topics such as relationships, work, parenting, and spirituality (<https://www.todayschristianwoman.com>)

Seeking Fictional Stories:

- ***Clubhouse Magazine***. Targets children aged 8-12, accepting faith-filled fiction stories that promote Christian values and wholesome entertainment (<https://www.clubhousemagazine.com/submission-guidelines>)
- ***The Kids' Ark***. Fiction stories for children ages 6-12; each issue of the magazine has a Christian theme (thekidsarksubmissions@yahoo.com)

Seeking Poetry:

- ***Ruminate Magazine***. Encourages the submission of poetry that thoughtfully engages with the Christian faith and explores the complexities of the human experience (<https://www.ruminatemagazine.com/pages/submissions>)
- ***Windhover. A Journal of Christian Literature***: Seeks high-quality poetry submissions that thoughtfully engage with the Christian faith and provide a unique perspective on themes related to religion and spirituality (<https://windhoverjournal.submittable.com/submit>)

Seeking Nonfiction Articles:

- ***Focus on the Family***. Offers practical advice and encouragement for parents, with a strong emphasis on Christian values and family life (<https://www.focusonthefamily.com/magazines/writing-guidelines/>)
- ***Relevant Magazine***. Targets young, culturally engaged Christians and covers faith, culture, and intentional living (<https://relevantmagazine.com/write/>)

Q&A: Query vs. Completed Article

Question: Why do magazine editors require query emails/letters to propose an article idea? Wouldn't it be easier to send them the completed article?

Answer: While some editors do ask for the completed article, most editors prefer the brief query email or letter. Why?

- 1) A brief query, usually a few paragraphs in length, concisely outlines the article's main idea, potential slant or angle, and relevance to the publication. This allows editors to promptly evaluate if the writer's proposed content aligns with their editorial goals and audience interests without having to read the entire article.
- 2) Since editors receive so many submissions daily, reviewing a brief query takes considerably less time than reading a full-length article. This enables editors to review more submissions within a limited timeframe, increasing the chances of finding suitable content for their publications.
- 3) Brief queries help editors prioritize submissions based on their current needs and editorial calendar. They can quickly identify the topics that are most relevant and timely, making the selection process more efficient.

What Magazine Editors Wish Writers Knew

"Writing without revising is the literary equivalent of waltzing gaily out of the house in your underwear." – Patricia Fuller

A magazine editor's job is demanding and difficult. If she could whisper in your ear, she would tell you, as a writer, to have a clear understanding of her

magazine's target audience, making sure the article aligns with her mission and overall tone, and the content is relevant, engaging, and suitable for her readers.

When you have a clear understanding of the magazine's readers, you'll help make your magazine editor's life easier, and she will reward your professionalism and diligence with repeated requests for your informative and finely-written articles.

Stay Savvy

The writing/publishing industry, like any other industry, can sometimes attract people, businesses, and/or organizations who try to take advantage of writers. Let's learn the tricks of scammers, fraudsters, con artists, hustlers, swindlers, watching for the warning signals, and staying away from them.

Question: "I've been asked to write a large number of magazine and newspaper articles for free, without payment of any type. Should I be writing articles without compensation?"

Answer: I believe that you, as a writer, should be paid for writing articles. It's hard work. Scripture states that "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (1 Timothy 5:18)? Sometimes editors, companies, and organizations can take advantage of you by not paying you for your work.

But sometimes, in certain situations, it can be a strategic choice you make that provides valuable benefits, including:

1) **Exposure and building a portfolio**

Writing articles for established publications can provide you, as a new writer, with valuable exposure and help you build a portfolio of published work. This can be important for you if you are just starting

your writing career and looking to demonstrate your writing skills and expertise.

2) Networking and relationship building

Contributing articles to newspaper or magazines can help you establish connections with editors, fellow writers, and other professionals in the industry. Building these relationships can lead to future paid opportunities or collaboration, as well as provide you with insight and guidance from experienced professionals.

3) Establishing credibility and expertise

By writing articles on a particular subject matter or within a specific niche, you can demonstrate your knowledge and expertise in that area. This can help position you as a credible authority on the topic, making you more attractive to editors, collaborators, and readers who are interested in your work.

4) Skill development and practice

Writing articles without compensation can serve as an opportunity for you to hone your craft and improve your writing skills. The process of researching, writing, and revising articles for publication can be an invaluable learning experience, enabling you to refine your style and technique, and ultimately become a better writer.

5) Spreading the gospel

As a Christian writer, an occasion might arise where writing an article for free can be a means of sharing with faith and promoting the gospel with those who can't afford to pay a writer. If this is the case, consider this selfless act a ministry gift.

May's Template: The "How-to" Article

Magazines publish articles in many different formats. But I've discovered that the article type most all magazines publish is the popular and easy-to-write "how-to" article format.

Here is the "how-to" article template, and the five essential elements to include:

- 1) An introduction that will set the stage for the topic and grab the reader's attention (It briefly explains the subject and tells why the reader should care.)
- 2) Goals, objectives, and outlines to show what the reader should be able to achieve after following the how-to steps
- 3) Step-by-step instructions—the core of a how-to article—that provide an easy-to-follow guide on how to achieve the goal
- 4) Visuals (photos or illustrations) that can enhance the how-to article by providing additional clarity
- 5) A conclusion that wraps up the article, reinforcing key points and providing a sense of completion (Troubleshooting tips and FAQs can also be included to address common challenges readers might face while following the instructions.)

Here are three sample "how-to" article ideas that focus on the month of May:

- 1) "How to Create a Prayer Garden in Your Backyard"
- 2) "3 Ways to Encourage Spiritual Growth in Your Children This Summer"

3) "5 Ways to Support Missionaries and Spread the Gospel This Summer"

Advice from Our Writers:

Carolyn Tomlin

Carolyn Tomlin, author of more than 6,000 published magazine articles, published her first article at age 48.

"I had a secret desire to write for years, but I thought no one would want to read what I had to say," she said. "Evidently, I was wrong."

She retired from a 33-year teaching career and now writes full-time.

"Writing is a pleasure that has no retirement," she said. "I can work from home. I'm my own boss. And my two rescued dogs, Hemingway and Little Orphan Annie, can stay at my feet."

Carolyn has also written 19 published books.

"I can't help but write," she said. "I go to bed thinking about all the possibilities the following day and get up each morning thanking God for his many blessings, especially the creativity He has given me to put words on paper."

Carolyn often gives advice to new writers who want to write magazine articles.

"Know the magazine and know the audience," she said. "Look at back magazine issues and read the types of articles they publish. Look to see who reads the magazine. Is it geared toward youth, teens, career women, sportsmen, or retired people? Also, build a professional relationship with

the editor. Send editors Christmas cards. Email a short note asking about an editor's ill family member. Submit your articles early."

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 5, 2023: World Environment Day
- June 12, 2023: World Day Against Child Labor
- June 14, 2023: World Blood Donor Day
- June 18, 2023: Father's Day
- June 19, 2023: Juneteenth

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

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

May 2024

- May 1, 2024: International Workers' Day/May Day
- May 5, 2024: Cinco de Mayo
- May 12, 2024: Mother's Day
- May 15, 2024: International Day of Families
- May 17, 2024: World Telecommunication and Information Society Day
- May 24, 2024: 175th anniversary of the first telegraph message sent by Samuel Morse
- May 27, 2024: Memorial Day (United States)

June 2024

- June 1, 2024: Global Day of Parents
- June 6, 2024: 80th Anniversary of WWII D-Day
- 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

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

What's Ahead

“Zoom with an Expert”

Join us on Thursday, May 25, at 12:00 PM Central for our monthly “Zoom with an Expert” call! This month we are thrilled to welcome author Carolyn Tomlin. Carolyn sold her first magazine article at the age of 48, and since then, she’s sold more than 6,000 articles. Join us this Thursday as we learn her best tips for successfully writing and selling magazine articles.

Be on the lookout Thursday morning in the Facebook Christian Writers for Life Student Group for the link to join our “Zoom with an Expert” call.

If you’re not able to join us live, the replay will be available at <https://christianwritersforlife.com/monthly-resources/>

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 write and sell articles.

Consider adding the following courses to your list:

- "Writing Nonfiction Magazine Articles"
- "Writing for *Guideposts* Magazine"
- "Writing for *Reader's Digest* Magazine"
- "Writing for the Holidays"
- "How to Write the Perfect Magazine Query"
- "Tips & Tricks for Magazine Writing"

All of these courses, and so many more, are included with your Monthly or Lifetime membership.

New Course: June 2023

On June 1, Christian Writers for Life will release our brand new course, **"How to Make Money Marketing Your Book."** Instead of *spending money* to market your book, you'll learn how to *earn money* as you market your book. If you're already a member of the Christian Writers for Life Student Group, you'll receive this course for 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. And remember, one of our new members will be selected to have the book of your choice published professionally by Christian Writers for Life!

CWFL Gives Back

Because of your subscription this month, Christian Writers for Life was able to donate nine wheelchairs through Free Wheelchair Mission, a humanitarian, faith-based nonprofit that designs and manufactures cost-efficient, durable wheelchairs for developing countries around the world. Free Wheelchair Mission has distributed more than 1.3 million free wheelchairs to people living with disabilities in 94 developing countries. To learn more about the amazing work this organization does, visit www.FreeWheelchairMission.org.

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.

“Lord, thank you for this precious Christian whom You have called to join You in Your life-changing ministry of writing. Please guide and direct the words that come from this pen, that they might travel throughout this hurting world and offer readers the hope that only Jesus Christ can give. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.”