



Christian Writers for Life Monthly Digest

November 2023: Getting Ready for Holiday Writing

November is often seen as the bridge between fall and winter, with leaves changing colors and falling, the cool crispness to the air, and the beginning of the festive holiday seasons of Thanksgiving (USA) and Christmas. As temperatures drop, fireplaces in family rooms roar to life. I love the smells of burning wood and the crackling a fire makes as it burns. It brings a hot-chocolate coziness, and proves the perfect time to settle under a soft blanket to read or write a book. November is also a time when we enjoy comfort food, hearty stews, baked pumpkin and apple pies, and cups of spiced hot teas.

A sense of gratitude envelopes us in November as we pause to reflect and ponder, to thank God for His goodness to us, His sustenance, His blessings, the gift of family and friends, and the opportunities He gives us as Christian writers to serve in His ministry to others through our written words. The Scripture verse I would choose for November would be Psalms 107:1: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."

For Christians, we begin the month of November by celebrating All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, two days that commemorate all the saints of the church, both known and unknown, as well as Christian martyrs and the faithful departed. It is a time of prayer and remembrance for all the souls of

those who have died. As a Christian writer, we feel inspired by the themes of these days to reflect on the communion of saints and the eternal life promised by Jesus.

God bless you as you write for Him!

Denise George

November's Writer Profile:

Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu

(known as St. Teresa of Calcutta or Mother Teresa)

No matter what your denomination, whether Protestant or Catholic, Mother Teresa as a minister and as a writer inspired millions of people. Born on August 26, 1910, in Skopje (now North Macedonia), she felt God's call on her life, and at age eighteen, she left home and joined the Sisters of Loreto in Dublin, Ireland.

She was sent to India in 1929, where she took her initial vows as a nun. While she taught at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta, she received what she called the "call within the call" to serve the poorest of the poor. In 1950, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, a religious congregation dedicated to serving the poorest and the sick.

From a small order, the organization grew to a global institution with thousands of members serving the needy around the world. She opened hospices for the terminally ill, orphanages, schools, and leper houses. One of the most famous is the Home for the Dying Destitutes in Calcutta, where she and others cared for the sick and gave them the chance to die with dignity. Beyond India, Mother Teresa and her order established centers worldwide to aid the poor, sick, and dying.

While we don't think of Mother Teresa as a writer, she was a remarkable writer. Not a prolific writer, but her written letters, speeches, and few written works have left an indelible mark on the world. One collection of her personal writings, *Come Be My Light*, reveals her spiritual journey and her personal struggles with faith. It was published after her death in 1997.

Another book, *A Simple Path*, compiles her teachings and thoughts on various aspects of life, spirituality, and service to the needy. Throughout her life, she received numerous honors, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her humanitarian work.

What does Mother Teresa teach us as Christian writers today even though she was not a prolific writer? I believe she teaches us several important things:

1. **Authenticity:** Mother Teresa's words were authentic. She lived what she preached and wrote, making her messages powerful. The most compelling narratives we write are those that come with genuine personal experience and deep conviction.
2. **Simplicity:** Her messages were straightforward and simple, presenting her ideas clearly and concisely. Her words resonated with her readers.
3. **Serve a Higher Purpose:** Mother Teresa's life was dedicated to serving God by serving the poorest of the poor. Her sincere and simple words reflected her mission. She reminds us that, as Christian writers, we can write and purpose, using our words as a means to serve a higher calling and cause.
4. **Embrace Vulnerability:** In her writing *Come Be My Light*, Mother Teresa revealed her personal spiritual struggles and periods of doubt. By sharing her vulnerabilities, she allowed her readers to relate to her words. There is a power to being vulnerable in our writing.
5. **Perseverance:** Mother Teresa faced many challenges, from health issues to harsh criticism. Yet, she continued her work and writing, undeterred. We can draw inspiration from her perseverance, understanding that the path of a Christian writer isn't always easy, but dedication to the craft and message can yield profound results.
6. **Universal Themes:** While rooted deeply in her Catholic faith, Mother Teresa's messages transcended religious and denominational boundaries. Her teachings on love, service, and compassion proved universal and resonated with people both Catholic and Protestant.

7. **Impact Over Volume:** As mentioned, Mother Teresa wasn't a prolific writer, yet the impact of her few words was immense. This teaches writers that it's not about the quantity of work produced but the depth, sincerity, and impact of the words, the message.

Read Like a Writer

Reading like a writer essentially means scrutinizing what you're reading from a craft perspective. You're not just absorbing the story for the story's sake, but you're examining the elements that make the story work.

Here's how a Christian writer might analyze the writing:

- **Writing Style:** This refers to the author's choice of words, sentence structure, tone, and rhythm. As a Christian writer, pay attention to how authors convey their Christian themes and messages. For instance, are they subtle or overt in expressing Christian values or referencing biblical narratives? This will help you determine how you might want to present your own Christian themes.
- **Character Development:** Look at how the author shapes the characters, particularly those who embody Christian virtues or struggles. How does faith influence actions, decisions, and personal growth? This can give you ideas for creating realistic, nuanced Christian characters who resonate with readers.
- **Plot Structure:** A well-crafted plot is crucial for any story. Examine how the author has structured the plot. Is there a clear progression, a moment of crisis or revelation, and resolution? As a Christian writer, note how authors integrate faith-based conflicts and resolutions into their plots. This will help you develop compelling Christian narratives.
- **Themes:** Every book has central themes or messages. As a Christian writer, identify the religious or moral themes that the author explores.

How do they tie these themes to the characters, plot, or setting? This will help you understand how to weave Christian themes (like gratitude, thankfulness, blessings) into your own writing seamlessly.

- **Literary Devices:** These are techniques authors use to create certain effects or convey their messages more powerfully. They include symbolism, foreshadowing, metaphors, and more. Notice how authors use these devices to reinforce their themes. For example, do they use symbols or metaphors that have particular significance in Christianity? This can inspire you to use literary devices more effectively in your own writing.

In addition to analyzing the writing, you might also consider how the author engages with their audience and handles potentially sensitive topics. This can provide valuable insights into how to write in a way that is both engaging and respectful of your readers' beliefs.

Think Like a Writer

This holiday season, encompassing Thanksgiving and Christmas, is a time rich in emotions, traditions, and spiritual significance. As a Christian writer, you can tap into this wellspring of inspiration in several ways:

- **Daily Reflection and Journaling:** Begin each day by reflecting on personal experiences, biblical stories, or the traditions that resonate with you during this season. Document these reflections in a journal. Over time, these entries can serve as a goldmine for ideas or even become part of a larger writing project.
- **Embrace the Art of Observation:** Be present during family gatherings, church events, or community celebrations. Observe the interactions, traditions, and emotions that unfold. These real-life experiences can be woven into narratives, devotions, or poems.

- **Revisit Biblical Stories:** Dive deeper into the biblical narratives associated with Thanksgiving (gratitude and harvest) and Christmas (the Nativity story). Reflect on lesser-explored characters or angles, and consider how these ancient stories relate to modern life.
- **Engage with Personal Memories:** Reflect on past holidays: the joyful, the poignant, the challenging. Personal stories often resonate deeply with readers as they see their own experiences mirrored or gain fresh insights from someone else's journey.
- **Focus on Themes of the Season:** Thanksgiving and Christmas are replete with themes like gratitude, hope, love, sacrifice, redemption, and new beginnings. Frame your writing around these universal concepts to connect with a broader audience.
- **Engage in Seasonal Reading:** Read holiday-themed literature, both Christian and secular. This can inspire your writing style, tone, and content. It can also provide insight into what resonates with readers during this season.
- **Participate in Writing Challenges:** Many writing communities host holiday-themed writing challenges or prompts. Engaging in these can stimulate creativity, keep you disciplined, and connect you with other writers for feedback and camaraderie.
- **Document Traditions and Rituals:** Write about the origin, spiritual significance, and personal meaning of various holiday traditions. Whether it's the symbolism of the Advent wreath or the significance of breaking bread during Thanksgiving, these can be insightful pieces.
- **Write with a Purpose:** Consider writing for a particular audience or need. It could be a devotion for those who feel lonely during the holidays, a narrative for children explaining the birth of Christ, or reflections for those seeking deeper gratitude during Thanksgiving.

- **Set Consistent Writing Time:** Set aside regular time for writing, even amidst the busyness of the season. This discipline not only hones your craft but also ensures you capture ideas and inspirations as they come.
- **Take Photographs:** Be sure to take plenty of photographs of people, decorations, etc. that you can use with your Thanksgiving and Christmas articles for the following year. More than one writer has had to set up and decorate a Christmas tree in August in order to provide a needed photograph to go with a magazine article scheduled for December publication.

By immersing yourself in the spirit of the season and approaching it with a writer's curiosity and reflection, you can uncover countless stories, insights, and messages that can touch the hearts of your readers.

Build Your Platform

Unique Opportunities November Offers

Building an author platform during the months of November and December offers unique opportunities due to the holiday season's significance in the Christian calendar and the general festive atmosphere.

Here are some strategies tailored for Christian writers during these months:

1. Seasonal Blogging and Guest Posts

How? Create a series of blog posts or articles reflecting on the spiritual themes of Thanksgiving, Advent, and Christmas. Additionally, offer to write guest posts for other Christian blogs or websites.

Why? It provides content that resonates with the season's sentiments and reaches readers seeking spiritual insights during this period.

2. Launch a Devotional or Advent Calendar Series

How? Share daily or weekly reflections, prayers, or Bible verses leading up to Christmas. This can be on your blog, email list, or social media platforms.

Why? It engages your audience consistently and offers spiritual nourishment during the Advent season.

3. Engage in Social Media Challenges

How? Start or participate in gratitude challenges in November or Scripture-sharing challenges in December. Encourage followers to share their insights or experiences.

Why? It fosters community, increases engagement, and boosts visibility during a time when many people are actively seeking spiritual content.

4. Network at Holiday Events

How? Attend Christian conferences, church events, or holiday book fairs. Offer to read excerpts from your book or share personal reflections.

Why? It helps you connect directly with your target audience and spread word-of-mouth awareness.

5. Release Seasonal Content or Promotions

How? If you have a book or e-book, consider offering seasonal discounts. Alternatively, release a short story, poem, or essay that ties into the holiday themes.

Why? Special promotions or seasonal content can attract new

readers and reward loyal ones.

6. Engage with Charitable Initiatives

How? Collaborate with charities for fundraisers or awareness campaigns. Consider donating a portion of your book sales or writing articles to support a cause.

Why? The season is often associated with giving. By aligning with a charity, you showcase your values and make a difference.

7. Collaborate with Fellow Christian Writers

How? Organize joint virtual events, interviews, or collaborative writings. Promote each other's work and share audiences.

Why? Collaboration expands your reach and offers mutual support.

8. Email Newsletter

How? Send out a themed newsletter sharing personal stories, updates, and reflections related to the holidays.

Why? It provides an intimate connection with your subscribers and keeps you on their radar during the festive season.

9. Create Shareable Content

How? Design inspirational quotes, Scripture verses, or snippets from your writings as shareable graphics for social media.

Why? Shareable content can significantly increase your visibility as readers share it on their platforms.

By tailoring your platform-building efforts to the unique themes and sentiments of November and December, you can effectively connect with your audience. This approach resonates deeply during a time when many are reflecting on their faith, family, and the year's close.

Let's Make Some Money!

Let's look at some specific ways to promote and market your books in November.

- **Themed Discounts:** Offer special Thanksgiving or black Friday discounts on your books. Use platforms like Amazon Kindle, your website, or local bookstores for these promotions.
- **Bundle Deals:** Bundle your books (if you have more than one) at a discounted rate, making it attractive for holiday shoppers.
- **Guest Blogging:** Write guest posts on popular blogs or websites that resonate with the themes of your book. It's a season of sharing, and sharing your insights or stories can attract new readers.
- **Engage on Social Media:** Share quotes, themes, or anecdotes from your book. Use thematic hashtags like #ThanksgivingReads or #HolidayGifts to increase visibility.
- **Host Virtual Events:** Organize webinars, readings, or Q & A sessions related to your book's themes. With the ongoing relevance of online events, this can reach a wide audience.
- **Local Community Engagement:** Host or participate in local events, reading clubs, or book fairs. Engage with local radio or TV stations for interviews.

- **Email Marketing:** Send a themed newsletter to your mailing list, offering exclusive discounts, sharing behind-the-scenes content, or providing a sneak peek into your upcoming projects.
- **Gift Recommendations:** Position your book as a perfect holiday gift. Create attractive graphics or promotional materials that highlight why your book makes a thoughtful present.

November's Writing Tip

Weave a Rich Tapestry of Reflections

November is synonymous with Thanksgiving, a season that naturally evokes feelings of gratitude, reflection, and togetherness. For a Christian writer, whether you live in a country that celebrates a national day of Thanksgiving or not, November brings powerful moments to delve deeper into the spiritual dimensions of thankfulness.

Spend time each day in November journaling on a specific Scripture about gratitude or thanksgiving. Let verses like 1 Thessalonians 5:18 ("give thanks in all circumstances") or Psalms 107:1 ("Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever") be your starting points. Reflect on personal experiences, challenges, and blessings related to that Scripture. How have you lived it? How have you struggled with it? Now let's talk about how you can publish it.

Let's Get Published!

Take the advice given above and, by the end of the month, you'll have a rich tapestry of reflections, testimonies, and insights on gratitude from a Christian perspective. This practice not only deepens your own faith journey but provides material that can be shared with readers through publication.

How?

- Write up a book of gratitude devotions (thirty days of devotions) and self-publish it in time to sell for Thanksgiving or Christmas 2024.
- Send some of the devotions you've written to *The Upper Room* for their next year's (2024) November/December issue of daily devotions.
- Lengthen some of the daily devotions and make them into 800-word magazine articles to be published during November/December 2024. Send in the article query eight to twelve months ahead to the editor of a print magazine.
- Offer to self-publish the book of daily devotions for 2024 for your church members to use as daily gratitude study guides.

How to Market

November Is a Good Time to Promote!

There are several reasons why November is a good time to promote yourself and your books:

1. **Holiday Shopping Begins:** With Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and early Christmas shoppers, November marks the start of the holiday shopping season. People are looking for gifts, including books. Send your books to family and friends instead of the regular Christmas card. Christmas cards now cost about the same price as a book! Instead of Christmas cards, send e-books of your latest book. With Amazon's KDP, you can send an e-book through email as a gift for as little as \$0.99 each.

2. **Thanksgiving Themes:** For authors whose work resonates with gratitude, family, history, or reflections, the thanksgiving holiday provides a thematic backdrop that aligns with promotional efforts.
3. **Year-end Reflection:** As the year winds down, people often look for inspiring or reflective reads. They're also planning what books they'll dive into for the upcoming new year.
4. **Increased Indoor Activities:** As colder weather sets in (for many regions), people spend more time indoors, which often translates into more reading time. You may want to start a virtual book club with family members and friends.

The Writer's Toolkit

The Tools You Need for November

- **Scripture Journal:** To record reflections on Bible verses about gratitude, thanksgiving, harvest, and God's faithfulness, begin or end each day with a Scripture and jot down thoughts, prayers, or stories it evokes.
- **Seasonal Devotions:** To dive deeper into themes relevant for November, from gratitude to the approaching Advent season, read daily devotions. Use them for personal reflections or as inspiration for your own writings.
- **Writing Prompts:** To stimulate creativity and encourage regular writing habits, create or source a list of November-themed prompts. For example: "Describe a time you felt God's abundance during a season of scarcity."
- **Books on Christian Gratitude:** To offer a deeper understanding of the theology and practice of gratitude, read and reflect on teachings from renowned Christian authors, theologians, or pastors.

- **Historical and Cultural Resources:** Read and study to understand the origins, significance, and Christian perspectives on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Incorporate these insights into articles, stories, or essays that shed light on the deeper Christian connections to the holidays.
- **Prayer Journal:** Use the journal's blank pages to record personal prayers, thanksgiving, and petitions. Dedicate time for personal prayer and reflection, ensuring spiritual growth alongside professional development.
- **Inspirational Music and Podcasts:** To nourish the soul and offer fresh perspectives or ideas, listen to background music while writing, or during personal reflection times. One of my favorites is the music of *The Nutcracker Ballet* by Pyotr Tchaikovsky. The ballet was first performed in March 1892, warming the hearts of the world for the past 131 years.

By assembling this toolbox, a Christian writer can be well-prepared to harness November's unique spiritual themes, ensuring a month of fruitful reflection and productive writing.

Industry Lingo

Some Unusual Industry Terms and Meanings

While many writers are familiar with basic industry terms, the publishing and writing world contains numerous niche and specialized terminologies. Here's a list of some terms that might be unfamiliar:

- **Backlist:** Old book titles that are still in print with a traditional publisher but aren't the publisher's new releases
- **Bleed:** When an image or graphic goes beyond the edge of the page, so there's no white margin

- **Blurb:** A brief promotional piece, often found on the back cover of a book
- **Boilerplate:** Standard, unchanging text that's used regularly, like the "About Us" section in press releases
- **Book Doctor:** Someone who offers services to fix or improve a manuscript but might not be the primary editor
- **Chapbook:** A small publication, often of poetry, that is generally fewer than forty pages in length
- **Deck:** A term from magazine publishing referring to a sub-headline or a secondary headline
- **Endpapers:** The sheets of paper pasted onto the inner covers of a hardback book
- **Folio:** Page numbers
- **Galley:** An advanced, unbound print of a book used for reviewing purposes before the final print
- **Imprint:** A trade name under which a work is published. One traditional publishing company might have multiple imprints, often specialized.
- **Kill Fee:** A payment made to the writer when the commissioned article is not used or is "killed"
- **LCCN:** Library of Congress Control Number. A unique identification number for a book

- **Mass Market Paperback:** Smaller-sized, less expensive versions of books, typically sold in non-traditional book locations like supermarkets or airports
- **Offset Printing:** A common printing technique where the inked image is transferred from a plate to a rubber blanket, then to the paper
- **Recto:** The right-hand page of an open book. The left-hand page is known as the “verso”
- **Spec (On Speculation):** Writing something without the certainty of being paid for it. An editor might ask a writer to submit an article “on spec,” meaning they’ll decide whether to buy it once it’s completed.

How to Work Well with Industry Professionals

Christian writers can benefit from building strong, collaborative relationships with industry professionals.

Here are three ways:

1. **Open Communication and Respect:** Engage in transparent and respectful dialogue about your goals, values, and boundaries. Listen actively to feedback and be open to different perspectives. This includes discussing content, marketing strategies, or even cover designs that align with a Christian worldview. Clear communication ensures that both the writer and industry professionals are on the same page regarding the project’s direction. Respectful dialogue can prevent potential misunderstandings or conflict, especially when navigating topics of faith and belief.
2. **Continuous Professional Development:** Attend workshops, seminars, and conferences, especially those focusing on Christian writing and publishing. Engage with critique groups and consider hiring a

professional editor to refine your work. Staying updated with industry trends, best practices, and networking with professionals can provide invaluable insights. A well-crafted manuscript adhering to industry standards makes the collaboration smoother. Industry professionals appreciate writers who are dedicated to honing their craft and understanding the market's nuances.

3. **Understanding the Market and Audience:** Research the Christian book market's dynamics, including its sub-genres, bestselling themes, and target audiences. Collaborate with agents or publishers to identify and reach the intended audience effectively. Understanding the market helps in positioning your work effectively. When a writer has a grasp of their audience, they can work with industry professionals, such as marketers and distributors, more efficiently. This collaboration ensures that the message reaches and resonates with its intended readership.

Q&A

An Editor's Required Article Word Count

Question: My magazine editor has limited my article's word count to 800 words. I need at least 1,200 or more words to get my message across. What should I do? Why do editors limit the word count for articles?

Answer: Writing within constraints can be challenging, but it also provides an opportunity for sharpening your message and prioritizing the most essential information. Here are some steps you can take when faced with a word count limitation:

- **Reassess the Core Message:** Determine the most important points of your article. What is the primary message you want to convey? Prioritize that and be willing to cut less crucial information.
- **Edit Ruthlessly:** Sometimes, as writers, we fall in love with our own words. This is the time to be objective. Trim unnecessary adjectives,

remove redundancies, and ensure every sentence and word adds value.

- **Use Visuals:** If your magazine editor allows it, consider using graphs, charts, or infographics to convey complex information quickly. It can also be used as a sidebar to the main article.
- **Break It Up:** Could your article be split into a series? Perhaps you can pitch the idea of a two-part or even three-part series to your editor.
- **Add an Online Supplement:** If the magazine has an online presence, suggest adding a more in-depth version of the article or supplementary materials online, allowing interested readers to dive deeper.
- **Engage with Your Editor:** Discuss your concerns with you editor who may offer guidance on what to cut or might even be willing to reconsider the word limit if you present a compelling argument.
- **Consider Additional Outlets:** If there's no way to fit your content within the magazine's constraints, consider publishing the extended version on a personal blog or another publication.

Question: Why do editors limit the word count?

Answer: For many reasons, including:

- **Space Constraints:** Especially in print magazines, there's limited physical space. Each article's length impacts how many articles can be included in an issue and the layout design.
- **Readers' Attention Span:** Longer articles might not be read completely by readers with limited time. Shorter articles can often be more digestible and are more likely to be read from beginning to end.

- **Consistency:** Magazines often have a particular style, pace, or structure. Keeping articles within a certain word range helps maintain this consistency.
- **Editing Time:** Longer articles require more time to edit. Given the tight schedules of most publications, shorter articles can be processed more efficiently.
- **Diversity of Content:** Limited word counts allows a magazine to feature a broader range of topics, writers, and perspectives in each issue.

Remember, constraints can be a catalyst for creativity. Embrace the challenge, and you might find that your refined article is even more impactful than its longer predecessor.

What Editors Wish Writers Knew

Avoiding Overused Clichés

The common issue of avoiding overused clichés is seen across all genres of writing but can be particularly prevalent in religious writing.

A cliché is a phrase or expression that has been used so often that it's become predictable, and often uninteresting, to readers. In Christian writing, clichés often take the form of commonly-used religious phrases or truisms, such as "God works in mysterious way" or "Love thy neighbor."

While these clichés might encapsulate profound truths, their overuse in writing can lead to a lack of originality and depth in the exploration of concepts and ideas. They can also make it harder for readers to connect with the material on a personal level, as clichés can feel impersonal and overused.

From an editor's perspective, clichés can indicate a lack of effort or creativity on the writer's part. They suggest that the writer has chosen to rely on familiar phrases instead of delving deeper into their subject matter or finding new, original ways to express their thoughts. Editors often value fresh perspectives and unique takes on familiar topics, and clichés can stand in the way of that.

Moreover, overused clichés can be barriers to communication. Not all readers may interpret the cliché in the same way, which can lead to misunderstanding or confusion. Similarly, not all readers may be familiar with the cliché, especially if they come from different cultural or religious backgrounds. This is particularly important in Christian writing, which often seeks to communicate complex spiritual and moral ideas.

By avoiding clichés, Christian writers can:

1. **Offer a fresh perspective:** It forces them to think outside the box and come up with unique ways to present their message.
2. **Connect more effectively with readers:** Unique expressions can resonate more deeply with readers, making them more engaged and invested.
3. **Provide clearer communication:** By using their own words, writers ensure that their message is understood as they intended.

So, while clichés can occasionally serve a purpose in writing, their overuse can hinder the originality, clarity, and effectiveness of a piece, which is why magazine editors often advise writers to avoid them.

Stay Savvy

As a Christian writer, staying savvy involves actively seeking opportunities to expand your knowledge, refine your craft, and engage with diverse perspectives.

Here's how you can do this:

1. **Expand your reading beyond Christian literature:** To gain exposure to various genres, ideas, and writing types, it's essential to explore literature beyond the boundaries of Christian-themed works.

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Read widely across genres:** Engage with fiction, non-fiction, poetry, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, historical literature, and other genres. This exposure will help broaden your understanding of storytelling techniques, diverse writing styles, and thematic exploration.
- **Explore different perspectives:** Seek out authors from various cultural, religious, and philosophical backgrounds. Reading works by authors who approach life from different perspectives will enhance your understanding of human experiences and enrich your writing by incorporating diverse voices.
- **Analyze critically:** As you read, pay attention to the techniques and structures employed by different authors. Observe how they handle character development, dialogue, plot progression, and themes. This analysis will provide you with valuable insights into different writing styles and enhance your own skills.

2. **Participate in writing communities and workshops:** Engaging with other writers in communities and workshops can greatly benefit your growth as a writer.

Here's how to make the most of these opportunities:

- **Join writing groups or online communities:** Seek out writing communities, whether local groups, online forums, or social media platforms, that cater to writers of various backgrounds and interests. Participate actively, share your work, and contribute to discussions. This will expose you to a wide range of perspectives and allow for valuable feedback.
- **Attend workshops and conferences:** Look for writing workshops and conferences that cover diverse topics and genres. These events often feature sessions led by experienced writers, editors, and publishers who can offer valuable insights and guidance. Embrace the opportunity to learn from their expertise and network with fellow writers.
- **Seek feedback:** Be open to receiving constructive criticism and feedback on your work. Engaging with other writers and sharing your writing will expose you to different perspectives and help you refine your craft. Listen to diverse opinions and use feedback as a tool for growth.

By expanding your reading horizons and actively participating in writing communities and workshops, you will broaden your knowledge, gain new perspectives, and continue to grow as a Christian writer. Remember to stay open-minded, respect differing viewpoints, and use your own discernment to align your writing with your Christian values. Never compromise your Christian beliefs in your writing. Allow feedback to help you grow stronger in your faith in Christ and God's Word.

November's Template: Thanksgiving Testimonial Template

Sharing personal stories of how God has worked in one's life can be a powerful testament to others. The testimonial format allows for an intimate, narrative-driven recounting of these moments of grace and gratitude.

By sharing and reading testimonies, Christian communities can feel more connected and inspired by the shared experiences of their members.

Personal testimonies can also be a form of evangelism, showcasing the transformative power of faith in a relatable way.

This template can be used as a guide for sharing your testimony or moment of God's unmistakable grace or intervention verbally in front of a group or in writing.

Introduction:

- Set the stage by briefly hinting at what the testimonial will be about.
- Why did you feel the need to share this story now?

Background/Context:

- What was life like before the event/change you're about to discuss?
- Were there challenges, doubts, or specific circumstances that readers/listeners should be aware of?

Turning Point:

- Describe the event, realization, or moment of God's divine intervention.
- How did you feel during this? Were there specific signs, feelings, or experiences that stood out?

God's Role:

- Detail how you saw God working in this situation. What about this experience was most meaningful.
- Were there Scriptures, prayers, or Christian teachings that became particularly relevant?

The Transformation:

- What changed after the turning point?
- How did your relationship with God evolve? Were there noticeable changes in your daily life or perspective?

Reflection and Gratitude:

- Reflect on the significance of this event or change in your life.
- Express/share your gratitude. How do you view this experience in the larger journey of your faith?

Encouragement to Readers/Listeners:

- Offer words of hope, encouragement, or advice to readers/listeners who might be facing similar challenges.

- End with a relevant Scripture or prayer.

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: Many online magazines, newspapers, blogs, etc. can be published immediately and need only a short lead time.

November 2023:

- November 9 (1989) 34th Anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall
- November 11: Veterans Day (USA): Honoring military veterans
- November 11: Armistice Day (other countries): Commemorating the end of World War 1 and remembering those who died
- November 22 (1963) 60th Anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy
- November 23: Thanksgiving Day (USA)

December 2023:

- December 1, 2023: World AIDS Day
- December 7, 2023: Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (USA)

- December 10, 2023: Human Rights Day
- December 17, 2023: 120th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first powered flight (1903)
- December 20, 2023: 220th anniversary of the Louisiana Purchase (USA) (1803)
- December 24, 2023: Christmas Eve
- December 25: Christmas Day
- December 26, 2023: Boxing Day (observed in many Commonwealth nations)
- December 26, 2023: Start of Kwanzaa
- December 31, 2023: New Year's Eve

For print magazines: Print magazines need at least eight to twelve months lead time to publish. Here are some observances to query now for publication one year from now.

November 2024:

- November 1, 2024: All Saints' Day
- November 2, 2024: All Souls' Day
- November 5, 2024: Presidential election year (USA)
- November 11, 2024: Veterans Day (USA); Armistice Day (some countries), Remembrance Day (Commonwealth countries)

- November 28, 2024: Thanksgiving Day (USA)
- November 20, 2024: 79th Anniversary of the start of the Nuremberg Trials
- November 30, 2024: St. Andrew's Day

December 2024:

- December 1, 2024: World AIDS Day
- December 7, 2024: Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day (USA)
- December 10, 2024: Human Rights Day
- December 24, 2024: Christmas Eve
- December 25, 2024: Christmas Day
- December 26, 2024: Boxing Day
- December 31, 2024: New Year's Eve

What's Ahead

New Course: November 2023

This month, be on the lookout for this month's brand-new course, one unlike anything we've ever offered before: **"How to Earn an Income by Writing Magazine Articles"**!

If you'd like to supplement your income, or even replace a full-time income, through writing magazine articles, this course teaches you exactly how to do just that!

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

If you're currently a \$7/month subscriber and would like access to all of our online courses, you can upgrade your subscription at any time. In your online Account, use the coupon code FREEMONTH when you upgrade to take receive your first month for free!

Email us at info@christianwritersforlife.com if you need help with your plan.

Helpful Writing Courses

We have so many additional courses that will help you as you write this holiday season!

Consider adding the following courses to your list:

- "Writing for the Holidays"
- "Writing for *Reader's Digest* Magazine"
- "Writing for *Guideposts* Magazine"
- "Writing Devotions"
- "How to Write the Perfect Magazine Query"
- "Believing in Yourself as a Writer"
- "Writing Your Family Story"
- "Crafting Compelling Blogs"

- “How Journaling Benefits Your Writing”
- “Conquering Writer’s Block”
- “How to Write an Award-Winning Short Story”
- “Writing Nonfiction Magazine Articles”
- “Setting Up Your Writing Space”

All of these courses, and so many more, are included with your course membership.

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 meetings each week!

These Group 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 in our Christian Writers for Life Student Group on

Facebook. Feel free to submit questions ahead of time via email (info@christianwritersforlife.com).

When you're ready to join each Coaching Call, click the link below (these are the links you'll use every week):

Mondays at 6:00 PM Central

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 813 1687 5348

Wednesday at 12:00 PM Central

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 886 0268 5801

If you have difficulty joining the call, downloading the Zoom app to your device often solves the problem.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Our Prayer for You

Father, as we step into November, the season for thanking You for our many blessings and opportunities, help us to also appreciate the opportunities you've given us to express ourselves and to be a part of Your ministry to others. May we study the art and craft of writing, learn the industry, be knowledgeable about Your Word, and keep our fingers on the pulse of society so we will know society's felt needs and be better able to address them in our books and articles. We give thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.