

Setting Up Your Book

Before you start writing, you should know your **theme**. You'll also need to know the type of person (the **audience**) who is interested in reading a book about this theme. Now you can come up with a list of **keywords** to help you write a **premise statement** that will be proven in your book. You'll come up with a list of **questions and answers** that need to be asked of your premise statement. Finally, you'll want to identify the **writing style** you're going to use so you stay consistent.

Theme

A theme is the underlying idea of your writing. A theme should be only one or two words.

Example: The theme for Thanksgiving is "gratitude"

Other writing themes: Activation, hope, prosperity, depression, anger management, intimacy, solidarity, alcoholism, power evangelism, prophetic evangelism

Audience

If you don't know the type of person who will be reading your book, you won't know how to speak to them. Is the audience going to be teenagers? Christian or unsaved? Strong religious mindset or hungry for more of God? Scholarly? Interested only in quick or light reading? Short attention span?

If you try to write to every type of audience in one book, every paragraph or section will only be spoken to one type of reader while the others may be frustrated. When you start talking to teenagers, the adult readers are going to roll their eyes and be frustrated. When you switch back to speaking to adult readers, the teenagers will feel left out when you start assuming that the reader has many years of life experience which your writing is now based on.

To discover your audience, create a hypothetical person in your imagination. Is he male? Is she female? Why would he or she read your book? What will they read on the back of the book or in the table of contents that compels them to buy and read it?

Now, create three hypothetical people. Give each of them different reasons for buying and reading your book. Maybe one person is really drawn to your testimony and the hardships you endured. Maybe another is drawn to what happened to you after you endured the hardships and is inspired by the outcome. Maybe another wants to know how you survived the hardships and is so bogged down by his own "storms of life" that he can't even think about outcomes yet. You must know your audience. Each of these people are the ones you're writing to.

Keywords

In order to create a premise statement that covers your entire book, you'll need to first explore the keywords that you want to write about. A page is included in this handout for you to write out keywords that you want to cover in your book.

If you were writing a book about freedom from old mindsets that resulted in a broken identity, you might write some of the following keywords: freedom, truths, lies, mindset, identity, bondage, breakthrough and lifestyle.

These keywords will be extremely helpful during the planning stages of your book. Each keyword should be rich and meaty, filled with great questions and potential revelation that you can cover in your book. You'll use this keyword page often for ideas!

Premise Statement

Your theme should lead to your premise. The premise is a single sentence that must be proven by every part of your book. If you have ideas for your book that don't prove or build upon your premise statement, don't include it. This will help your writing stay focused on your premise.

Ideally, a reader should be able to summarize your book into a single sentence that is synonymous with your premise statement. If they can summarize your book into the same summary that you started with, it means you stayed true to your premise and you were able to communicate it clearly in every part of your book.

A good premise statement should be so bold that it *begs* to be proven.

Examples:

- Children can prophesy.
- God is in a good mood.
- Christians have power, authority, and a commission to bring heaven to earth.

If your premise is "children can prophesy," every part of your book should be about proving that statement. What if you want to include a section of tips for finding a babysitter? Yes, it's related to children but the theme of the book is prophecy and the premise is "children can prophesy." The idea for this section isn't related to the theme, nor does it help prove the premise, so that idea is out.

The premise becomes your filter which keeps you focused. If your ideas can pass through the filter, use it. If not, save your ideas for the next book!

Quotation from How to Write a D*** Good Novel II by James N. Frey:

"Knowing your premise is like having a cannon to stuff the gunpowder of your creativity into. Without a premise, no matter how much gunpowder you've got, you may have a lot of flash and smoke, but you won't blow down any walls."

You have an idea (the cannonball) that you want to get into the hearts and minds of your readers. The cannon (premise) allows you to focus the power of your creativity in a way that will launch your idea toward the reader in a powerful, impacting way.

Questions & Answers

To get ideas for your book, read your premise statement and start asking questions. Why? How? In what ways? Now write down any answers you have. Demand an explan-

ation from everything you assume. Then ask more questions of these answers. Keep doing this repeatedly until you exhaust that avenue. This process will help you draw out the information that is inside you. Look at your questions and answers and figure out which ones your audience is asking. Are there any questions here that aren't relevant to your audience?

Asking yourself questions is a great way to draw out the revelation within you. It's also a great way to ensure you clearly explain concepts to your audience in a way they'll understand. You don't want your readers to be asking "how" or "why" as they're reading your book and *not get answers!*

Example Premise Statement: All children can prophesy.

- **Question:** Why can all children prophesy?
- **Answer:** There is no junior Holy Spirit. Acts 2:17 "Your sons and daughters will prophesy..."

- **Question:** How can children prophesy?
- **Answer:** They have a strong imagination which, when combined with the Holy Spirit's revelation, makes it easy for them to see and feel in the spiritual realm.

- **Question:** Don't children need to be prophets in order to prophesy?
- **Answer:** Acts 2:17 and when Paul says in I Cor. 14 "...you may all prophesy..."

- **Question:** How do you teach children to prophesy?
- **Answer:** Use lots of analogies so they understand it better. Have them practice often so the gift of prophecy becomes a normal way of thinking.

This will help you understand what you know and what you don't know. As you're writing the questions down, think of what your hypothetical readers would ask you. Talk to them in your mind. Or talk to somebody who has been in the situation you're writing about. Have them talk to you as if you're the most knowledgeable expert in the world. Don't be afraid of their questions. And make sure they're not afraid to ask you tough questions! The answers aren't important yet. Just write everything down... the questions, and your own answers if you get them at the moment, or think about answers later. Some of your on-the-spot answers may surprise you and you might wonder when you learned something so profound. Some of your wise answers may have even come "at the moment" by revelation of the Holy Spirit.

As you're building your list of questions, look at them often. Keep them in front of you for several weeks. Print them out and put them on the bathroom mirror, in your car, on your kitchen table. Have your friends email or text you questions — even if you have to give them a few and ask them to send you a random question every few days. The idea is that you want to keep these questions in front of you at all times so your subconscious is constantly thinking about them. The only way to be constantly writing is to be constantly immersed in the questions your book will answer.

If you can't find or figure out answers to some of the questions on your list, these are the ones you want to take to God. Ask Him for wisdom. Then ask Him a question or two each day. Throughout the day, revisit the question a few times and see if He's provided you an answer yet. Revisit old questions you've asked Him already. Sometimes you may be surprised to find you get the answer as soon as you ask Him. Other times, He may wait a few days. And sometimes you may find yourself in a conversation with somebody and you hear yourself giving the most amazing wisdom to that person... and then you realize that you asked God for a revelation two weeks earlier. And here it is!

Expect God to give you revelation and wisdom from heaven. He has promised it to you. Put an expectancy on Him to fulfill His promises. He's not waiting for you to perfect yourself. He's just waiting for you to ask, and then expect an answer. Many times, we do "drive-by" prayers. We ask God for something but we don't really expect Him to do anything about it. Expectancy is the other half of prayer. Prayer is what gives God permission to intervene in our lives. Expectancy is what creates room for God to put something into our lives. Expectancy is faith in action.

Writing Style

Every book has a specific writing style. Is the writing stuffy and literary? Is it lighthearted and funny? Is it tongue-in-cheek? Optimistic or pessimistic? Business professional?

Your writing style should reflect both you and your audience. Don't choose a writing style that you can't accurately portray. It's easy to imagine what can happen when a 70 year-old college history professor tries to speak or write in a "hip/modern" style to reach the younger generation. It can come off very awkward and obvious. It can be the same thing for a 15 year-old who tries to write with a style he's not familiar with.

Pick a style you're comfortable with and ensure that your intended audience will find it familiar and comfortable as well.

Jesus deliberately chose a specific style for his teaching. He spoke in parables which were short stories that were engaging and interesting to his listeners. His parables also served to hide the real truth of his teaching in a way that only a hungry listener could discover. He presented a simple hurdle for people to jump over. If they were hungry, they would dig into his teaching to find the truth.

Discover Your Audience

Few books are written for everyone! If you try to write to everyone, the other 95% will get bored and stop reading. A book has to write to a specific type of reader and you, the author, must know to whom you are writing. This will keep your writing focused and the information relevant at all times.

Whether you realize it or not, you always write to a specific audience whenever you write anything. Imagine that you're a teenage girl writing a letter about the romantic first date you had with a boy yesterday. If you write this letter to your best friend, it's going to be very different than if you wrote this letter to your dad! Although both letters are about the exact same event, they'll have different wording, writing style, and even certain facts may be omitted or included.

Your best friend would be very bored (and perhaps offended) if you accidentally mailed the dry, boring, brief, "just the facts" letter to her instead of your dad. Similarly, your book audience needs to be written to one kind of reader.

In this exercise, you will create three fictional readers and explain why they want or need to read your book. You're creating three readers (and not one) so you better understand the type of person (or people) who'll want to read your book.

To summarize the reader in "Reader Summary", describe their motivating factor for buying the book using a sentence such as:

- Experiencing depression and is desperate for breakthrough
- Bored with life and wants purpose and destiny
- Wants to learn more about intimacy with Jesus
- A busy, overworked mom who is frustrated with her family and feels unappreciated

The "Life Situation" should be the reader's unique situation that causes them to want or need your book. Describe a fictional situation in their life that will motivate them to be interested in your book.

The following readers can be fictional or real people you know. In fact, one of these readers could even be you in the past, before you got the revelations which you're now writing about.

If you need to, talk to some people who are the type of reader you'd like to write to. The idea of this exercise is to get inside their head so you understand your audience thoroughly. When writing your book, there are times when it will be much easier to write as if that person was sitting right next to you and you're simply talking to them. This will make your writing style engaging, interesting, and relevant.

Also, analyze other books in your book genre. As you're reading it, ask yourself who the author wrote to. Who would benefit most from that kind of book? Who wouldn't get much (if anything) out of that book? Learning to identify this dividing line will help you as you try to define the boundaries of your audience.

READER #1

Name: _____ Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Reader Summary: _____

Describe this reader by answering the following: Favorite food? Movie? Book? Activity? Hobby?

Life Situation: _____

What convinced this reader to buy your book? What did they notice in the description on the back of the book, or what keyword in the chapter titles reached out and grabbed them?

Any other important facts? Family description? Past incidents that still affect them? Fears or lies holding them back from their destiny?

READER #2

Name: _____ Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Reader Summary: _____

Describe this reader by answering the following: Favorite food? Movie? Book? Activity? Hobby?

Life Situation: _____

What convinced this reader to buy your book? What did they notice in the description on the back of the book, or what keyword in the chapter titles reached out and grabbed them?

Any other important facts? Family description? Past incidents that still affect them? Fears or lies holding them back from their destiny?

READER #3

Name: _____ Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Reader Summary: _____

Describe this reader by answering the following: Favorite food? Movie? Book? Activity? Hobby?

Life Situation: _____

What convinced this reader to buy your book? What did they notice in the description on the back of the book, or what keyword in the chapter titles reached out and grabbed them?

Any other important facts? Family description? Past incidents that still affect them? Fears or lies holding them back from their destiny?

Summarize the **Parameters** of Your Book

What is the theme of your book? *(one or two words)*

What is the premise statement for your book? *(one sentence using the most prominent and general keywords from the previous page)*

What will be your writing style? *(you can reference an existing book as the same style you want to write in)*

Describe your audience. Who needs to read your book and why?
