

# How to Craft Nonfiction That People Will Want to Read

Mid-South Christian Writers Conference  
March 15, 2025



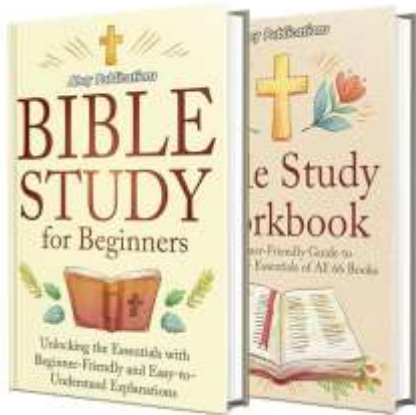
TIM BISHOP

@TimBishopWrites



1

## Value Comparison



Paperback \$15  
E-book \$10



1 + ADD TO CART - \$10.66

2

## Today's reader

- Busy
- Shorter attention span
- Prefer pictures, graphs, charts
- Expects free or deeply discounted content
- Is as demanding as the rest of us consumers

3

## Why?

- What is your overarching why?
- Why are you writing your current work-in-process article or book?
- What important point(s) are you trying to convey?
- Keep the focus

4

## Who?

- Know your audience
- Who is your current work-in-process article or book for?
- “Speak” to them in language they understand
- Why should they care?

5

## What?

- Subject matter
- Your credibility versus research
- Begin with your sales copy
  - What do you want the reader to take away? (information, felt need)
  - Deck for an article; back cover copy for a book
  - Hook, hook, **hook**
- Examples

6

## Deck

- **Headline: What's Driving Tesla's Woes?**
  - Deck: As Tesla faces a global sales slump, and with shares down for the seventh consecutive week, could Elon Musk's antics really be to blame?
  - By Carlton Reid, Wired Magazine
- **Headline: Ukrainian Evangelicals Wait for the End**
  - Deck: They yearn for peace and a good night's sleep but don't trust Donald Trump's proposed cease-fire.
  - By Jill Nelson, Christianity Today

7

## Deck

- **Headline: Thank You, Mom**
  - Deck: Sometimes we just need to be reminded of the heroic dimensions of motherhood.
  - By Ed Chinn, The Timberline Letter
- **Headline: Oldest Known Impact Crater Discovered in Australia**
  - Deck: The discovery bolsters the theory that meteorite impacts played an important role in Earth's early geological history
  - By Margherita Bassi, Smithsonian Magazine

8

## Back Cover

### *Doing Life with Your Adult Children* by Jim Burns

Are you struggling to connect with your child now that they've left the nest? Are you feeling the tension and heartache as your relationship dynamic begins to change? In *Doing Life with Your Adult Children*, bestselling author and parenting expert Jim Burns provides practical advice and hopeful encouragement for navigating this tough yet rewarding transition.

9

## Back Cover

### *Doing Life with Your Adult Children* by Jim Burns

- My child's choices are breaking my heart--where did I go wrong?
- Is it OK to give advice to my grown child?
- What's the difference between enabling and helping?
- What boundaries should I have if my child moves back home?
- What do I do when my child doesn't seem to be maturing into adulthood?
- How do I relate to my grown child's significant other?
- What does it mean to have healthy financial boundaries?
- How can I support my grown children when I don't support their values?

10

## Back Cover

### *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* by Lysa TerKeurst

Discover How to Move On, Make Peace with Painful Memories, and Create a Life That's Beautiful Again (subtitle)

You deserve to stop suffering because of what other people have done to you.

Have you ever felt stuck in a cycle of unresolved pain, playing offenses over and over in your mind? You know you can't go on like this, but you don't know what to do next.

11

## Back Cover

### *Forgiving What You Can't Forget* by Lysa TerKeurst

- Learn how to move on when the other person refuses to change and never says they're sorry.
- Walk through a step-by-step process to free yourself from the hurt of your past and feel less offended today.
- Discover what the Bible really says about forgiveness and the peace that comes from living it out right now.
- Identify what's stealing trust and vulnerability from your relationships so you can believe there is still good ahead.
- Disempower the triggers hijacking your emotions by embracing the two necessary parts of forgiveness.

12

## For articles

- Follow the publisher's guidelines
  - Word count
  - Timeline
  - Style guide
  - And any requirements specific to the publication

13

## For a book, consider...

- Consider writing a nonfiction book proposal even if self-publishing
- A helpful framework to organize thoughts and structure writing
  - The Concept
    - Premise statement
    - Three summaries of varying length that can be used for marketing
  - The Market
    - Audience
    - Comparable works
  - Author
    - Bios
    - Potential endorsers
    - Marketing Ideas
  - The Content
    - TOC
    - Chapter summaries

14

## Sample Premise

Many people today have difficulty connecting with God and look elsewhere for fulfillment. With plenty of adventure, discovery, challenges, and up-close encounters with God's magnificent creation, a trek by bicycle reflects the spiritual journey toward peace with God. **A vicarious bicycling adventure will captivate seekers and help them find nourishment for their hungry souls.**

15

## How?

- Before inviting your inner critic to the project, throw the clay on the potter's wheel
- Understand recent developments on your topic; know what people are seeing and saying
- Anticipate reader objections
- Pose questions or dilemmas that encourage readers to think
- Consult authorities, whether you interview them or quote from their published content
- Offer other opinions and approaches to the subject
- Use specific, visual/tactile descriptions, strong verbs and precise words, make the picture you're painting come alive, leave it to the reader to draw conclusions
- Appeal to the reader's senses
- Provide examples to illustrate concepts
- Avoid jargon, including church/God speak; define terms that may be new to readers
- Write draft #1, let it sit for at least a day, then begin the rewriting/self-editing process

16



## How?

- Speed write first draft
- Understand recent developments on topic
- Anticipate objections
- Encourage readers to think
- Consult authorities
- Acknowledge other approaches to the subject
- Use strong writing mechanics
- Appeal to the senses
- Use examples
- Avoid jargon and define terms
- Self-edit

17

## How?

- A. I.
  - Research
  - Brainstorm
  - Clarify
  - Identifying clunky sentences during self-editing (e.g., Grammarly)
  - DO NOT let it write your content
  - It's a personal assistant, maybe even a friend

18

## Two Key Elements Too Key to Squander

- Hook/Opening
- Closing

19



20

## Dress Up Content with Bonus Material

- Images
- Tables
- Pull quotes/lead lines
- For books only
  - Index
  - Glossary
  - Foreword
  - Dedication
  - Chapter header quotes
  - Endorsements
  - Acknowledgments
  - Author bio
  - Ornamental breaks

21

Dressed up *Wheels of Wisdom* layout  
courtesy of Gwyn from  
GKS Creative

Chapter header blurb

### LESSON 42

#### *"It's a God Thing"*

You know you're in the right place when you experience a divine encounter. Always look for them. They're more prevalent than you might expect.

BY TIM

**D**ebbie and I have had some of the most profound bicycle touring experiences during our rest periods. On day eighty-nine of TheHoneLine Tour, we had a rest day in Xenia.

22

My conversation with Amy on the way warmed my heart. I kept thanking her. With her wholesome smile looking me squarely in the face, she told me how pleased she was to be able to help us.

Later, after a late-night meal with them in Williamsport, she said, "My daily prayer to the Lord is, 'Bless me into usefulness.' He answered my prayer today through you."

Scripture to ponder

For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

PSALM 91:11-12

Inviting readers to apply the content

*Personal* REFLECTION:

1. Do you believe God sends us helpers when we need them? When has He done this for you?
2. Have you ever been stunned by an unexpected set of circumstances, unable to move on? Who came to your aid?

23



SECTION VI TAKEAWAYS

*Things to Celebrate*

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

24

Dressed up *Two Are Better* interior  
courtesy of Dave Aldrich



25

## TOPICAL INDEX

### A

Accountability: Lesson 3  
Action: Lessons 24, 25, 48, Epilogue  
Adventure: Lessons 6, 24, 30, 34, 39, 44, 50, Epilogue  
Affirmation: Lessons 37, 41, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 49, 51, Epilogue  
Anger: Lessons 14, 22, 38  
Anxiety: Lessons 20, 24, 25, 28, 39  
Attitude: Lessons 3, 40, 46

### B

Balance: Lessons 9, 13, 21  
Blessings: Lessons 18, 39, 41, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52  
Boundaries: Lessons 13, 16, 19, 22, 23  
Burdens: Lessons 14, 26

### C

Challenges: Lessons 1, 6, 15, 29, 31, 34, 37, 50

Differences: Lessons 12, 37, 39

Difficult circumstances: Lessons 2, 4, 33, 34, 45

Disappointments: Lessons 4, 51

Discernment: Lessons 8, 22

Discouragement: Lessons 2, 4, 6, 33

Divine encounter: Lessons 22, 34, 42, 43, 44, 46, 51, Epilogue

### E

Encouragement: Lessons 30, 34, 37, 40, 42, 44, 45

Endurance: Lessons 29; 45

Excess baggage: Lessons 13, 14

Expectations: Lessons 33, 38

### F

Faith: Lessons 5, 8, 12, 24, 25, 42

Fear: Lessons 4, 8, 24, 25, 27, 28, 38, 45

### G

26

# GEOGRAPHICAL INDEX

## LEGEND:

HW = 2010 HONEYMOON ON WHEELS

MMT = 2012 MOM-TO-MOM TOUR

HLT = THEHOPELINE TOUR OF 2014

LESSON NUMBER IN PARENTHESES

### Florida

Ormond Beach, Balancing Act  
(MMT, 21)

Mount Dora, Nature's Object Lessons  
(MMT, 41)

### Idaho

Lowell, Moving Meditation (HLT, 20)

Lula Pace, Facing Fear (HW, 74)

### Maryland

Hunt Valley, Restraints or Helpful  
Guidelines? (MMT, 19)

### Massachusetts

Marlborough, Unexpected Stop  
(MMT, 31)

### Missouri

27

## APPENDIX A

# What We Took

### Tim's bike

Trek 5200® touring bicycle  
Tubus® rack in front  
Trek® stock rack in rear  
4 Ortlieb® packer-style waterproof panniers and handlebar  
bag  
Garmin Edge 705® bicycle computer mounted on stem  
Topeak Road Morph® pump mounted under top tube  
Rear rack with bungee cords:  
*Big Agnes Sandstone 3L® tent*  
*2 each spare tires*  
3 bottle racks for 20-ounce bottles:  
*1 unused when services available*  
*Usually 1 only with every drink*  
*The other with water*

### Debbie's bike

Trek 5200® touring bicycle  
Tubus® rack in front  
Trek® stock rack in rear  
4 Ortlieb® roller-style waterproof panniers and handlebar  
bag  
Bontrager® bike speedometer mounted on top tube  
Seat post toolbag:  
*Bike multi tool*  
*Mini grease multi tool*

28

# Self-editing

- Using AI, Grammarly, Word
- Consider the right beta reader(s)
- Reading aloud
  - Repetitive words or sentence structures
  - Clunky sentences
  - Lack of variety in sentence length and flow
  - Dangling modifiers
  - Overwriting (instead rely on the reader's ability to infer)
  - Tangents
  - Cliches
- Visual inspection
  - Section breaks
  - Chunky paragraphs
- Word searches
  - Passive voice: is, was, are, were, by
  - Sentence structure: there
  - Adverbs: ly\_
  - Telling: feel/felt, think/thought, wonder
  - Throwaway words: that, some, really, very, just, actually, basically
  - Hedging phrases: a bit, a little, sort of, felt like, perhaps, maybe
  - Over the top: !

29

## III HEDGING APPLICATIONS

**variable-rate debt loads are at risk for rising interest rates.** As with all forms of hedging, these businesses that are more susceptible to cost increases need to assess the risk.

By far, the most important time to contain interest cost is up front, before you execute the original loan document. If you are in a position of negotiating strength, a competitive process will help to minimize your cost and land you with a more favorable hedging package and loan agreement. Moreover, hedging interest cost isn't just end once you finalize the up-front negotiation.

**There are several methods of hedging interest costs on existing debt, which usually convert all or a portion of the debt's interest cost from variable to fixed.** One of the more common tools is an interest rate swap.

An interest rate swap is a contract that derives its value from the comparison of two interest rates. When converting from a variable to a fixed rate, or vice versa, one of the legs of the swap will be a fixed interest rate, while the other will be an average of a variable interest-rate index over the term of the swap. The variable leg of the swap opposes the variable rate in the debt, effectively eliminating the variable rate in favor of the fixed rate leg of the swap.

If you are trying to hedge against interest-rate increases, ideally you will look for a swap with the same index used to calculate the amount on the debt you are hedging. For example, if your debt's interest is calculated based upon LIBOR plus two, you will want to find a LIBOR-based swap. You will also want to match the remaining term in the debt with the term of the swap, unless, of course, you don't precisely the same level of risk throughout the remaining term of the debt. Choosing to fix the interest rate over only a certain portion of the remaining debt term is still feasible. Because of the complexities involved, check with several market makers to make sure that the quoted price optimizes your risk-avoidance goal.

When do you find such a swap? Your first stop may be the broker. The broker should best understand the rate structure in the debt, since he is already a party to it. However, he may not trade interest rate swaps, or he may not price one competitively with the market.

88

## What's wrong?

## III INTEREST COST

It matters not whether you trade the swap with the broker or with some other party. The swap stands apart from the debt, but when taken together serves to fix the rate and eliminate the risk associated with the debt's variable rate. You just might find a better price with someone other than your broker. Moreover, if your debt's variable interest rate is predicated on a common index, you can find plenty of parties to quote the swap, each with a different perception of its value and a different appetite to trade it.

You will incur more cost in the short term when you fix the interest rate on variable rate debt. For example, if your variable rate calculates to 5 percent, the fixed rate that results from a swap will be higher, perhaps 7 percent. Whoever takes the other side of your swap is moving from a fixed rate, with its relatively lower risk profile, to a higher-risk variable rate. There's a cost to the risk transfer, and you consequently need to be compensated for assuming the risk that you no longer want. Whether you incur more cost in the long term is anyone's guess. Such is the nature of hedging interest cost.

Generally, because risk assumes with uncertainty, and because there is more uncertainty when the same location is bought, the additional cost you incur when converting to a fixed rate will be higher on debt that has a longer remaining term. From time to time, however, unusual interest-rate market conditions may suggest otherwise.

When you fix the rate on a variable rate loan, you are also foregoing any of the benefit should the index rate used in calculating your interest cost decline. Yet again, you don't get something for nothing! You're exchanging risk for certainty.

There may be times when you hold fixed-rate debt but you would prefer a variable rate. Trading the swap described above in the opposite direction will accomplish this. Your interest cost will track with whatever index forms the variable leg of the swap. If the fixed rate on your debt is higher than the market's fixed rate for debt of comparable term, you will incur the additional cost over the remaining term even if you convert to a variable rate.

Another method of hedging interest cost is to negotiate a clause in the original loan document that will allow you to

89

30

Use of illustration →

Use of section header →

## 11 HEDGING APPLICATIONS

Illustration 11.1  
**Hedging Currency**

	Foreign Exchange		Combined
	Dollars	Tutures	
Foreign sales dollars at risk	\$3,000,000	-\$3,000,000	\$0
Exchange rate	0.95	0.95	
Expected domestic dollars	\$1,800,000		
Exchange rate at delivery	0.85	0.85	
Domestic dollars collected	\$1,700,000	\$100,000	\$1,800,000
Receipts (in domestic dollars)			
Expected collections			\$1,800,000
Collections without hedge			\$1,700,000
Collections with hedge			\$1,800,000

When the company collects from the dealer on the plow, the \$2.0 million CAD selling price converts to \$1.7 million USD using the 0.8500 exchange rate. That's \$100,000 shy of what was needed based on the price for its plow in the US market. However, since the company hedged the exchange risk and gained \$100,000 in the futures market, it ends up with the \$1.8 million as originally anticipated, as shown in Illustration 11.1. The first column reflects the dollars collected from the deal before and after the currency exchange. The second column shows the gain via the futures contract.

### Foreign Exchange on Consumables

If a US company purchases consumables in another country, using the foreign currency, it has the opposite currency price risk of that in Illustration 11.1. The dollars are flowing in the opposite direction. If the value of the foreign currency

99

31

## Self-editing Quiz

- There was something about him that calmed her.
- Something about him calmed her.

32



## Self-editing Quiz

- It was the enthusiasm and joy resounding from her voice that stoked Doug's adventure.
- The enthusiasm and joy resounding from her voice stoked Doug's adventure.
- The enthusiasm resounding from her voice stoked Doug's adventure.
- The enthusiasm in her voice stoked Doug's adventure.
- Her enthusiastic voice stoked Doug.

33

## Self-editing Quiz

- What people worked years to acquire has been wiped from the map in a flash.
- People's hard-earned possessions have vanished.

34

## Self-editing Quiz

- If you're caught up in this suffering, my heart goes out to you, even though I cannot relate to what you must be feeling.
- If you're suffering, my heart goes out to you, even though I cannot relate to what you must be feeling.

35

## Self-editing Quiz

- There's always something to be thankful for. I suspect those whose homes and belongings were destroyed by fire are thankful they're still alive.
- There's always something to be thankful for. People whose earthly possessions burned to ashes must be grateful their hearts still beat.

36

## Self-editing Quiz

- However, there was no end to his complaining.
- However, he kept complaining.

37

## Self-editing Quiz

- You'll need a large stuff sack and some rope.
- You'll need a large stuff sack and rope.

38

Paperbacks and ebooks, (audiobooks when available)

**GIVEAWAY**

METAPHORS IN *Motion* TIM & DEBBIE BISHOP  
 THE PERSISTENT ROAD TIM BISHOP  
 WHEELS OF *Wisdom* TIM & DEBBIE BISHOP  
 TWO ARE BETTER TIM & DEBBIE BISHOP  
 BICYCLE TOURING HOW-TO TIM AND DEBBIE BISHOP  
 HEDGING DEMYSTIFIED TIM BISHOP  
 HOW TO BALANCE RISK AND PROTECT PROFIT  
 OPEN ROAD PRESS

39

## Self-editing Quiz

- Without any vegetation.
- Without vegetation.

40

## Self-editing Quiz

- He walked briskly out the door.
- He strode out the door.

41

## Self-editing Quiz

- She ate her meal quickly.
- She devoured her meal.

42

## Self-editing Quiz

- After an evening at a strip motel in Newcastle, a handful of pronghorn chased the cyclists out of Wyoming under threatening skies.
- A handful of pronghorn chased the cyclists out of Wyoming under threatening skies after an evening at a strip motel in Newcastle.

43

## Self-editing Quiz

- It was actually a helpful presentation.
- It was a helpful presentation.
- Jim cupped his hand to his mouth. "I was a little concerned myself when I saw the subject. But it was actually a helpful presentation."
- Jim cupped his hand to his mouth. "I was concerned myself when I saw the subject. But it was ????"

44

## Self-editing Quiz

- The professor just couldn't understand why his students kept falling asleep.
- The professor couldn't understand why his students kept falling asleep.

45

## Self-editing Quiz

- Jamie wrote the book that Mary read.
- Jamie wrote the book Mary read.

46

## Editing

- Self-editing is not enough. Formal writing needs an editor...
- ...with appropriate credentials
- If you're not writing for an in-house editor, hire an outside editor
- Listen to your editor
- Keep an open mind

47

## Summary

- Know your audience and serve them as unto the Lord
- Stay true to your message
- Produce an attractive, high-quality product
- Don't give up

*“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”*

--Colossian 3:23-24 NIV

48



## Resources

- *Writer's Market* by Robert Lee Brewer
  - *The Christian Writer's Market Guide* by Steve Laube
  - *Chicago Manual of Style* by University of Chicago Press
  - *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White
  - *Rewrite Right* by Jan Venolia
  - *How to Write Non-Fiction* by Joanna Penn
- 
- ChatGPT or other AI

49

## To obtain a copy of this presentation

Go to <https://timbishopwrites.com/articles/>

In the sidebar, under Tim's Help for Writers, click on nonfiction

I invite you to follow me on social media using the handle [@TimBishopWrites](#) and subscribe to my newsletter at [TimBishopWrites.com](https://timbishopwrites.com).

@TimBishopWrites

tbishop@openroadpress.com

50

# Questions?



@TimBishopWrites

tbishop@openroadpress.com