

Called to Write Christian Fiction



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This is a work of biblical & Christian opinion: sharing the experiences of over forty-five years of serving Jesus of Nazareth, teaching the scriptures, and walking in the Spirit. All opinions should be examined and prayerfully considered before they are blindly acted upon.

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*This is dedicated to the Lord Yeshua
who enables me to write
with power, joy, and love.
Believe me, that is a miracle of God.*

Acknowledgments

I've always been a lone wolf, an asocial man who works best alone with my thoughts and ideas. As I have ventured out into social media, it has been a joy to "meet" people from all over the world with similar interests and passions.

Many of the more stimulating interactions online have been in the closed Facebook group, *Iron Sharpens Iron: Christian Speculative Fiction Authors*. Many members have become good acquaintances. They have been a real joy and a serious reality check. It's been great fun.

Peter Younghusband, of [Perspective by Peter](#) in Australia, has become a friend and an inspiration in my quest to become a decent, usable book reviewer myself. Michael and Mary Findley have also been an encouragement, an excellent source of information, and the source of many good books to read, both fiction and non-fiction.

Guy Stanton III has inspired me by his books and warmed me with digital conversations. The same is true of Ralph Smith, Yvonne Anderson, David G. Johnson, Mary Findley, Tim Hurst, Vikki Kestell, Sean Elliot Russell, Jeffrey McClain Jones, and many more as I have become immersed in Christian speculative fiction.

Let it suffice to say that hundreds of the New Christian Authors are putting out wonderful books in service to the Lord Jesus and building the kingdom on Earth which is truly inspiring.

I am grateful to have met all of you...

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How does holiness apply to me as an author?

It's the normal state of a born-again believer. At least, it is supposed to be that. But don't be confused by the normal definition you hear: set apart. Set apart is normally only a religious thing applied to non-living objects.

Holiness (in Strong's Concordance): *hagioasmos*; means 1. consecration, purification

Or it could be *hagiosyne*; about God means majesty; about us means moral purity

So you can see where the set apart teaching comes from religiously. Its meaning doesn't really become clear until we look in Strong's Concordance at the Greek for holy (*hagios*):

Sacred (physically pure, morally blameless, ceremonially consecrated) meaning number 4 about who we are to be: in a moral sense, pure, sinless, upright, holy:

That's how it applies to us—physically pure and morally blameless, pure, and sinless. If Jesus expects us to be holy, it is possible to be holy. He's not a mean Lord demanding things which are impossible.

Jesus is the core of it all. As we are obedient to Him, we learn holiness. As Peter quoted, "You shall be holy, for I am Holy." He was quoting something the Lord said through Moses centuries earlier. What Moses had not foreseen was the mystery of the Church.

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We are holy because the Holy One lives in us. Especially the part where we are made holy by His Holiness residing within us, in our spirits. He works His way out through our soul as we allow it and shows us how to purify our flesh. But we need to cooperate.

It doesn't just happen

It is the result of each one of us individually pursuing and grasping onto the very character of God. It results in a consecrated focus, which is morally blameless, and we become physically pure.

For us as authors, it means that we must maintain a pure, laser-like focus on the Truth—so we can share that with our readers.

You may say, "That's not my call."

I say, *It's the call of all believers—of which you are one if you claim to be a Christian author.* That's why Paul and Peter call us saints. This is the same word, *hagios*, and means the holy ones. That's you and me.

Your calling as an author may be a subset of your broader calling. But, the call is always to holiness & purity. We walk the strait and narrow path which leads from the narrow gate. You will not be fulfilled as a Christian author until you answer this call to holiness.

That's what this book is about...



The tools of our work

The tools of our work are not carnal but supernatural II CORINTHIANS 10:4. We are different from the heathen authors. Not only are our criteria different, but our process is very different from non-believing writers. This is serious ministry done in obedience. The Lord God Almighty has called you to write.

If this is not true, you're writing out of your flesh, and maybe your soul. Scripture is clear. GALATIANS 5: 16, 17 The world and the flesh are at war with the Holy Spirit. The soul is where we make the choice about which side we are on. If we do not make this choice, by default we work out of our flesh. We write in service to our Lord, dependent upon His wisdom, guidance, and anointing.

You may think I am overstating this. But as the age of the gentiles draws to a close, I am quietly stating the truth. I'm not negating practice, studying, experience, beta readers, editors, formatting, or any of the rest of the normal book production process. We are required to learn our craft. But the work is a ministry of the Kingdom of God for His purposes.

In addition, if you are writing a Christian book, it is unlikely that a non-believing editor is going to be of much help. How can someone who knows nothing of spiritual reality help with an edit, proof, or comment on a book which is written under the guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit?

But I am getting ahead of myself. First things first...

Does Christian fiction matter?

I began reading Christian fiction exclusively in the past four-five years. As I will show you in a bit, I rate the level of Christianity in the speculative fiction I read for the reviews I post to my Reality Calling blog.

Several years ago, I had an interesting experience. Because there are so few Christian books in the fantasy, science fiction, technothriller genre I like to read, I had run out of anything to read. Since I was reading 3-6 books a week at the time, this was a minor crisis for me.

So, I read a heathen book from an oft-read author

I picked up a copy of a Brad Thor which I hadn't read. I had also, in a moment of nostalgia, bought a copy of the latest Cussler/De Brul book. So, I read the Thor book on Friday/Saturday. I was amazed at how poor I thought it was. It was just a black ops/cop mystery all about the black ops hero thinking about getting into the panties of the female detective he was working with—as they attempted to thwart the horrendous problem they and the nation were facing.

I was very much aware that the hero and heroine had no help—completely dependent on their intellectual prowess and luck. The book finished with the celebratory wishful thinking about a possible new love relationship. But having read Brad's books for years, I knew it was just another bout of serial fornication couched in terms of worldly love.

The Lord gave me relief with a truly Christian novel

By the grace of God, I received the new Guy Stanton book to review the day I finished Thor's book. So I cleansed the palate, as it were, with it. It was another delightful romp through one of his stories of vigorously pure and holy romance within a rousing action/adventure plot. It was a real joy and left me encouraged and edi-

fied, as his stories always do. That's how a Christian book should affect you.

Then it was back to another heathen book

By Sunday afternoon, I needed something else to read, so I started the Cussler/De Brul story. I finished it the next night as the hero saved the day and then headed off for a romp of serial fornication in celebration. Thankfully, that was only hinted at. The book was about a brilliant leader saving the day by his strength and intelligence, with quite a bit of random luck. I was left sad and almost depressed. For experience tells me that this doesn't often happen in reality—if it even exists.

True Christian content actually edifies

I saw this spiritual benefit of creative output first in music. As Barry McGuire used to sing: "I don't believe in luck, I believe in Jesus." He, the Second Chapter of Acts, Debbie Boone, Keith Green, and others transformed my music habits in the mid-70s after I met the Lord. Here was popular entertainment which edified and built me up. It was a major revelation.

Now, I find I am at the same place with Christian fiction. I hunger for strongly Christian books which edify, raise me to worship, and help me give more place to the presence of the Lord in my life.

Why do we need entertainment?

We don't need it. It can certainly be argued that it is silly at best, and possibly evil, that I feel such a need for entertainment. But I am an American of the 20th century and entertainment took the place of worship and fellowship for heathens. The acid parties where we immersed ourselves in the latest Beatles album seemed to fill a huge need in my life. I had no idea that they were a deluding replacement for worship and discipleship. It just felt good. I had no idea what that meant back in those dark days.

The group I lived and socialized with certainly tried to fill our own spiritual needs with the counter-culture built on the LSD mental obstacle course, the occult, and all the other garbage we were into. We actually, and seriously, took acid as the preparation for self-led group therapy to become enlightened. What idiots we were!

As the world falls apart, we need Christian fiction

At least this is true for people like myself who read—instead of watch. Don't accept anything less. Share the good stuff with the rest of us. In addition, the world needs Christian fiction. For many people, especially those immersed in the world online, excellent Christian fiction may be the best hope for salvation they ever see. It will quite possibly be the only glimpse they ever get of truly righteous living.

After two decades of reading fantasy and science fiction, I couldn't take it any more. Most of it degenerated into aggressively sinful stuff. When I met the Lord I quit reading fiction for over a decade. I switched to military, political, techno thrillers and action/adventure like Clancy, Cussler, De Brul, Silva, Dale Brown, Brad Thor, early Vince Flynn, W.E.B Griffin's speculative series, Baldacci's Camel Club series, and so on. Most of these authors eventually got into something weird and or evil.

But nonetheless, I really like near-future speculative fiction. Also, as a Bible teacher and former teaching pastor, I like Christian versions of this type. However, they are exceedingly rare. I've read several over the last year. Maybe one or two could be called a Christian book—on a religious level And only one series made it to spirit-filled.

Many are only vaguely Christian

I just read a well-written series with a female lead based on speculations over terrorist attacks. The heroine is supposedly a Christian and a good moral woman. But

other than that statement, Jesus has no real presence in her life. Saying the character is a Christian, a church goer or a person of high moral standards does not make the story a Christian story. Jesus needs to be involved and active in the story—just as He is in real life.

You can get very speculative. Ginny Jaques in her speculative novel about the millennium, *Zinovy's Journey*, does a wonderful job of expanding our understanding of the possibilities of what will happen after the King comes—while remaining within the realm of scriptural possibility.

Christian Fantasy & Sci-fi

Here the problem is usually that spiritual reality is reduced to allegorical references and good morals. Often it is so minimized that it's hard to see it being any help in leading people to the Lord—and it's rarely edifying. Occasionally you see an author rise to the level of *Sir John & the Dragon's Boast* by R.P. Edward, Yvonne Anderson's *Gateway to Gannah* series, David G. Johnson's *The Chardash Chronicles* or Tim Hurst's *Kinsman's Tree* series.

Most often these so-called Christian tales are vague allegories about good morals. The hero or heroine learns through trial to be a good, moral person. We all know this is impossible in the real world. No one ever cleans up their own life and becomes righteous because of their superior intellect or will power.

People only accept the Lord as the result of a direct touch from the Holy Spirit, and a new birth from God. The Holy Spirit is the only way to actually change your character for the better. Otherwise we are stuck in the Old Testament righteousness through law and God clearly knows that will never work. The law only reveals our sin.

The Preachiness turn-off

I read a book a while ago that I almost quit. In the first three chapters, I had to wade through long Bible

quotes, a complete sermon, and other boring silliness presenting doctrine to readers looking for edifying entertainment. It eventually got into a fairly good story, but the bad taste from the preachiness has not left me yet. The book's value was seriously compromised by it.

The sinner's prayer fallacy

Often the only Christian experience is a person getting instantly saved from a sinner's prayer. But, their life never changes much. We know the real deal rarely happens. If it does happen to your character, you need to show the on-going support of other Christians or the special help of the Holy Spirit. Here's a quote from my book, *The Narrow Gate*:

How many people do you know who came down front to an altar call (especially at a large crusade), prayed the sinner's prayer, and nothing happened?

I know many people like that. The most common figures are that somewhere between 6% & 10% of people who come down for an altar call become church members.

Let's look at Billy Graham's own beliefs about the people who came forward during his crusades. He had a formula that looks like this:

*Sermon + Counseling + Follow-up =
Decisions x 25% = Born-again*

But look at this quote: "According to Kel Richards, National Coordinator for Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Australia, on the 1994 Christian Life and Witness Course video made for Australian BGEA counselors, only 2 percent of conversions take place during the sermon, 48 percent during counseling and 50 percent sometime during follow-up.

"When the previously cited 25 percent salvation rate is applied to these statistics, Graham's formula for

success looks even better. If only a sermon is provided, just one half of one percent of decisions will be effective. If a sermon plus altar counseling is provided, twelve and a half percent of decisions will be effective. If a sermon plus altar counseling plus follow-up is provided, twenty-five percent of decisions for Christ will be effective."

The obvious problem is that in most churches presently doing a weekly altar call, there is no counseling and no follow-up, so we are looking at one out of two hundred people who come forward actually end up born again—statistically."

You may be called to this type of ministry. But, you need to be aware of this lack of effectiveness. It's all one of the results of the "no pain" evangelism which has developed in the United States in the last fifty years.

I want true spiritual reality!

Jesus expects us to walk in the light. Is that really so difficult? Is it that rare? It almost seems to be so rare that no one can write about it.

I experience God's marvelous workings in my life daily. He gives me a fresh testimony. Satan's reality is also obvious. Jesus' power to thwart that evil reality is just a normal part of walking in the Spirit as a believer. Satan has free rein in our culture and society. And that has led nominal Christian authors into writing about situations which are far outside acceptable Biblical living.

The Bible warns us about people puffed up by tales of angels and the like. I've read a so-called Christian book which taught that demons can repent and be saved, if they can marry a true believer who loves them—right? No! There is no hint of this Biblically.

Spiritual evil is commonly present in so-called Christian books—unexplained and often glorified. There are no werewolves in reality, the same is true for vampires. There

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may be demons masquerading as wolves, werewolves, vampires or other horrors. Beings like orcs, trolls, goblins, dwarfs, and the like can be used with strong effect. But don't try to convince me they're real. They only work in fictional worlds like Middle Earth. Sadly, Tolkien's world is not a real place. It's fiction. There are no aliens (maybe demonic counterfeits) except in science fiction. So, beings like these must be carefully explained in the your worlds.

The occult has real power. The world system controlled by Satan is a daily part of our spiritual warfare. But it is easily countered by the Holy Spirit within a true believer (as far as the effects to the believer's life are concerned). Real damage can result from people giving themselves into the hands of the enemy. With no true believer in your tale, there is no counter to the demonic kingdom. You can't defeat a demon with thoughts or deeds.

Let's make our books real and true!

Of course there's violence, sex, and bad language in reality. We cannot ignore that, though we certainly do not need to wallow in it. Sex outside marriage is sin—really bad. Don't glorify it or use it to titillate your readers. This includes allowing evil people to flaunt their sin graphically.

Killing people is sometimes unavoidable, sometimes part of a job description, but it is never fun or a rush except within an evil mind or as a temptation to sin. Lying is just as severe as sex, violence, and murder. Sin is sin. Make sure your readers understand that. A Christian writer should never titillate and certainly never excuse sin.

It's a strait and narrow path we walk

Let's keep our books holy yet real. The Lord shows us how in the Bible. The Holy Spirit leads us in that walk of faith. If we write under His inspiration, that level of communication is certainly possible—no matter how rare it is now.

Determine your call & your vision

They are two very different things. As we draw near to the end of the age of the Gentiles and the Coming of our King, the Lord would use us in this effort, if we allow it. Don't get arrogant—assuming you can write anything and the Lord will bless. It doesn't work that way in reality. The enemy confuses many with worldly blessings. Don't think a lot of sales are necessarily a sign of blessing.

So the Lord has called you to write

I regularly see authors writing about their call to write. I rarely see anyone taking this call seriously. It's talked about like an overwhelming fleshly need to write. But that's not a call—it's probably a temptation to indulge the flesh. The Lord's call is part of the process where He moves you into what you were designed to do. It's a life-long thing. As Paul wrote in Romans 11:29, ***"the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."*** You will be living with this for the rest of your life. It's important you are sure. If He has called, it is part of your walk of faith.

Wait until you are convinced of that

Once that's settled, then you can examine what to do with it. It's all about sharing, revealing, discussing, and writing the Truth and how it affects us in our daily lives. The Lord requires us to deal with the realities of life—proclaiming the good news to a sick and terrorized world.

A story of true love discovered can really help a desperately lonely woman or man, if you let the Lord show you how. Heathen authors are bombarded by falsehoods and sinful techniques from our enemy who uses them in a carnal world to entice readers controlled by the lusts of the flesh. We need to be careful about the source of our advice. We serve a kingdom ruled by a righteous king. Our books need to contain spiritual truth.

A simple explanation about Christian writing as a ministry to believers and non-believers can open your eyes to the glorious task which the Lord has set before you. If God has called you, He's expecting a fruitful harvest. If you are following His lead, He will do the marketing.

What is important is that we determine the level of the call He has on our lives to write. Only then can we talk about our personal vision for a specific ministry.

You need to get this straight

I cannot answer your questions about your call. That is between you and the Lord. I can say you will need a personal relationship with Him so you can discuss this call with Him. He will surely tell you if you ask Him to and if you listen for His voice. He has promised.

A major thread in scripture is hearing from the Lord. In truth, it can be said that if you are not hearing from the Lord you do not have a real relationship with Him. You need to spend as much time as you need, before you start writing, to get this straight. Your call will strongly change what you write about and who your audience is.

*If you are not called,
writing is just another fleshly pursuit*

Yes, that is the truth of the matter. If you are not writing in obedience to a call from God, you are following your soul or flesh. That puts it completely outside the

purview of this book. So, it is incredibly important to find out about your call, and what the Lord expects you to do about it. The world's full of fleshly, and soulish, books. What it is missing are spiritual books about the truth—especially spiritual fiction..

We are all called to do something. I was called to teach. I didn't realize that until God sovereignly gave me the job of heading up the Commercial Printing program at Albuquerque Technical-Vocational Institute (25,000+ students). At the same time, I was placed into the position of teaching pastor for a small non-denominational church. Now that I'm writing and publishing, my teaching call has not changed, but the vision has been refined. The focus has become teaching Christian authors, writing Christian fiction and non-fiction, and serving through social media as the Lord gives opportunity.

Why is the call so important?

First, God is letting you know who He designed you to be. Plus, there's a certain side benefit: if God has called, the Lord will provide. If he has called you to write and publish, he will provide the computer, the connections, the online access, the knowledge, the wisdom, and all the rest which you need to fulfill your calling. Your call includes provision to accomplish your calling. Everything you need. This includes sales of your books. If you are sure of your call, you'll find asking for needs is unnecessary. Just thank Him for your daily bread. For He has promised to meet your daily needs. He knows before you ask.

So, what is your vision?


Once you have a call, this is a constantly evolving plan and focus for your life and ministry. This is how your call will be worked out into reality. You may need to go through massive changes as I did when I was first given

the opportunity to teach full time. This was followed four years later by the equally huge change of the Lord showing me I was to be a writer. The call had not changed, but the vision of how to work it out did.

The original desire which I brought with me when the Lord called me into the Kingdom of God was to be a creative person. As far as I can tell in retrospect, most of that was in the soul and the flesh. He has never blessed my self-centered creative impulses. The specific ministry calling as teacher happened two decades later when the Lord dumped that career in my lap unannounced and unexpected.

What's going on in the Body?


Your vision will fit you into your specific place in the Body. You do need a good idea what is happening in the Kingdom today. Presently, there are two major efforts the Lord is presenting to the Body of Christ. These are in addition to the process of sanctification to which we are all called.

 **Scattering seed:** The prophecies in the church today are clearly telling us that the final harvest is near. The problem is that we can only harvest from the seed sown. Few of us have focused on sowing seed. Harvesting is much more fun. As [Rick Joyner says in The Harvest](#):

“There is a time to plant and a time to reap, but there will not be a reaping if we have missed the time to plant. Through much of recent history, the evangelical church has had a “reaping mentality” which has caused it to overlook many of the planting seasons. Because of this our harvests have amounted to little more than the gathering of what has grown wild.” RICK JOYNER.

Many Christian authors, at this time in the life of the Body, are now or will be called to sow seed for the coming harvest. We need to plant good seed so

there can be a Godly harvest. Writing books is an excellent tool for this.

 **Building up believers:** On the other hand, as the Great Delusion grows stronger and the institutional church becomes more apostate in the Great Falling Away, there is a huge need for books which truly edify existing believers who have become beat up by the world (which includes most of the institutional church).

We are going to see marvels in the coming years. They will be far outside church as we know it. Here's another quote from *The Harvest*:

The Lord has prepared a ministry for the last days that will be the marvel of men and angels. These will not be self-seeking or self-promoting, and most of them will remain unknown to the world—even to much of the church. Their works and preaching will stir nations, but many will fade into the crowds and disappear before anyone even knows who they are. Many of the most powerful apostles and prophets will remain nameless and faceless to the public.

These have no desire to build major ministries and will not covet fame or fortune. They are “spiritual celibates;” they will not rape the bride. Just as a natural eunuch is given entirely to preparing the bride for the king, and has no desire for her as he is not able to, these will be completely given to preparing the church for her King. Their whole purpose is to see the King's joy because they are truly His friends. These will follow Him wherever He goes... these have been quietly preparing themselves just as Jesus did for His first thirty years. While others are advancing in ministry, many of these have been retreating. While others have been building up, these have been digging down, trying to strengthen their foundations and deepen their roots.

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Are you one of these men and women who has been prepared for this coming season? It is quite possible. What could be more exciting and fulfilling than to be one of the people Jesus uses to bring about His coming.

These things are truly important

You know our life as a transformed, spirit-filled believer has been filled with the power to actually help people. Jesus came that we might be set free to serve in love. Self-fulfillment is a result of His blessings as we follow the path He gives us to follow. It is not the reason we write, but the result of our obedience to our call to write. But all of that is of no consequence when compared to the Final Harvest.

Your growth as a child of God equips you to truly help your readers. You can do that with fiction or non-fiction. The key to excellence in Christian publishing is keeping your eye on the vision Jesus gives you, personally. He has vital work for us to do. We need to hear Him clearly. He does have things He wants each of us to do.

How to produce anointed books which change lives

Christian writers need the ability to write and publish books which genuinely bring change into the lives of our readers. This must be our goal. Only the Holy Spirit can do this through us. But we can learn how to be used more easily by the Lord. We will get better with more experience. More than that, working out our call in fear and trembling will cleanse us and purify us. He will prune us so we can be that well-crafted tool in His hands.

How do we write under the anointing?

I am sharing this out of my personal experience of teaching and being taught in the Lord for over forty-five years. I am not talking about something weird. I am sharing with you a standard of writing that is lamentably missing in most Christian books today—anointed writing.

What we want and need as writers is for the Holy Spirit to take the words which we publish and convert them into personal *rhema* messages for each person in your readership. This is the word used in Ephesians 6 when talking about the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. *Rhema* is a specific personal word for an individual directly from the Holy Spirit. It is the power of the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit has the power to take a bit of speech or a phrase you write and use it as a word of knowledge, wisdom, or prophecy to your readers. He is so powerful and wise that He can use the same phrase to mean dif-

ferent things for every reader—even people rereading your work. More than that He loves to do this. This is why it is common to hear reports about truly anointed writing that show completely different reactions and stories from almost every person who read the book.

I need to cover my experience with Dr. Westbrook. He was the best person I ever saw communicating in this manner. He was our supervisor when my wife and I started a Foursquare church in Albuquerque in the early 1990s. Most denominations would call him a bishop. Who he was in the Kingdom became clear to all of us. He was a powerful anointed leader. This man, in the course of his calling, came to several of our regional pastor meetings to share with us and help prepare us for ministry.

He had a method of teaching and leading that was not impressive—yet truly amazing. He often spoke in sentence fragments. These fragments revolved around the message but came from a man who was taking the time to seek the Holy Spirit for the next words to say moment by moment. When examined intellectually, things often didn't make straight linear sense. However, the insights that came to my mind as I listened to him teach were wise and solved problems I was dealing with at the time.

Incredibly, this was the case with every person hearing the teaching. Every listener heard a different sermon or teaching and all the messages received were personal and life changing. More than that, it reliably happened every time he taught us. His focus was on hearing the Holy Spirit and trusting Him to make sense of it to us, his sheep. It was His trust in the Lord which enabled it.

In his case, you could see and sense the Holy Spirit taking the raw content this man spoke and converting it into powerful anointed teaching—an individual *rhema* for each of his listeners. I have never experienced this so clearly before or since. However, I am now aware of how

often great preaching has this characteristic. God takes what is taught and converts it to a *rhema* for the hearer. The conversion from *logos* to *rhema* is wonderful to see and experience. This is what Paul was talking about in I Corinthians 2 when he refused to let his intellect provide the teachings. He gave up on the idea of winning them by his intellectual prowess. He knew that unless the Holy Spirit backed it up in power, he was wasting their time.

How do you receive this anointing when you write?

You ask for it. You ask before you write—every time you write—that the Holy Spirit will take your thoughts and words and make them into *rhema* for your readers. You pray that your flesh and old self will be kept out of the way and that you can be a channel for the Holy Spirit. You pray you can be given the ability to convey truth which will not mislead.

When you have prayed for wisdom and anointing, then you can write, trusting He will do what He promised. Without this power applied to your writing, it is just a career choice. If writing is your calling and your ministry, it will be worthless without the power of the Holy Spirit transforming your work. This anointing is essential.

Pray for it every time you write

Not only do you need to do this before you write, it is also good for you to begin every marketing or speaking event by asking the Holy Spirit to anoint your words so that the people hear what they need to hear—so that the Lord can help them in their daily lives.

But it goes further than this. You need to pray that you can be a help and edify with your social media comments, with your emails, with your life. Then we'll produce books which change our readers' lives and ministries. We will fulfill our calling as writers. This is all about going into all the earth witnessing and discipling.

But this is not all that is necessary. You also need to see and understand God's vision for your writing and publishing ministry. It is truly a ministry—or you are not a Christian writer. You need to get a feel for those whom the Lord is calling you to serve.

What is your vision?

It is increasingly clear that my vision is to help you understand that your call to write is very important. It is part of the effort He is putting out to save everyone possible before it is too late. My vision is to encourage you in that, and to provide you with the knowledge necessary to communicate clearly with your writing. Typography, page layout and book design are the tools of your trade just as much as excellent dialog, compelling characters, immersive worlds, and crafted stories.

I am not called to talk you into feeling guilty if your books are not forceful sermons—dragging your readers kicking and screaming from Hell into Heaven. Preaching doesn't work in books. Manipulation by guilt is fleshly at best and often sin. Quoting scripture is only appropriate in scenarios where you would do so in real life with your friends and acquaintances.

It's all about keeping it real. Be transparent. Talk through your writing like you talk to your friends. It's not a different kind of communication. Truly, communication is communication, no matter what the media. It's all about us putting forward a true picture of ourself. We walk in the light, letting them see us as we are, or we're in trouble.

Just like friendship evangelism, you learn what your reader needs and fulfill it. You listen to them, come to understand them, answer their questions, and lead them to the Truth. Only the Holy Spirit can enable them to act upon that Truth. All you can do is provide access to it.

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We are teacher/storytellers not master/manipulators. We lead by example and the clear statement of reality toward Truth and the acceptance of that reality.

The five levels of Christian fiction

I wrote a booklet about this, *A Spiritual System for Rating Books*. In it I give all the arguments and include a rating system for the enemy presence in the book. There's a link to the free PDF [if you're on a computer, you can simply read it in your browser] in the sidebar of *Reality Calling* at radiqx.com.

A call for reality with our characters...

Warning! The following is outrageous personal opinion—hopefully written in obedience to the One whom I serve

Of course, most of you might say, “My characters are already real.” In that case, for many of the Christian books I read, I have to say, “I’m sorry to hear that.” We all realize that the characters in much Christian fiction today are not strong Christians. If the characters revealed in these books represent the reality experienced the daily lives of the author, I’m saddened.

My focus is Christian speculative fiction: action/adventure, fantasy, and science fiction. Maybe romance is better, but I’ll bet not. My wife said she rarely found it. Much is accepted in the name of escapist fiction which is far outside the boundaries of the Kingdom. Characters can and often should be flawed. But sin is not acceptable behavior—ever—in a Godly person; though it’s unavoidable in a heathen. Yes, we all sin. But as soon as we know it is sin, we repent. Shacking up is fornication, and it is sin. Lying is bearing false witness: sin. Borrowing without permission is stealing: sin. The list goes on & on.

In my technothriller, I have a CIA assassin who left because she could not stand the lying culture—no one

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knew what the truth was any more. Her killing of evil persons was not a problem, but her job—warrior work. The lying went far beyond simple misdirection into sin.

As authors we need to put ourselves into the character’s shoes and figure out how we would react if we were in that situation as a real person. We need to get into the minds of our readers enough to discern whether what we just wrote is believable and realistic to them.

I find that Christian speculative fiction falls into five groups

The first two are not Christian

- ❖ **The clean read:** there is no discussion of the source of these moral principles and no spiritual accountability.
- ❖ **Pre-Messiah fiction:** Good comes through the law and obedience to it. The Lord only speaks through specially picked prophets & clergy. At best, these are at the Jewish level.

The final three are Christian at various levels of power

- ❖ **Religious fiction:** That portion of the body which does not believe in rebirth or the filling of the Holy Spirit, which is all of the traditional mainline churches, Protestant and Catholic.
- ❖ **Redemptive fiction:** There is a relationship with a living God who has provided the characters with a savior. But it’s often not truly personal. And the power of the Holy Spirit is often missing entirely.
- ❖ **Spirit-filled fiction:** There is direct, daily involvement in the characters’ lives with words spoken, miracles, healings, prophetic words, and supernatural gifts of knowledge and wisdom. As in reality, many of these things are seen in hindsight, but the characters are aware of a direct, daily, interaction with their Lord and Savior.

I worked hard to come up with these more politically correct naming conventions. None of these types are evil or “bad”. I’m trying to avoid value judgments, because I want to avoid doctrinal arguments—as a waste of time here.

This whole idea was the result of rumination and prayer on an email conversation I had with Guy Stanton III, a writer of full gospel action/adventure romance novels. In the midst of a long conversation, he said:

I always wished growing up that I had been born in the antiquity eras so that I could wield a sword and fight to live free by the force of the blade in my hand, but more and more I’m beginning to see what a great honor has been afforded me to be placed in these last days into a position to do warfare for the Kingdom of Heaven.

As some of you know, I have always seen myself as a dirty, crusty, often smelly, knight/scout out looking for possible incoming danger or joy. I am a knight serving my King in daily battle. He called me and He deserves the best I can offer. This is what I am looking for, praying for, and trying to encourage. I want to see books entering into the battle at the end of the age before we go home to be with our Lord, friend, and husband. But most Christian books are mainly entertaining and that is usually a waste of a gift of God. I’m afraid that some, maybe many, authors are going to hear the dreaded words of Jesus in Matthew 7:23:

And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”

I only have their written words to use for discernment. I know little or nothing about the authors’ personal relationships with Jesus, our Messiah. I can only talk about the spiritual lives of the characters in their books.

As we talk about these five levels of spirituality in Christian fiction, I beseech you to prayerfully consider where you fit in all this. It’s very important that you get

this right. The Lord will give you the time to know for sure. With that covered, let’s talk a bit about the five levels of Christian content seen in current novels.

Clean books, vaguely good people: the clean read

These books are clean but really have no spiritual content. I reviewed one of these recently. These are no better than clean heathen books like all recent Clive Cussler works (now that he’s moved away from serial fornication). Sometimes this type of book is excellent like *Becoming The Chateran* by S. J. Aisling or *Lord of the Rings*. But there’s nothing edifying. It’s good entertainment. At least they are not evil as most of the heathen books are these days. Some of the worst, in my eyes, are books which claim to be Christian, but offer a watered-down, lyrical, poetic version of spirituality at best. Often there is just a vague, poetic deity with a strange name. In many of these books, I have to warn that evil got the glory and the hints at the Lord were capricious with little or no reality.

Is it possible to write books of this type which share truth?

It is very difficult. If you think you are called to write this type of book, you need to spend a lot of time in prayer to learn how to add Truth to your book.

Old Testament believers & religious books:

A large percentage of so-called Christian fiction falls in this group. Here we have people responding to holy writings or an Old Testament type of calling to please God. They are works oriented. Keeping the law is the highest good. Sometimes we have Old Testament-style prophets as we see in *Prophet* by R.J. Larson. It’s an entertaining book, but not Christian. In books like *Son of Truth* by Morgan L. Busse, spiritual reality can have some real depth, but the savior is always missing. These books at least point to God, but they’re mainly entertaining. There’s no reality to

help readers see truth or to develop Christian maturity in the readers.

Some books with this level of story cannot be categorized like *Arena* by Karen Hancock, but they have that ring of truth we recognize as believers. Others are books from ancient history, pre-Israel & pre-Jesus. A book like *Fallen Kings* by Sarah Witenhauser seems realistic and the story is compelling. But the characters so desperately need a savior and He simply is not available yet. They can be very depressing books.

Wonderful books like *A Cast of Stones* in *The Staff & The Sword* trilogy by Patrick W. Carr present a compelling Old Testament style of religion which is wonderful in the beginning. But it is hard to express how much these books need a Messiah. By the end of the third book a year later, I was quite depressed. The ending was not edifying at all.

Some of these books are religious. They claim to be Christian. But the Lord has no impact on their daily lives. There is no spiritual power.

Religious Christianity

Some of these are “catholic”, that is Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, or some Lutheran. These books can be very good upon occasion. It is depressing to go back to that place where all power is channeled through clergy, but that’s the way it was. But the truth is there. It’s just the power which is missing. It’s back to “God works in mysterious ways”. As you can imagine, I do not agree with that. Not mysterious, but beyond our comprehension.

Redemptive fiction:

Here we have a major step up. The characters have “accepted the Lord” though it’s often not clear what that means. They are strong believers in the Bible. The only problem here is a tendency to get preachy and there is a common lack of any real active communication with or

relationship with the Lord. Many of these books also get lost in religious doctrine.

Characters tend to get all their guidance from scripture. There is little or no *rhema*, that specific word the Holy Spirit quickens to lead us. We are starting to get into rare territory even here, but these books can be a strong edifying witness to the truth of the Gospel. Sometimes the author goes through some real contortions to have a link to spiritual reality as David G. Johnson does in *The Chadash Chronicles*. However, David’s characters show a spiritual reality which is really fun to read.

What distinguishes these books is a spiritual reality that points to our Father and His Messiah. Excellent examples here are the *Redemption Tales* by George McVey which are Westerns having a really strong evangelical witness without preaching and a hero who is a preacher/gun-slinger. The *Legends of Astarkand* by Krystine Kercher add reality to the idea of a righteous Godly king. The strong, personal, walk in the Spirit aspect of Christian living can be missing though. The *Makilien* trilogy by Molly Evangeline offers much more than most—it’s an edifying read, and great fun.

Her series, *The Ilyon Chronicles* (now as Jaye L. Knight), starting with *Resistance*, is better, but still evangelical. God is a vaguely distant person with little personal interaction with His people. But a messiah shows up in one of the later books. This type of book can be very helpful to readers, and has the potential to provide wonderful vehicles for scattering seed for the coming harvest. Redemptive books can be very good.

Often, this level of book never resolves into true saving faith. It remains religious. But, we have many examples where this is overcome. Mary Findley’s *The Baron’s Ring* is powerful. Mary has written many good books, including some steampunk fantasy.

Spirit-filled believers:

Here we have the best and most helpful Christian fiction. These are evangelicals who have come to a deep and close personal relationship with Jesus, communicating daily about needs, direction, seeking guidance, praying for/receiving healings, and so on. Now, I'm not talking about characters who are necessarily pentecostal, but those who have a real relationship with the Lord which includes regular communication, direct guidance, prophetic implications, a touch of the miraculous, and the normal evidences of Christian life as presented by Jesus at the end of Mark.

Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." [MARK

16:14–18 NASB]

These characters can strongly present how a true walk in the Spirit works day to day. Yes, this is a very high standard. Ralph Smith's *Seal of the King* does this extremely well by showing a Godly romance which is so compelling that it's really hard to put the book down. Peter Younghusband's review of Ralph's book is excellent. David and Aurora heal people, receive strong words of wisdom, and function as true believers with no preaching at all—leading to a strong, lusty, Christian marriage in holiness.

I'll always be grateful to Peter for leading me to Guy Stanton III. Guy's books are a sterling example of this type of book. His premise for *The Warrior Kind* series is as radical as that found in *The Chadash Chronicles*, but his characters are strong, vibrant, spirit-filled believers leading Godly kingdoms, doing good, and loving large. His *Agents for Good* series has the same type of believers in an action/adventure setting—black, white, male, female, it doesn't matter. All the good guys (male and female) have an intense personal relationship with their savior and give us outstanding examples of how to live the Christian life abundantly. His book which begins the third series: *Journey Into The Deep, The Water Wars* takes us into the world of Atlantis on a realistic, creationist level. His action/adventure, fantasy, science fiction, romances stand in a league of their own at this point in time [in 2014].

Yvonne Anderson in her *Gateway to Gannah* series does an inspirational and compelling look at an entire culture based on automatically following the Lord because it is just the thing to do, the way to live. Several times it almost brought me to tears as I realized how far we are in America from life as it is meant to be lived here on earth.

Of course, we have Stephen Thompson's outrageous, full-bore, Pentecostal black ops warriors in his *Crossfire* novels. These books are filled with over-the-top pentecostal warriors called by God to battle demons and principalities. They are good fun. In most ways, they are pure entertainment, but that is true of the books by Smith, Stanton, and Anderson also. They build us up instead of tearing us down.

Another series at this level of spirituality are the four books in the *Outlaw Preacher* series by John Andrews. These are marvelous tellings of the deeds of some outrageous outlaw bikers who have become true believers. Again, the reality of how a true believer with a hellacious

background would act in the real world is told with power and clarity.

More recently, Timothy Hurst's four book *Kinsman's Tree* series is outstanding. Vikki Kestell wrote a compelling science thriller in the four book *Nanostealth* series. It was one of my favorite series in the last decade.

My books are pretty tame when compared to these seven authors, but I try to reach this level of spiritual reality with both *Daniel's Mighty Men* and *The Righteous Perish*. The first place where I feel like the Lord may have anointed is the *Ferellonian King* series of three books. This heroic fantasy has characters that live daily lives in a very similar manner to what I do day in and day out. The writing of these books brought me to tears and worship. I can only hope they do that to readers.

We need more true believers amongst our characters

My vision is to encourage authors to be much more open about the reality of their life in the Kingdom. If our characters show forth the reality of the Gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit, our readers might actually get a glimpse of who God is calling them to be. So, are you ready to go for it? Do you think I'm nuts? What are you trying to do with your books?

Working with the Holy Spirit on your book

Here's where the rubber meets the road. If the Holy Spirit is involved in your conscious life, He offers you help of which the world has no concept. Paul tells us that Jesus is our righteousness and our wisdom. The Holy Spirit knows what the Father wants from your book, and if you ask, He'll share that with you. You know how subtle He is when He works in your life. How would that wisdom transform the twists and turns of your plots and

story lines? In my life, He's always delivering me in ways I would have never imagined. He can show you how to do that with characters.

In my most recent works, The Ferellonian King series, the Lord gave me a believable spiritual way of handling a situation which came as a complete surprise. Several times I found myself leaning back in my chair, hands up, praising Him for His delightful solutions to situations.

The Holy Spirit is so gentle and loving in His work that you will not have to worry about offending people, or missing the point. He can get the message across without preaching or bludgeoning the readers with your Bible. He's so creative that blowing apart writer's block is a small thing. He can give you characters who truly touch the hearts of your readers and get them involved in the world you create. Remember, he can create out of nothing. It's easy for Him to help you create a world and populate it. As far as I can tell, He loves helping me do that.

More than that, the Holy Spirit gives me discernment when I use a word which will offend—when that is not my intention. He gives me the wisdom to touch your heart—because He knows your heart as well as He knows mine. It's a wonderful way to write.

Let me give you a taste of what we're about

We get a glimpse at the beginning of I Corinthians 2. Paul's talking about preaching and evangelizing, but by redacting those words we can see the conceptual attitude.

...I did not come proclaiming...lofty words or wisdom. ...
my message is not in plausible words of wisdom, but
in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

It gets more clear later in the chapter.

...we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom
but taught by the Spirit...

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Now, maybe you think you're not interested in this. But let me testify: If you want really great ideas and powerful prose—the Holy Spirit does it better than anyone. I can't tell you how many times I have come to a blockage where I don't know where to go next. A simple prayer, "Lord, I need your wisdom, and you promised..." He usually gives me an amazing solution—quite quickly, often instantly. I'm not sure the whining helps at all, but you understand what I mean if you know the Lord. He loves being actively involved with your life.

We are meant to impart words of power

But Paul was preaching to win souls to the Kingdom. What does that have to do with me as an author? So, you are writing worthless tripe filled with nothing but excitement and entertainment? *Shame on you.*

A call from God is about sharing an often hidden reality. We can speculate all we like, but without the ring of truth, we have little to offer. It is true that we are charged to present our words openly and honestly, but as Paul said:

We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves ...even if our message is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing." 2 Cor 4:2-3

In the power of the Holy Spirit we can run that gauntlet of fear and doubt, producing words of power which change the lives of our readers.

Some recent understandings

Bringing reality to Christian fantasy touches the heart, if you allow it. The virus quarantine has been a real blessing to me. I've been left alone to write eight or more hours a day. It's been a life-changing experience to live my life in a heroic fantasy setting—truly wonderful to see the Lord working before my eyes.

If you take your life, and transform it into a Biblical style of narrative, it can open your eyes to what He's been doing all along. More than that, it can touch your readers on a new level.

Take the Acts of the Apostles, for example.

In the Biblical narrative, it seems like lives of constant miracles, interventions, and deliverances. Yet we know Acts covers around thirty years. If we space out the events on its real time-line, we can see that there were large periods of waiting, and simply living out their Christian lives.

How many times do we have an intense introduction to an area, a new work of the Lord, followed by "*they lived there for three more years of fruitful ministry.*" From Paul being knocked on his butt to where he and Bartholomew headed out on the first trip were several [actually many] years of ministry and growth—evidently with nothing spectacular enough to mention. They were just learning how to walk in the Spirit.

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Bringing reality to Christian fantasy touches the heart

Yet those years in between are what built them up to be prepared for the opportunities when they came. So, the reality we add is what we learned in those unmentioned years in-between. How would this hero or heroine live and learn, if they were you? That's the reality we can add.

A major confrontation with a demon infesting a sinner is easily and simply dealt with—after years of daily deliverances in one's own life within our family and church. The daily experiences are what build our faith. Then, when a major event takes place, it's handled as easily as the daily ones are—in faith, trusting in the One who is able. Our Messiah's yoke is easy and His burden is light. That is what we learn. And, that is what we must share with our readers.

This level of reality in fantasy tales is almost entirely missing from the genre

Though the trials of our characters are usually massive, over the top events, it's their character, developed in daily living, which takes them through. To make your stories real, show some of the ways your characters learned from the Lord. This is the daily walk we must add—the things taught to us by the Holy Spirit in our daily living. For there's no time to learn much in the major events. We use what we've learned in daily living.

Things your characters can teach your readers

More than anything else, personal intimacy with the Lord matters

For me, the most important thing I've ever learned is that personal intimacy with Yeshua changes everything. Currently, most of the church ignores this simple fact. To my horror, even churches preaching the gospel about the blood and the cross, focusing on new converts and leading them to the Lord, often don't mention this from the pulpit. All of their services are evangelistic.

As far as I can tell, the pastors and teachers who know this don't have any reticence to teach on the subject. They simply forget to mention it. I can understand that. People who do not know the Lord, do not have the Holy Spirit. So, this level of intimacy is not helpful in getting them saved. Without the Holy Spirit, personal intimacy with God Almighty seems beyond strange—pure fantasy.

So teaching about personal intimacy with Jesus has become critical in the world today

This blessing is enabled by our rebirth or birth from God. It's a normal part of walking in the Spirit. However, our Messiah always remains a gentleman and will not force His attentions upon you. This is a two-way street. This level of intimacy requires intense communication back and forth between both of the two people involved.

In order to have intimacy with God, you are required to know Him well and talk with Him often in a frequent, long-standing personal relationship.

We know that Jesus' listeners in Israel 2000 years ago were ingrained with the Jewish slang of the day. Their understanding of knowing a person includes this idiomatic meaning, sexual intercourse. In practical terms, knowing is an intimacy like that experienced in marriage. But, this level of intimacy does not require marriage. With Jesus, in a real way, we are still in the courting phase. We don't get to marry Him until after the rapture.

All believers can expect this level of intimacy with their Lord. As mentioned above, personal intimacy with Yeshua must be sought out. Jesus will not force it upon you. You need to ask Him for it. But if you ask Him for this level of intimacy—He will respond quickly and directly. He will always respond to this seeking by you with a strong affirmation. You may need to be a little persistent, so He knows you're serious.

It's the result of conversational prayer with your future husband

Yes, if you are a believer, you are engaged to Jesus. We all are. We find out that a major part of our walk with the Lord is coming to know Him. We need to learn this now before we're yanked out of here. Why? Because if we do not know Him at this level we may not be going in the Rapture. More importantly, this lack of personal intimacy with Yeshua really hampers the effectiveness of our witness and the development of fruit in our lives.

I realize that the focus of many Christians is the saving of souls. We are not mistaken about this. It is the initial part of the Great Commission—to be followed by discipling those who repent and turn to the Lord. We are all to be involved in this.

But we must not avoid the more uncommon task of developing intimacy with our betrothed. I mean: we're engaged. Don't you want to get to know Him better before He becomes your spouse for all eternity?

Is intimacy required?

I believe it is. It may be possible to make it to heaven without it. Personally, I wouldn't count on it. How can it hurt? Do a search in the Bible for knowing God. Jesus, in his priestly prayer of John 17, states emphatically, "This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." John 17:3 MEV. Yes, it's the same word again.

Personal intimacy is necessary for you as a writer, and it's the best thing you can give your readers.

Other unusual things to share with your readers

Finding freedom from sin is rarely taught, and teaching about this is getting more scarce. Actually, the bondage of sin is rarely mentioned. So, no one knows that freedom from sin is even possible. Few know before they meet Jesus that this issue even exists.

"Do you not know that we who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that **our old man has been crucified with Him, so that the body of sin might be destroyed**, and we should no

longer be slaves to sin. For **the one who has died is freed from sin.**" [Romans 6: 3-7]

For the one who has died is freed from sin. What an immense statement! Of course, this assumes you know that before you presented yourself as a living sacrifice to Jesus [Romans 12:1] you were a slave to sin. (If you haven't done that yet, you need to take care of this.) This is why you couldn't quit sinning, no matter how hard you tried. No wonder people do drugs, become addicted to sex, and all the other horrible things you and I did before the Lord brought us out of that bondage.

Before a person is saved, he or she has no freedom (other than what sin they choose to commit that day). They don't even have the freedom to choose Jesus. That can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. All of us were living lives of bondage to sin and frustration.

But finding freedom from sin is just the start

This is something where we need to cooperate. We need to choose to stop specific sins. The Holy Spirit will bring those to mind—so we can deal with them. Some people are almost completely cleaned up with their salvation. But, that is not the norm.

Even getting the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, with its obvious filling with power, doesn't magically remove sin from your life. It removes the power of sin, but not the habitual committing of sin.

You may be free, but you need to walk in it

Getting rid of some sins in our lives takes an act of our will. This seems to be true of fleshly sin. I mean, if you're stopping by your wife's friend's office on the way home for a quickie, you must simply stop it. The Holy Spirit will back up your choice. The same is true of drug use [yes, alcohol is a drug—one of the worst ones]. But we find that choice needs to be made—often out loud ver-

bally. You choose to stop sinning and exercise your faith to enable the Holy Spirit to back up your choice. If that doesn't work—you may need deliverance from the enemy. But that's simple and easy also.

Other things are taken care of by the renewing of our minds [Romans 12:2]. I never chose to quit watching junk TV. My mind simply changed over several years and I found I simply no longer had any interest in watching that stuff. For me, the same thing happened with pork. Your life is different. But if you've walked with the Lord for any length of time, you discover some old bad habits are simply gone.

Think of your readers if they come to know a character who walks through this to victory

The Lord delights in the little things

Bringing reality into your character's life

One of my major joys comes from the fact that our Lord delights in the little things. My wife and I were both creative artists in many fields. One of the reasons the Lord brought us together was to be able to support each other in our creative endeavors. I've written several times about that unique way we are made in His image—our creativity. After all, He created it all from nothing, and John 1 makes it clear that Jesus was there at Creation.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were created through Him, and without Him nothing was created that was created. JOHN 1:2-3 MEV

As an example of a little thing, we had to build a ramp in front of the house to get my wife out of the house. The ramp covered up some plants, but there was nothing we could do about it. Last spring we were reading about Monarch butterflies—how they have four or five generations every summer but only the last one of the summer

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is able to migrate and fly to Mexico for the winter. More than that, they require milkweed plants for their reproduction cycle. Interesting, it's yet another sign of unique creation, shooting down evolution.

Pat wanted to plant some milkweed for them. But one scraggly plant came up in the hole in the middle of our ramp. So, we just prayed the Lord would bless it and give us monarchs.

Over the summer, we had nearly a dozen milkweed plants grow up through various openings around the ramps. Going in and out of the house, Pat and I saw several of the yellow and black striped caterpillars munching on the milkweed. Pat asked the Lord if she could see the chrysalis as a caterpillar transformed into a butterfly.

A month later, under the 2x4 rail in front of where I parked her chair while I locked the front door, one of the caterpillars hung a perfect bright green chrysalis exactly where she could look at it closely. Not only was it perfect, but it had tiny gold dots which glowed like they were on fire.

Eventually, Pat looked at the cocoon closely as we came back from an appointment into the front door. The chrysalis was translucent and even transparent in areas. We could see the black with the white spots of its wing clearly—cramped into this tiny cocoon a half- to three-quarter-inch (centimeter and a half, maybe) in height and three-eighths of an inch or a centimeter in diameter. The next morning I went out to get the mail and a gorgeous Monarch butterfly took off from that area of the rail. It was larger and brighter than any I've ever seen. It flew straight and level, as fast a bird, until it disappeared from view—lost in the distance. You can't tell us that it's not true that our Lord delights in the little things.

*This is a type of reality you can add
to make your stories more real.*



It's the normal things which are so unusual

If you're like most new creations in the Lord, you talk to Him all the time. Maybe, you haven't learned to listen yet. But that will come. Your characters need to do this also. How does He speak to you? He should speak that way to your believing characters.

If you lose something, how do you find it? After a while, you learn to ask the Lord where it is very early in the process. I've watched as my eyes simply moved to see the missing object. The Holy Spirit does stuff like that all the time. He should do it to your believing characters.

In many Christian novels, the characters mention the Jesus once a week, once a month, or never. That's not realistic, except for believers whose walk with the Lord remains compromised. It's hard to add something to a character which you are not experiencing.

On the other hand, there are times when I forget to pray. Then I wonder why what I am hoping for never happens. How can I get wisdom, if I don't ask for it. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally and without criticism, and it will be given to him." JAMES 1:5. If I do ask, it shows up, and often quickly.

Plus, there's the freedom found in walking in the Spirit. Repentance comes quickly, as do changes in direction. Knowledge and wisdom become constant companions. The Lord promised, and He delivers.

42: Called to write Christian fiction

Like my wife and I used to say, “I don’t know how the heathen manage without the Lord.” Your believing characters need Him with them hour by hour also.

The Lord didn’t call us to preach, but to witness. A witness tells what he or she has seen, felt, and experienced. No second-hand or third-hand anecdotes, but things you have seen the Lord do. He does a lot, hour by hour, day by day, year by year.

In everything, follow the Lord’s lead

It’s not that we can’t decide things without His input, it’s that it’s a foolish thing to do. He may tell you He doesn’t care about your latest query. So decide. But don’t assume it will be that way the next time. When the Lord does have an opinion, we should take it as a command. *Your wish is my command...*

We know that the Lord can protect us from the enemy. But He can also protect us from ourselves. I don’t know about you, but my largest problem is the foolish things I want to do—not sin any more, but foolishness. I’ve had to learn to hear the Lord when He is saying, “You really don’t want to do that.”

The Lord has a lot more knowledge than we ever have available to us in the flesh. That’s why He didn’t want us eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil. We don’t know enough to make that determination. That will change in heaven. But we need to be careful here and now.

Part of the burden of living in the flesh is this need to submit ourselves to the worth and wisdom of the Lord. The flesh fights this tooth and nail. But we’re supposed to make our flesh subservient to our spirit. Even Jesus had to fight this in the garden that last night. But he did it.

Thank God, Jesus the man had enough character to put down his flesh and say, “Not my will, but yours.”

44: Called to write Christian fiction

This is one of the ways we build reality into our characters. They may have a really tough time doing what is required, but by the grace of God they do it. Sometimes, I resist for quite a while—but not nearly so much now that I’ve matured a little. I’ve learned that if it is a change the Lord wants to be done, He will not give up until I do it.

Of course, I could harden my heart. But in 46 years of walking in the spirit, I have developed a deep aversion to that. I want my heart soft before the Lord. This is another character trait your believing characters should have working in their life.

But don't try to fake it

If you are not living it, you won't be able to make it real in your books. You can only witness to what you've learned and made part of your life. Paul talked about that when he wrote, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 2 CORINTHIANS 2: 14 MEV If you are living in the flesh, it is obvious to anyone living in the spirit. It's even obvious to most non-believers.

You truly need to work hard on your own spiritual growth to be fruitful as an author called by the Lord to write. Your readers need your insight. If you haven't been born from above, you cannot share about how extensive the transformation is. The same is true about being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, I have experienced the anointing to enable me to explain something I didn't understand. But for many things, it simply is not possible.

For example, I have never had a child. As a step-father, I have raised two children. But that deep blood bond is beyond me. I don't understand it. I'd be a fool to try and share about that.

In the same way, I have limited experience with vivid prophetic visions. On the other hand, I have spoken and received prophetic words. They do have to be discerned, But, I know about them—so sharing about that type of spiritual manifestation is realistic to me.

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I freely admit that it is helpful to have several decades of ministry experience. But I recall that the Lord gave me exciting things to share within weeks and months of my radical transformation back in January, 1974.

If you haven't experienced these things, join a small group Bible study. Visit a church where these things happen on a regular basis. Talk with your friends. Share what you know. These experiences are not hard to find. Ask the Lord where to go and what to do. You need to be careful, but there's a lot of excellent preaching on YouTube these days. I don't know how long that will last. But it's there now.

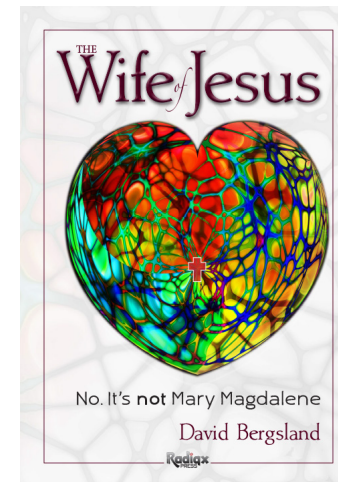
Finally, read the Bible daily, asking the Lord to explain it to you. Ask him for new revelations. He delights in finding someone interested enough to ask.

Relax

for it is God who works in you,
both to make you willing
and to enable you for his good pleasure

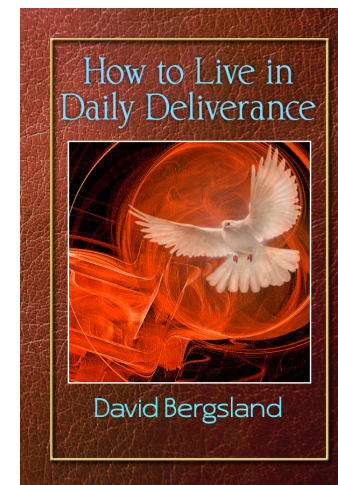
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