

Why Write, Lord?



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Dedication

For my fellow authors.
May we find purpose in what we do.

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INTRODUCTION

I want to be a Christian writer. Scads of writers flood publishers with streams of book ideas and manuscripts. Before I add my work to the flow, I need to consider my motives. Why should I write?

- Is my goal to create a best seller and rake in the money?
- Will I need 5 star reviews to feel validated?
- What if my books never see the light of day?
- What if critics are unkind?

I pored over the list and concluded I need a purpose that travels beyond the realm of fame and fortune. I need a mission statement to motivate and sustain me in the lonely hours at my desk. Here's my target:

- I will be deliberate in learning the craft.
- God is to be honored in whatever I write.
- Writing should drive me closer to God.
- I will use my experience, skills, and insights to benefit others.
- I will aim to challenge and feed my readers.
- I want to know God will take care of me in the circumstances of life.

*"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
Matthew 6:33*

- My prayer will be that of Jabez – that God would enlarge my border according to His plan.

Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested.

1 Chronicles 4:10

The greatest author is God. His work remains a best-seller thousands of years after its completion. He is sold in more languages than any other author. He is copied more than any other author, judging by the plethora of Scripture versions, commentaries, and study guides. Could God's reasons for writing help me as I write? Can I gain insight into His reasons? Can I interview Him and ask, "Why write?"

I explored the Bible in my search for answers. I captured a list of verses containing the word *written*, looked for common threads, and grouped the verses into categories. The answers I sought became clear. God had purpose in giving us His Word, and it was not to press our four leaf clovers or archive Grandma's fading picture.

Understanding God's reasons and applying them to my work will create a guidepost I can consult when my path becomes obscure. If I stumble, I can get up, review the mission statement, and get back on track. The guidepost will provide accountability with my readers. If my stuff strays from the stated goals, call me on it. You have my permission. After all, what's a writer without readers?

REASON 1: GOD WRITES TO INSTRUCT

God dedicated portions of His Word to instruction. He wanted us to understand His expectations for mankind.

Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction."

Exodus 24:12

We're supposed to learn from the examples God recorded in His Word. Other people's choices, good and bad, can provide a quality education, if we pay attention.

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

I Corinthians 10:11

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:4

Written instruction will be of benefit to future generations. Oral traditions can be lost or changed, but the Word of God abides forever.

This will be written for the generation to come, That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

Psalms 102:18

Obeying God's instructions brings blessings.

Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.
Deuteronomy 30:9-10

Dr. Dennis Hensley, in *How to Write What You Love*, explains if I have a message worth sharing, my writing becomes “the ability to get an idea out of your head and onto a piece of paper in so clear a manner that it will go into the reader’s head and provide enlightenment or entertainment.”¹

Writing seems simple enough, until I consider my reader may be either a complete novice on the subject or an expert looking for a fresh perspective. In either case, I want to instruct correctly, and that necessitates homework. I need to become an authority on the topic through experience, study, research, or investigation. The craft of writing leads me to collect data, distill it into a manageable form, and wrap it with prose to make it palatable to the reader.

Edward O. Wilson, Pulitzer prize winning author, explains the need for research in scientific work. His comments apply equally to the zealous author, “To make discoveries in science, both small and important, you must be an expert on the topics addressed. To be an expert innovator requires commitment. Commitment to a subject implies sustained hard work.”²

Good writing requires hard work, beyond printing business cards or posting a web site. Am I ready to commit to that level of involvement?

¹ *How to Write What You Love*, Dennis E. Hensley, Page 76

² *Letters to a Young Scientist*, Edward O. Wilson, Page 149

REASON 2: GOD WRITES TO GIVE GUIDANCE

No one is more qualified than God to offer life guidance. As the Creator, He knows the workings of humans far deeper than we know ourselves. God's word is filled with practical guidance showing us how to do life.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.

Psalm 32:8

Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Joshua, an Israeli general, landed a tough assignment. He had to take the leadership reins from Moses, survey a new land, build an army, and conquer powerful city-states. I am sure Joshua wrestled with doubt, but God was ready with guidance and encouragement.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Joshua 1:8

Later, as Joshua's stellar career was winding down, he shared a farewell speech with his people. What had Joshua learned from the events of his life? He learned the best guidance emanates from strict adherence to God's Word.

Be very firm, then, to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, so that you

may not turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left ...

Joshua 23:6

My life is a string of roles and assignments. Based on what I've learned in those experiences, do I have guidance I can share with someone facing similar challenges? I compiled a partial list of my life's roles and was surprised at the variety.

- Middle child (Blessed are the peacemakers!)
- Asthmatic with severe allergies
- Various jobs including lawn maintenance, shoe sales, carpenter's helper, package sorter, Pastor's Assistant, and 30+ years as an engineer.
- Husband - 32 years with the same lady and we're still in love
- Father - 2 grown daughters
- Children's Church leader
- Sunday School teacher - all ages including adults
- Youth Leader
- Church adult education instructor
- Passionate gardener (Not the title of an upcoming romance novel!)
- Do-it-yourself handyman

Are there ideas streaming from this list that might lead to books, pamphlets or online content benefiting others? I certainly think so. The challenge is to identify the specific focus then write.

REASON 3: GOD WRITES TO HONOR MEMORIES

In His Word, God recorded accounts of ordinary people doing extraordinary things. As we ponder their stories, we may find encouragement to put our faith to work and become extraordinary also.

Mordecai, from the Old Testament book of Esther, had his back against the wall with defeat for his people almost certain. He lived his faith, spoke out for his God, and influenced Queen Esther to take a stand. Read the story, and note the Scripture's summation of Mordecai's accomplishments:

And all the accomplishments of his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia?

Esther 10:2

Mordecai's example is there in black and white for us to read, remember, and reflect. What a guy! Wouldn't it be great to sit and share a conversation with him?

A sinful woman crashed a dinner party where Jesus was a guest. She was an outcast and by societal rules, had no business attending. She came to perform an act of selfless worship, and the Savior gave this testimonial:

Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.

Matthew 26:13

We remember her act every time we pass this section of Matthew's Gospel. It is a convicting account. She colored outside the lines in her worship. How far does my worship travel?

I had a desire to write about my Grandpa, Homer Miller. I started the

work several times and scribbled notes but stopped. I gave myself a goal to get the work done and began releasing chapters in serial form via my blog. A book seems easier to write in smaller chunks, which is why some smart person invented chapters. Eventually, I had the complete set of stories and *The Giving Grandpa* was published.

Family members and friends who've read the book have offered thanks, and shared their stories about Grandpa. My private memories of Grandpa helped others remember him. Through the experience of reading simple words, we traveled back in time, and relived special moments. And through those memories, I had an opportunity to share Grandpa's faith which became my faith, too.

Whether it is memoirs or biographies, an author can write to honor one who touched his life. Edward O. Wilson tells us, "Keep in mind that innovators in both literature and science are basically dreamers and storytellers."³ Writing someone's story in a way the readers are reminded, challenged, and entertained is a special talent.

³ *Letters to a Young Scientist*, Edward O. Wilson, Page 74

REASON 4: GOD WRITES TO PRESERVE HISTORY

I have a reprint of a work originally published in the 1880's, *Bible History Old Testament* by Alfred Edersheim. Edersheim reorganized the Old Testament chronologically to create a valuable reference aid, and his book is a fascinating read. The table of contents reflects the historical aspect of God's Word.

Does human history matter to God? The books of Kings and Chronicles record descriptions of the kings of Israel and Judah and their administrative accomplishments. References point readers to additional sources of information.

Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

I Kings 14:19

Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the chronicles of Samuel the seer, in the chronicles of Nathan the prophet and in the chronicles of Gad the seer ...

I Chronicles 29:29

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

II Chronicles 9:29

Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer, according to genealogical enrollment? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

II Chronicles 12:15

Now the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his words are written in the treatise of the prophet Iddo.

II Chronicles 13:22

Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first to last, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz, has written.

II Chronicles 26:22

Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and his deeds of devotion, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel.

II Chronicles 32:32

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his deeds of devotion as written in the law of the LORD ...

II Chronicles 35:26

Data interpretation and memory processing differ from observer to observer, and that gives historical writing a subjective flavoring. Two authors writing about the same event will stress different points. When we consider the Gospels, four accounts of the life of Christ written by four men, we should expect Mark to see things differently from John. They both portray Jesus accurately, but from different viewpoints.

Authors of historical works write to provide a record of the past for the benefit of future generations. Where we came from, how we started, and what we faced - all should be important to our descendants.

REASON 5: GOD WRITES TO CREATE ACCURATE RECORDS

God keeps accurate records. I understand the language may be figurative, but the truth is easier for me to grasp when I envision a book, a quill pen, and a hand doing the writing. Connected readers can envision a touch screen and a link to the heavenly data cloud if that helps. Here is a sampling of the records God keeps.

The plan for our lives

In Psalm 139, David shared his understanding of the detailed plan for his life.

Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

Psalm 139:16

David believed that long before his heart began beating, the days and events of his life were mapped by the Creator. David's days reflected deliberate purpose rather than fate and chance. Other Bible writers second this concept, such as Paul in Ephesians 2:10. It is comforting to know God has a plan that makes sense of my life.

List of those who fear God

Judgment was coming as Malachi took his pen to write the last book in the Old Testament. Many of his contemporaries loved God and feared being swept away with the unbelievers. Malachi reminded them God knew of their love and service. God would not forget them. Malachi described God's solution in terms the people could understand. God has a list and He

never needs to check it twice.

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.

Malachi 3:16

The Book of Life

Jesus, the Son of God, extends a generous invitation to “whosoever will”. The offer carries no cost to the one who accepts it, though it cost Jesus dearly. He gave His life to buy salvation. He decided to share His heavenly inheritance with whosoever accepts His free gift.

When I believed Jesus and accepted salvation, my name was written, with indelible ink, in the Book of Life. My entrance to heaven was secured.

And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:15

In writing biographical and historical accounts, I take pains to research and record details accurately. I endeavor to examine various viewpoints and sprinkle my words with fairness. I want to provide an authoritative source for those who come behind. Dr. Luke states the task clearly:

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:1-4.

REASON 6: GOD WRITES TO CALL US TO ACTION

God gave His Word with the expectation we would read and heed. James, the half-brother of Jesus, urged readers to be doers and not just hearers of the word. That's sound advice.

Josiah, who became king at the ripe old age of 8, commissioned a temple restoration project. While clearing the rubble, the workers found a copy of the law. Josiah listened as the book was read and in anguish, tore his clothes. He knew his people were in grave danger for ignoring God's expectations. Josiah dispatched his cabinet, Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan and Asaiah, to inquire of God how to proceed.

Go, inquire of the LORD for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.

II Kings 22:13

When the answer was returned, Josiah took immediate action. His courageous leadership and personal commitment had a positive effect on his followers.

The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant.

II Kings 23:3

Josiah was not finished. There was more to do. Elements of evil lurked around him, and a more thorough purging was necessary. He pushed ahead.

Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

II Kings 23:24

Most writers intend to move their readers in some way. Thriller writers want readers so engrossed in the story they sleep with the light on. Mystery writers want readers to devour chapters until half the night is passed turning pages. Humorists leave readers laughing. Romance novelists provide a fantasy where readers can switch places with the heroine for a time.

The reader browsing the financial books at the local library will find as many opinions about the safest place for investing as there are experts cranking out the books. Many financial authors offer products or services to prospective investors, and the book is their sales pitch. The newly enlightened reader will (hopefully) be moved to open an account and pass the loot.

The writer's message must be clear. The benefits to the reader must be easily grasped. And the steps of action must be obvious. Then the reader can offer the highest form of praise - to accept that author's word, and act accordingly.

REASON 7: GOD WRITES TO PROVIDE A FOUNDATION

Joseph Pulitzer gives this wisdom on writing, “Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.”

The reader who takes time to investigate discovers God has placed a foundation in His Word on which to build our faith. God desires the light of understanding to click on as we study.

John, the Gospel writer, explained he did not include all the works of Jesus. John included enough for God’s purpose which is for us to learn who Jesus is.

...But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

John 20:31

As John’s earthly life drew to a close, he addressed doubts that may arise for believers. Can we believe all this stuff about Jesus? Can we know for sure our eternal destiny?

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:13

God provided a written record so we may know with certainty who Jesus is. We can compare His life, recorded in the Gospels, with prophecies made in the Old Testament, and find correlation.

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.

Luke 18:31

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Luke 24:44

and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day ...

Luke 24:46

As a writer, I have an open door of opportunity to help build the faith of my readers. I can become a tool in God's hands as He uses me to share precise teaching to build a foundation for faith. I can assist my readers in seeing the light and embracing the God of glory. What a privilege!

Author Michael Larsen in his book *How to Write a Book Proposal*, shares the power of the written word. "You can advance a cause or belief. A book can change hearts, minds, and the world."⁴

Sign me up.

⁴ *How to Write a Book Proposal*, Michael Larsen, Page 4

SUMMARY

I began this discussion with a list of boundaries I intend to place around my writing. Often we associate the word boundary with restrictions and a curtailment of freedom. Boundaries also liberate. I am free to write within the safety of these protections, and there is no limit to the possibilities. The boundaries protect me as I write. The boundaries protect those who come behind as readers. Here's the list again:

- I will be deliberate in learning the craft.
- God is to be honored in whatever I write.
- Writing should drive me closer to God.
- I will use my experience, skills, and insights to benefit others.
- I will aim to challenge and feed my readers.
- I want to prove Matthew 6:33 in the circumstances of my life.
- My prayer will be that of Jabez – that God would enlarge my border according to His plan.

What will I write? Reviewing the seven reasons God had for writing His Word, I see a panorama of opportunities.

- I can write to instruct
- I can write to offer guidance
- I can write to honor memories
- I can write to preserve history
- I can write to create accurate records
- I can write to motivate others to action
- I can write to share and explain my faith

Let me take creative license and pull a partial quote from Revelation 14:13, “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write...’”

Let’s go!

About the Author



I write from Raleigh, North Carolina, where I live and garden with my wife, Shawn. I've invested thirty plus years as a professional engineer and have authored mounds of technical documentation. I recently shifted to writing full-time, and that decision necessitated giving some thought to why I write. This booklet is the result of my investigation, and I am happy to share it with my readers.

I have several books in print including:

- *Go Eat the Cheese!*
- *Go for the Gold*
- *Help! My Daughter's Getting Married!*
- *Who Ate My Cheese?*

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