



## ***Inner Guts: How an extreme makeover of our hearts enlivens, deepens, and betters our prose***

By Mary E. DeMuth

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### **Session One: Inside Out**

### **How the Journey of Further Publication Hones our Hearts**

#### **Don't shun writing in obscurity even though you're published**

- **Dare to discover through personal writing.** "Writing is a process in which we discover what lives in us. The writing itself reveals what is alive. The deepest satisfaction of writing is precisely that it opens up new spaces within us of which we were not aware before we started to write. To write is to embark on a journey whose final destination we do not know." Henri Nouwen, *Reflections on Theological Education*
- **Explore your calling.** (Jeremiah 15:19, 20:9)
- **Remember Joseph's story**
- **Be faithful in little** (Luke 16:19, Zechariah 4:10, MSG)
- **Focus on Jesus:** "The secret of our survival is fixing our eyes on Jesus and making Him alone our focus. Then our walk with God and our commitment to serve Him will no longer depend on whether or not people treat us right or circumstances are in our favor. We will no longer rely on our emotions to support us or on our successes to keep us going. Jesus alone will become our goal and motivation—our prize—and we will live for Him, run our race for Him and cross the finish line for Him." (K.P. Yohannan, "What Keeps us Going?" *Send!*, Second Quarter, 2006, p. 23)

#### **Lay down the idol of writing**

- **If writing is an obsession, lay it down for a period of time.** (Ecclesiastes 12:12)
- **If you prioritize writing over the enjoyment of your family, reevaluate.**
- **God is jealous. He will not allow Himself to be second place to your profession.**
- **Repent.**
- **Be a follower of Jesus—literally!**
- **Jesus prayed and spent time alone with His father.**
- **Jesus said difficult things, even though it frittered away His fan base.** (John 6:6)
- **Consider the least of these.**

## Hone the craft

- **Count the cost.** (Luke 14:28-29)
- **Change the curve of the Well-known Author Syndrome (W.A.S. Mary DeMuth patented word and acronym!)**
- **Be a lifelong learner of the craft.** (Proverbs 22:29)
- **Read voraciously, even outside your genre. Expand to reading ABA works.** (Ecclesiastes 12:9-10)
- **“Write what you need to read.** Write from your heart and about the things you know. Write truth. Sometimes it hurts a great deal to peel away the layers of self-deception and see ourselves in the mirror, but it draws us closer to Jesus. It also ministers to others who are struggling with the same issues. Read the Bible every day before you begin. Study the Word carefully so that when you do write (or speak), you sense when you are off the path. Always keep your focus on Jesus. We should live our lives to please him, whether we’re writing or doing anything else.” **Francine Rivers**, from her web site.

## Avoid pitfalls

- **Over-ambition.** What does it look like in an advanced writer’s life?
  - Taking on more contracts than you can handle.
  - Believing the good press and shunning the bad.
  - Treating people differently now that you’ve “arrived.”
  - Not giving back to other beginning writers.
  - For branding’s sake, not writing from your passion.
  - Forsaking time with Jesus or time with family in order to write.
- **Writer’s block.** When can it happen?
  - Perfectionism. We stop understanding Anne Lamott’s wisdom of writing “crummy” first drafts.
  - Mind clutter. (importance of returning to simplicity)
  - When we are more writing for the market demands than the demands of our heart
  - Stress.
- **Laziness**—giving up before you really hone a piece.

## Deal with Rejection

- **It’s inevitable, even when you’re multi-published, and for some reason, it hurts more!**

It is the branch that bears the fruit  
That feels the knife  
To prune it for a larger growth,  
A fuller life  
Though every budding twig be trimmed,  
And every grace  
Of swaying tendril, springing leaf,  
May lose its place  
You whose life of joy seems left,  
With beauty shorn;  
Whose aspirations lie in dust,  
All bruised and torn,  
Rejoice, though each desire, each dream,  
Each hope of Thine  
Will fade and fade; it is the hand  
Of Love Divine  
That holds the knife, that cuts and breaks  
With tenderest touch,  
That you, whose life has borne some fruit  
Might now bear much.

**Annie Johnson Flint**

- **Replace your anger with humility.**
- **Remember it's universal!**
  - "I carry in my heart the insults of so many people" (Psalms 89:50).
- **Understand that rejection may not be about your abilities.**

### Develop a prayer team

- **Randy Alcorn inspired this.**
- **To affect a dying world with the gospel, you must be lifted up in prayer.**
- **This gives others the opportunity to be a vital part of a writing ministry.**
- **As a regularly published author, this is a necessity.**
- **Others who pray can be a good checks and balances system for you.**

### Withstand the trial of notoriety

- **Take the lowest seat** (Luke 14:7-11, Proverbs 27:2)
- **Much is required.** (Luke 12:48)
- **Become a servant.** Randy Alcorn's advice: "Focus on being a servant. Ask yourself, 'How can I serve in any situation, whether it be . . . with a taxi driver, flight attendant, waitress, etc. Think of what you can do for that person. It's not about you; it's about the Lord. This gets your mind off yourself and onto another person. The greatest danger of notoriety is you start thinking about you. People then exist to serve you. This is exactly the opposite of the servant mentality. Jesus came to serve, not to be served."
- **Woe to you** (Luke 6:26)
- **Praise is a crucible** (Proverbs 27:1)
- **The danger of success.** "Never cease praying that you will not become a star or a celebrity. Donald Davidson has said, 'Our culture places an absolute premium upon various kinds of stardom. This degrades and impoverishes ordinary life, ordinary work, ordinary experience.'" From *Scribbling in the Sand*, Michael Card "It is by affliction chiefly that the heart of man is purified, and that the thoughts are fixed on a better state. Prosperity, unalloyed and imperfect as it is, has power to intoxicate the imagination, to fix the mind on the present scene, to produce confidence and elation and to make him who enjoys affluence and honors forget the hand by which they were bestowed." Samuel Johnson
- **Maintain an eternal perspective.**

### Give back

- **Don't forget where you once were.**
- **Recall your journey and offer hope to others.**
- **Give away your work. Edit and teach for free.**
- **Mentor as God directs.**

Remember He is near and will "move" you.

## Session Two: Inner Guts: What it Takes to be a Career Writer

- **My journey of publication**
- **Writing is a difficult profession.** Hear what the experts say...

Writing takes...

- **Tenacity and perseverance**
  - “*Seabiscuit* is really an allegory of Laura’s struggle—a come-from-behind hero rising to prominence,” said Kim Kenney, head of the Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome Association. Writes Hillenbrand, “I don’t want to be known as Laura the invalid. I want to be known as Laura the writer” (Hartlove, Chris, “Against the Odds,” *People*, 8/11/03, pp. 71-72).
- **Community**
  - Harper Lee would’ve never published *To Kill a Mockingbird* without a great deal of strong community around her.
- **Humility**
  - Let’s share our stories of humble beginnings.
  - CBA writer Cec Murphey’s story: “For refreshment time at one conference, we went into the church gym. Because instructors had a yellow ribbon flowing from the bottom of their nametags, we were easy to identify. A woman came in, walked up to one instructor, gazed at her nametag, tilted her head so she could read the name through her bifocals, and moved on. She did that 3 or 4 times. She finally got to me. She stared at my face, peered at my nametag, and looked at my face again. ‘Oh, you’re nobody,’ she said and moved on.”
- **Risk/courage**
  - Jan Karon moved away from her advertising job and moved to Blowing Rock, North Carolina to write. “God had given me a gift, and I’d always been terrified to try it. My prayer was, ‘God if you want me to write books, You’re going to have to show me how to do it. I took a risk when I left advertising in 1988. It’s very frightening to think of leaving everything and just stepping out on faith. But of course, faith is more than enough to step out on’ (Tompkins, Ptolemy, “The Real Mitford,” *Guideposts*, November 2003, pp. 28-32).
- **Discipline and routine**
  - B.O.C. time
  - Weekly writing goals
  - Self-imposed deadlines
- **A strong knowledge of the industry**
  - Hear what agents and editors said about the query letters they’ve received.
- **Thick skin and a tender heart**
  - Rejection is inevitable.
  - Don’t let it make you bitter, let it make you better. Example: Harper Lee
- **A belief in sovereignty**
  - Do we really believe God sees us as we sit in front of the keyboard?

- Nothing we do for Jesus is in vain: "So my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless" (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- Do we really believe He is big enough to accomplish His purposes through us our stories?
- Would we rather God give a stamp of approval to our own writing plans or let Him orchestrate our careers?
- With sovereignty, we take setbacks in stride. "If God has made your cup sweet, drink it with grace; if He has made it bitter, drink it in communion with Him." Oswald Chambers
- Our overarching goal should be the glory of God, not our words in print.
- Being able to let the past sleep: "Let the past sleep, but let it sleep on the bosom of Christ, and go out into the irresistible future with Him" (Chambers, Oswald, *My Utmost for His Highest*, Westwood, NJ: Barbour and Company, 1935, p. 49).
- Author Jan Winebrenner, "How does it accomplish God's purposes to cut in front of someone to get a table at Mount Hermon?"

- **A determination to set trends instead of following them:**

## Trends are set by people who don't think about trends. By Mary E. DeMuth

*Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller is a trend, but before that book, (and similarly Girl Meets God), the edgy 20-something faith memoir was not cool. My biggest pet peeve though, is bandwagoning. Once someone does something innovative (which is really just an extension of the passion God has placed within them), then eighty-seven someones copy it ad infinitum. When Donald Miller grappled in prayer about how to reach his campus, he and his friends decided to open a confession booth where THEY confessed the sins of the church. The idea was radical and an immediate hit, orchestrated by the Holy Spirit for their locale. Now, though, I am hearing about these exact confession booths springing up all over the place. I'm curious whether, in my strolls down the CBA halls this year, if I will see confession booth kits.*

*I see trend as a bit elusive. People who set trends usually don't mean to. They simply listen to the Holy Spirit, write something totally amazing and let it go on the breezes of the fickle Christian marketplace. What happens after that is up to the Lord. Write from your passion. Be attentive to the whispers of the Holy Spirit. Be willing to walk through difficult places personally, holding the hand of Jesus, so that you have something to offer others. Beyond that, hone your craft. And let the pieces fall where they may.*

- **Flexibility to weather the crazy changes of this industry**
  - People move all the time—editors, publishers, agents
  - Flexibility and holding our writing with an open hand helps us navigate this
- **An examination of motive, but not an obsession with it:**

## On hyperactive consciences, by Mary E. DeMuth

*I'm one of those people with a hyperactive conscience. Someone can look at me funny and I'll say sorry. Therefore, I can go a little nutty trying to evaluate the motives of my heart in terms of writing. Yes, Jesus is the most important relationship in my life, followed by my husband and three beautiful children. But, writing is my calling. I'm finally able to settle into it, like a comfortable couch, finally able to embrace it.*

*Sometimes the Enemy of our souls would like to whisper condemnation in our ears with words like, "How do you know you're doing this for Jesus? You're just after the fame and glory." And being humans, we listen to that voice, trying desperately to sift through it. For hyperactive conscience lady, that means I sift and resift, worrying I'm not truly living with eternal perspective.*

*I wished I realized sooner that all my wrestling about whether my writing motives were pure or not should have been left at the feet of Jesus. I've struggled with wondering if I loved writing too much. Would the Lord ask me to lay it down?*

Inner Guts Handouts  
Mary E. DeMuth

*And just yesterday, I had an amazing talk with a writer friend. She struggled with that very fear. She said, "I spent many days and weeks pouring through the Bible, seeking the Lord. I realized God brought all the men and women of faith on a journey and that He used every circumstance to culminate their ministry. He never told Moses, 'OK, stop leading the people. You love it too much.' Or to Joseph, 'Yeah, I brought you through this time of desolation to a place of prominence. I'd like you to step down.'" My friend continued, "If someone took out the writer part of my heart, part of my heart would be empty. I am a writer. It's how God made me. He created my life and pointed me in this direction to serve Him as I write."*

*Her words brought freedom. We can spend undue energy fretting about our motives, bearing a heavy yoke. Jesus beckons us to lay down our wrestling, to trust that the Spirit within us will check us if we are selfishly ambitious, and to write with vigor for His glory. This world NEEDS our redemptive words. If we struggle constantly with whether our motives are correct, we'll never release those words. So, relax. Trust the Spirit and write.*

- **An eternal perspective**
  - Mike Smith's *The Secret*

## Session Three: Extreme Makeover: Writer Edition

Some quotes to consider:

"Most writers fail from lack of character than from lack of intelligence."  
— **Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading***

"All writing comes by the grace of God."  
— **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

- **Are you ready for the makeover?**
  - "What you're after is **truth from the inside out**. Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life." Psalm 51:6, MSG
  - Only God can do a heart makeover. Real, authentic writing will follow.
  - What is in our hearts spills out onto the page.
  
- **Are you broken or brittle?**
  - What needs to be torn down in your life? Pride? Fear? Anger? Worry?
  - Are you tender? K.P. Yohannan article
  - Are you broken? brokenness handout
  
- **Are you ready to consider that God may want to heal your heart through the vehicle of your writing?**
  - Ken Gire, author of *Windows of the Soul* reminds us that, "we reach for God in many ways, through our sculptures and our Scriptures. Through our pictures and our prayers. Through our writing and our worship. And through them, he reaches for us."<sup>1</sup>
  - How God used an editor to change my heart
  
- **Are you aware of the problem of whitewashed writing?**

*Everything flows from our hearts. It's not so much what we put in that defiles us as what comes out. Consider Jesus' words: "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man" (Matthew 15:18-20).*

*Jesus is saying that it's not what we appear like on the outside that defiles us. It's not our dirty hands, in other words. It's what's inside. And eventually, what is inside will be known to all. I hope and pray the CBA is not full of whitewashed tombs, writers parading around with clean hands and darkened hearts. I hope and pray it's not all about our own ministry, our own glory, our own brand, our own corner of the Christian market share, our own niche. I pray it's about honest pilgrims with honest hearts penning honest, life-giving words for the sake His renown, He who is the Author of all words, of all redemptive stories.*

*The first shall be last and the last shall be first, Jesus said. I wonder how many bestselling authors will be standing at the end of the line.*

- **Did you know we, as writers, are translators of God's comfort?** (2 Corinthians 1:3-11).
  - If we engage in life and pain and engage also in God, then we can offer comfort and life to others who suffer, **through the vehicle of a well-crafted story.**
  
- **Are you willing to examine your publication goals?**

- Are they blocked goals? Something someone could undermine? Or circumstances could alter?
- Or are they healthy, realistic goals?

*Publishing doesn't validate your life. How true.*

*I have to admit before I was published, I thought that if I reached that nirvana called "published author," I'd have sweet validation. Every day would be smiles and dancing. You know what? I was wrong. Being published is terrific, mind you, but it doesn't bring happiness or validation. Instead, it adds more stress to your life.*

*Gone are the days when I could write for the sheer joy of it. Always looming is a deadline. And though I pinch myself because I "get" to write, and I feel like I'm doing what I was created to do, I sometimes get lost in the cycle of publicity, sales and marketing.*

*Maybe I'm the only one (and I'm embarrassed to admit this publicly), but I check my Amazon ratings for the three books I have in print. I know, know, know that these ratings mean very little. I know that a high rank (which is bad) just means that during that hour the book didn't sell. I know that if a band of readers (like a book club) went together and bought ten of my books in one hour, my rating would shoot lower (which is good). But it doesn't mean anything.*

*Why do I pester myself with such nonsense? After all, publishing doesn't validate my life, right?*

*It's like this weird endless cycle of neediness. It evolves in incremental steps of if onllys:*

1. *If only I could be published in a magazine, even if I'm not paid.*
2. *If only I could be paid to be published in a magazine.*
3. *If only I could go to a writer's conference and have an agent show an interest in my proposal.*
4. *If only I could sign with an agent.*
5. *If only that agent could sell my work.*
6. *If only I could have more than one contract.*
7. *If only I could earn out the advance for the book I wrote.*
8. *If only I could sell enough books so a publisher would want another book from me.*
9. *If only a publisher would treat a mid-list author like me kindly.*
10. *If only I could make a living at writing.*

*That's a lot of if onllys!*

*I remember reading about blocked goals once and it's stuck with me. A blocked goal is a goal that is dependent on other's actions or happenstance. All these if onllys fit, albeit somewhat awkwardly, as blocked goals. I don't have any control over whether I'll get a contract offered. I can't make people buy my books. I can't make my book sell enough to earn back an advance. I can't control the fickleness of this industry.*

*What I can do is create goals that can't be blocked. Goals like:*

1. *I will listen to the heartbeat of God and write what He inspires me to write.*
2. *I will not let writing, by God's strength, overshadow the needs of my family.*
3. *I will write the best books I can write, always seeking to improve, abounding in humility and teachability.*
4. *I will be patient when sales wane and trust God's sovereignty.*
5. *I will promote my books with this motivation: to see the kingdom of God advanced.*
6. *I will laugh at the unpredictability of this industry and strive to be lighthearted.*
7. *I will serve others and not let elusive and fleeting fame (if that happens) inflate my head.*
8. *I will attend conferences, read writing books, and welcome critique.*
9. *I will serve my readers by praying for them and answering emails when God provides time.*
10. *I will write for the sheer joy of it, not desponding unpublished words.*

*So, yeah, publishing does not validate me. Sure it feels great to hold my book in my hands. It's lovely when I get a good review. But it's the hand of God on my life that brings me ultimate validation. That God stooped to earth and chose me, a frail, needy girl, stops my heart every time. And by His grace, I will carry on.*

- **Are you ready for God to perform an inside/out makeover when it comes to sales figures, publicity, and marketing?**
  - The Support Raising Phenomenon
  - See if you can fast from watching your Amazon ratings.
  - Remember God orders it all: “The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble they will not fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand” (Psalm 37:23-24).
  - Do we truly trust God to handle our publicity campaign?
  - Consider interviews and speaking as an opportunity to expand God's kingdom.
  - Let's share stories of how God has helped market our books.

## Session Four: The Subversive Act of Writing the Truth

Some quotes to consider:

"Risk being unliked. Tell the truth as you understand it. If you're a writer, you have a moral obligation to do this. And it is a revolutionary act—truth is always subversive."

— **Anne Lamott, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life***

"The secret of good writing is telling the truth."

— **Gordon Lish**

- Some Scriptures to consider: (Ephesians 4:15, John 14:6, John 1:14)
- Jesus said "I tell you the truth" 78 times in Scripture
- Satan is the antithesis to truth. (John 8:44)
- Lying is also the native language of our world and even the Christian world. Telling the truth, then, is a subversive act. It deals a decisive blow to the Enemy of our souls. Writing the truth in story form is spiritual warfare. It advances the Kingdom of God.

### Why don't we write the truth?

- We don't realize that the truth of our lives is great fodder for stories. (Harper Lee)
- We are afraid—of relatives, of fellow Christians, of our reputation, of what others will think of us.
- We worry that others will tie our characters to us, so we fail to make our characters breathe like humans.
- We won't admit the truth to ourselves; therefore, we can't articulate it to others in a story. Counselor Hud McWilliams: "The human heart has an almost unlimited capacity to hide the truth from itself if the truth is too painful."
- We want and love control.
- We love the applause of man over the applause of heaven (Galatians 1:10)
- We think hiding works (David).
- We have a wrong view of Jesus as Love and Truth. Jesus was not always nice. His words were not always kind and sweet. But we've typified Him thus.

***The more we are able to grapple with truth in our hearts, even the difficult, painful truth that we are needy and helpless and sinful, the more our words will reflect reality, the more it will transform (by the power of the Holy Spirit) our readers.***

### Why is writing the truth important?

- It gives the opportunity for God to be glorified. (2 Corinthians 4:7)
- It invites others into community.
- Because we represent the God of truth. If we shirk from telling it, we don't represent Him well.
- It opens others' eyes so they can see Jesus.
- It frees people. (John 8:32, 36)
- It un.masks.

### For the novelists out there: Isn't fiction 'non-truth'?

- Jesus told parables of truth.
- The Bible is not merely a handbook, a book of be-a-good-Christian lists; it's a mystery, an ever-unfolding redemptive story.
- Stories knit generations together by preserving truth.

### How stories daring to tell the truth changed culture forever:

- *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- *The Jungle*

- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- Chuck Colson: how truth-exposing fiction is a vehicle for social change—handout

**But what about the dark side of life? Should we expose it all? What about profanity?**

- Telling the truth is the ultimate risk.
- The beauty of redemption shines brighter on a black canvas. “I refuse to become complicit with evil by characterizing that nasty, nasty stuff in a way that softens its destructive bite. Doing so would not only be deceptive but it would undermine the great victory won by our hero in His majestic defeat of this terrible villain called evil.” (Ted Decker, [www.teddecker.com](http://www.teddecker.com), blog entry 1/28/06).
- Honor Jesus with your words (swearing, blatant sexual scenes, etc.)
- Remember Sam’s words:
  - “It’s like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were. And sometimes you didn’t want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad has happened? But in the end, it’s only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you.” (Script, *The Two Towers* movie)

**So what? How do we do we infuse truth into our writings?**

- First, be willing to “go there” with Jesus, to let Him heal wounded parts of you.
- Let the story tell the truth.
- Consider God’s timing in it all. You may be far too close to a situation to spill it onto the page. Let it percolate.
- But don’t run away from it either, even if the market doesn’t seem ready
- Study how Jesus took principles of truth and set them into parables.

***Dare to let the truth Jesus has burned into you set you free, and, ultimately, set your readers free.***

## Session Five: Theology Counts

“Brightly colored sunsets and starry heavens, majestic mountains and shining seas, and fragrant fields and fresh cut flowers are not even half as beautiful as a soul who is sowing Jesus out of love, through the wear and tear of an ordinary, unpoetic life.” Frederick William Faber

### What we think about Jesus matters. Who is Jesus?

- **He has become domesticated by the church**
  - Is He wimpy, needing exercise and a suntan?
  - Is He our buddy? Our best friend who always overlooks our transgressions?
  - Is He middle class?
  - Is He ho-hum?
  - Is He our boyfriend/girlfriend?
  -
- **Let's list the positive characteristics of Pharisees. What did they do well?**
  - John 5:37-40

### What is the church?

- **Bound set theory or Centered set theory?**
- **Fence or a well?**
- “The missional-incarnational church, though, is a centered set. This means that rather than drawing a border to determine who belongs and who doesn't, a centered set is defined by its core values, and people are not seen as in or out, but as closer or further away from the center. In that sense, everyone is in and no one is out. Though some people are close to the center and others far from it, everyone is potentially part of the community in its broadest sense.” *The Shaping of Things to Come*, p. 47.
- The question: how does our writing become a well? How can we write invitational words of life to those on the periphery?

### What is the religion of the day?

- **Materialism.**
  - “Enjoy what you have rather than desiring what you don't have. Just dreaming about nice things is meaningless; it is like chasing the wind” (Ecclesiastes 6:9).
  - “Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).
- **A marketing expert said this: “We stepped in where Christianity has left off.”**
- **What heaven used to offer is what the market fulfills now.**
- **We live like kings but we're bored, depressed and we've lost our imagination**
- **We need a biblical theology of possessions and stuff**
- **Writers who love Jesus are caught in a paradox, then. We write for the market, but we live for the Kingdom**

### What are the implications of our theology of Jesus, church, and possessions for us as writers?

## Session Six: Pay it Forward to your reader and other writers

- **First: How can you replenish others if you aren't replenished? REST and Sabbath and listening are keys to great product, productivity, longevity and transference:**
  - "We are merely moving shadows, and all our busy rushing ends in nothing" (Psalm 39:6, NLT)
  - LISTEN TO GOD FIRST: "All our authority is derived. Either God gives us words, or we are only giving opinions. Either God vouches for us, or our credentials are forged. If anyone ever stops to listen to you or me, this had better be solidly in place: Our speaking comes out of our listening. What we say comes out of what we hear. We have to be people who listen, day and night, to God. Our utterances ought to be as Jesus' were: an echoing of the Father, an imitation of Him. They ought to be a holy ventriloquism, a sacred pantomime. Peter puts it this way: If anyone speaks he should do it as one speaking the words of God (1 Peter 4:11). That verse should be paired with Jesus' statement, He who has ears, let him hear." Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*, p. 178.
  - In rest, we learn to trust: "But that's God's business. He might use the means of cyber technology, savvy marketing, good publicity. But either God, God alone, keeps our words from falling and scatters them wide, or else there is nothing in them worth keeping and scattering in the first place. Our concern, our responsibility, is simply to hear and to heed God. He is always and everywhere to say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" IBID, p. 183.
- **Be loved by God.** "Don't be afraid," he said, "for you are deeply loved by God. Be at peace; take heart and be strong" (Daniel 10:18).
- **Know and love your reader (Power point presentation here).**
- **Address felt needs**
- **Write from your passion, not the market**
  - Another trend I've seen in writers is to just fill in a schedule with writing, not taking into mind passion. I picked up a book yesterday that I promptly put down. The prose was nice, but the book stagnated, even in the first chapter. I could feel the impassion. I wonder if the author just filled a slot. In my busyness and eagerness to really establish my name in Christian publishing, I've been tempted (and flattered) when houses approach me (This happens RARELY, but sometimes it does) to do a them-tailored project. I usually say no because I'm not passionate about the topic.

Perhaps these questions are in order:

1. Do I feel God wooing me to this project?
2. Will this project further my career?
3. Will I be proud to display this project?
4. Will I be thankful I wrote this book?

Of course, there are times when you simply do something because of economic, marketing, or publicity reasons. I'm not saying we should all become primadonnas who shun work "beneath us." But when undertaking something big like a book, I'm advocating passion. It comes through (or not), folks. I for one do not want to contribute to more passionless prose.

- I can't tell you how very tired I am of boring Christian books. There exists some sort of "acceptable" content that we write about ad infinitum, but rarely do we hear from writers who dare to go out on limbs--to share what is really, really inside. It takes guts. It's not easy.

I'm not talking about writing heresy or unorthodox words, but to be willing enough to be honest. The

truth is, we are very small folk on this earth. We don't understand all the mysteries of life or of God. There is much left that we cannot comprehend. So much of evangelical stuff out there deals in boxifying God, making Him palatable, acceptable, easily understood.

But He is not so.

And we do the world a disservice when we present Christianity as a happy to-do list of virtues. Personally, I bleed over my words. I sometimes regurgitate my angst on the page. I have paid for my honesty (though it be tempered), but I have also seen others set free when they realize we don't have to be perfect Christian clones of one another to follow hard after Jesus.

I would love to see more honesty, more reality, more genuine grappling with truth. I'm tired to death of folks regurgitating the things they've never really thought through, thoughts given to them by others. Are we parrots, merely mimicking words we've never wrestled with?

- **A story of mentoring**, or why I'm where I am
- **The gift you give others**: Learn to rejoice sincerely at others' success—Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep."
  - Nix envy: "How rare, men with the character to praise a friend's success without a trace of envy." Aeschylus
  - "That means we do not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original" (Galatians 5:26, MSG).
- **Your foibles, other's triumphs**: a formula for healthy writing
- **The importance of translating** what God has taught you on your life journey and your writing journey
  - Tell your story to encourage other fellow pilgrims
  - Tell your writing journey to encourage other fellow writers
- **Ministering in obscurity**
  - Every day we have the opportunity to minister when things are unseen
  - God sees in secret: Matthew 6:3-6
  - Some writing (probably most) will never be published in a formal sense. Write anyway.
- **Teaching**: starting writer's groups, teaching at conferences, online writing relationships
  - You will learn more when you teach.
  - See one. Do one. Teach one.
- **Pay it forward**: the privilege of mentoring other writers
  - Writer's groups, other writers in cyberworld
  - Hear what other writers are saying . . . and longing for.
- **Randy Alcorn's advice**: fame means serving
  - Will we withstand the trial of notoriety?
  - Will it really be all for Him?
  - What are we paying forward? Our empires or God's? Mark 4:30-32 (Mustard seed)

**Trust is the key to longevity in this industry—trust that God sees, He will lead, He is holding our hands as we write:**

#### **A Quiet Mind**

What room is there for troubled fear?  
I know my Lord, and He is near;

And He will light my candle, so  
That I may see the way to go

There need be no bewilderment  
To one who goes where he is sent;  
The trackless plain by night and day  
Is set with sighs, lest he should stray

My path may cross a waste of sea,  
But that need never frighten me  
Or rivers full to very brim  
But they are open ways to Him

My path may lead through woods at night,  
Where neither moon nor any light  
Of guiding star or beacon shines  
He will not let me miss my signs

Lord, grant to me a quiet mind,  
That trusting Thee, for Thou art kind  
I may go on without a fear,  
For Thou, my Lord, art always near

Amy Carmichael

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<sup>i</sup> Gire, Ken, *Windows of the Soul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996, p. 17.