

The Gift of Writing

A gifted story: Catherine just wanted to tell the story about her husband's life after he died. His sermons were so inspiring that he was known the world over for his splendid oratory from the pulpit. Somehow, she thought, she should try to put to writing some of his homilies. Would God give her the gift of writing to thus carry on his ministry? And so Catherine compiled many of Peter's sermons, put them in a book and wrote an introduction - she entitled it, *Mr. Jones, Meet the Master*. That was followed by *A Man Called Peter*. Both were best sellers. Over the years Catherine Marshall has reached countless thousands of people with her spiritual prose in numerous books. Her spiritual gift of writing is now well known.

Biblical references:

1 Tim. 3:14-15 - As I write this letter to you, I hope to come and see you soon. But if I delay, this letter will let you know how we should conduct ourselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

John 20:30-31 - In his disciples' presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book. But these have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life. 1 John 2:12-14 - I write to you, my children, because your sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who has existed from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have defeated the Evil One. I write to you, my children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who has existed from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong; the word of God lives in you, and you have defeated the Evil One.

Definition and comment:

The gift of writing: the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to translate Bible truths into a written form that can edify, instruct and strengthen the community of believers. This is a gift of creative ability that is called into use in the service of the Lord to forward his kingdom. Although this gift is not specifically named in New Testament gift lists, there is little dispute that God still gives special creative abilities for use in his work today as he did in Old Testament times. David's great poetic ability was a skill God used to enhance temple worship, and his writings became timeless through the Psalms, moving literally hundreds of generations of believers. Man was made in the image of God, the Great Creator, and creativity is part of that image. As men and women find outlets for their creativity, they are fulfilled knowing what they have done is good. Music, drama, painting, sculpting and writing all are born out of the creative instinct God placed in humans. When these abilities are dedicated to the building up of the church or to glorify God, there is an openness to Holy Spirit empowerment. It is in that context that writing is being considered a spiritual gift.

Affirm that you have this gift; questions to ask yourself:

1. In your writing have you felt inspired by God to write a certain way?
2. Do you see your ability to write as your means of sharing God with others?
3. Do others see the significance of God in your life through your writing?
4. Have others been led to a new understanding of their own faith through your writing?
5. Do you sense a gifted power and ease in writing that at times seems to transcend your own capabilities?
6. Were your talents in writing evident even at an early age?

Areas for study and personal growth:

1. Come to understand the nature of your gift and how it appears to be utilized for best effect. Strengthen the tie between your writing and your prayer life so that it becomes always an act of prayer for the glory of God. Meditate on why you have been given this gift, and seek to use it in ways you believe fulfill its purpose in you.
2. Skill as a writer comes from mastery of basic rules of grammar and punctuation as well as learning the elements of style. Insure that you have mastered these essentials.

3. Establish a comfortable setting where you can write effectively without being disturbed. Equip yourself well for the task, and develop an appropriate discipline for regular exercise of your gift. Style and good phraseology are developed and enhanced through practice.
4. Make it a habit to read the spiritual writings of others to gain an appreciation for the range of content being offered, and consider the variety of ways you may be able to use your gift in God's service. Learn also to listen to verbal accounts of Christian experiences that they might offer inspiration for future writings.
5. Seek the heavenly guidance of the Holy Spirit when writing. Insure that you are open to inspiration through prayer as you gather your thoughts and seek the best methods of expression. Develop a prayer rule of life to support your craft.
6. Consider attending a creative or spiritual writer's workshop, such as the Christian Writers Conference and Workshop or the Billy Graham School of Writing.

General ways to use the gift of writing:

- Personally: write a family history
- Within the church: create worship liturgies; write newsletter articles; compose workbooks and teaching materials (see more specific church service opportunities in the Booklet *Channels for Using the Gifts*).
- Within the wider community: do free lance religious writing.

For reflection:

When creating we must search for a new expressiveness we have not known before. This activity can only be performed with a high degree of openness to new possibilities. The need for this kind of openness is doubly important if we wish to be the hands of Christ in our writing. The Holy Spirit must be able to penetrate through the thick exterior of our limited experiences. Writing in the service of the Lord requires sufficient discipline to hold open the channel to God so that the Holy Spirit can move us in appropriate directions.

The spiritual gift of writing is both a personal and public blessing. Because the act of creation is so fulfilling, you will experience all the excitement that arises from any creative adventure. But when you place your writing in the service of the Lord, it takes on a public dimension of great importance to the church. The church needs spiritual writers and new ways for the gospel story to be told among the people. Each age brings with it different vernaculars, different perceptions, and different ways of comprehending truth. Spiritual writings expand the influence of the church beyond its limited boundaries, while often bringing new insights even to members within the church. You will find writing in the service of the Lord to be a spiritual experience as you feel a responsibility and urgency to put forth a message that will enhance the spiritual understanding of others and move them into a closer relationship with their Maker. As your writing is led by the Spirit, so you will be too. What better way to straighten any crooked path that might lie ahead!