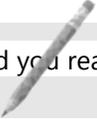


## Introduction



"Lord, did you really call me to write?"

I (BH) rested my fingers on the keyboard. "Writing takes a lot of time, Lord, and I just want to be sure I'm following your direction. I mean, wouldn't it be better if I spent my time actually ministering to people in the real world, teaching Sunday School, or playing the piano at the nursing home?"

The Holy Spirit responded immediately, placing a question in my mind.

*My child, if this book you are writing ministers to one person, do you think I would think that worthwhile?*

"Yes, Lord. Of course. You went after one little sheep who strayed from the flock. You are not willing that any should perish but that all come to repentance. Yes. You will do whatever it takes for each and every person."

I'd sent my book out to beta readers. Several commented that the story drew the reader closer to God. Gave her hope in difficult situations. Reminded him of God's great love.

A smile crossed my face as peace flooded my heart. The enemy had tried to stop me from writing, but God confirmed his desire for me to continue. "Thank you, Father. I will write this book. Even if it is just for one person."

*Good. Because that one person is YOU.*

Oh, my. Now I cried. God's presence surrounded me almost as tangibly as if he had literally wrapped his arms around me. For me . . . really?

As I prepared to write my novel, I sought counsel, listened to online sermons, and scoured my Bible for God's answers to my main character's problems and deep inner needs and desires. For God's hope and direction. To show how the precious Holy Spirit might break through this character's self-made wall of protection, to reach her hurting heart, and to make God's love known to her in a life-changing way.

As I studied and took notes, God brought answers to my own heart—addressing issues I'd packed away so long ago I'd forgotten them. He exposed memories and pain I'd never surrendered and asked Christ to cleanse and heal. God changed my heart as I wrote this book. Took pieces of my heart that had hardened to stone and turned them into flesh again—brought life and joy to that which was dead.

We don't know what God has in mind when we begin a writing project. If you are like me, you want to know that the idea came from God before you commit to the hours required to produce a quality article or book. So . . . how can we know?

What does writing in God's presence look like in real life?

In this short book, we'll zero in on Samuel, a young boy in the Bible who lived in the temple. Served in God's presence. And slept near the ark of the covenant.

## Writing with a Partner

Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.

Psalm 54:4

Not long ago, (MG) while preparing an address I had been commissioned to bring, the Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to my heart: *"Speak my truths truthfully."*

It was then that I realized that many of us have been lazy in our study of the Word of God. We have been guilty of grabbing an idea and running through the Bible trying to find isolated verses that, standing alone, seem to support that idea.

We need to allow the Word of God to determine what is truth and how it ought to be presented. It is only as I invite the Holy Spirit to study the Word of God with me as my Helper, my Guide, my Teacher, that I can ever hope to unveil, or reveal, truth to my readers.

Look, we are not just writers. We are CHRISTIAN writers.

We should never engage in any writing project that we can do without God's help. If we depend upon our own intelligence, our own understanding, our own wit, we will fall woefully short of what God wants for us.

Any activity we can do by ourselves, without God's help, is a waste of time—for us and for our readers.

### **Samuel heard from God.**

At a time of great spiritual darkness in Israel, when even the priests had abandoned faith, God was silent.

There was no clear vision in the land and the entire nation languished in rebellion and spiritual darkness.

God declared that he would raise up a new voice with a renewed vision. That new voice was the boy Samuel, and God found him in the temple, sleeping near the ark of covenant.

The ark represented the presence of God to the nation, and it is only in the presence of God that we can walk in a fresh vision.

Our own nation wallows in great darkness, sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss. Any writer who hopes to bring healing, spiritual sight, and liberation from the spiritual bondage which holds so many captive, must not write alone, but must cry out for a helper to come alongside and provide fresh vision for our day.

Understanding vision is critical to Christian writers today. For generations, writers have “prophetically” carried God’s message to the people of their generation.

Revelation means to uncover, to reveal something that has been hidden so that men can see it. Of course, we see with more than our eyes; we also see with our understanding.

A few years ago, I (BH) attended the Colorado Christian Writers Conference in the beautiful mountains of Colorado. We experienced a huge snowstorm that closed the highways and dropped three feet of snow before us.

While the view was exhilarating and the air crisp and refreshing, I was almost too busy working the conference to even appreciate what lay before me in splendor and glory outside. One morning, I opened my drapes and immediately had to look away. The brilliance of a white, snow-covered ground, bleeding directly into snow-covered mountains reaching all the way to the blinding sun was more than my human eye could behold.

For the first time, I was able to visualize verses about the radiance of God. Above and beyond anything I could imagine. A fresh vision.

God spoke to my heart. Busyness was stealing my time with God and others. The things I was doing were good and necessary, but my priorities had become skewed. In that moment, I realized that I needed to prune my life of the busyness, even if just for a few moments at a time, in order to continue growing in God. Some activities needed to be clipped away completely. Others put in perspective.

So I knelt . . . even though I was almost late for an appointment. “Lord,” I prayed, “you and I both know I don’t have time for this.” We laughed together because the Lord knew my heart. “But I don’t want to continue on my own. My strength is gone. And my joy. I’m so sorry. Thanks for speaking to my spirit and reminding me what was missing . . . Who was missing. I love you so much. Fill me with more of you and remind me to look others in the eye and genuinely listen to their words and their hearts. I don’t want to miss even one opportunity to bless them with your love.”

So often I work continuously while my heart longs to paint, play the piano, write my novel, or visit with others. Years ago, I was taught to finish my work before playing. But I believe life would have me work myself straight into the grave with no breaks if I let it.

Jesus, our Great Physician, keeps a careful watch over our growth in him, pruning and applying the balm of Gilead when necessary. We are not responsible to grow our own fruit. Rather, we have only to listen and obey when he calls us to make changes in our lives.

In John 15:5, he says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

Let's join in prayer that we might see, hear, and understand more clearly as we share God's Word to our generation!



Holy Spirit, you have gifted me to write, and I want to use that gift to preach to the poor. I want to be used of God to heal the brokenhearted and to declare deliverance to those who are captive. There are those around me who are spiritually blind and deeply, deeply bruised by the cares of this world.

Teach me to use the gift you've given me to make a difference in broken, ruined lives. Show me how to bring joy, laughter, and hope to a generation that is quickly losing hope. Come, Holy Spirit. You are welcome in this place. Please, sit here beside me at my desk and help me. For I cannot accomplish a spiritual task with my natural, human gifts. I need a fresh vision from you, God. I'll be sleeping near the ark. When you're ready, speak. I'll be listening. In Jesus' Name, Amen.