

# Writing and Publishing Your Book with Xulon

## GETTING STARTED

### STEP 1

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO WRITE

**Before you begin to write, there are some important things to consider and determine.**

**A. Determine where you are currently at in the writing process.** Every book has a starting point. It is important to know where you are currently at in the process of pursuing your dream or mission of writing a book. Ask yourself questions such as:

- “Have I already begun writing my book?”
- “Do I have journal notes, handwritten notes, or recorded sermons?”
- “Have I saved some notes, journals, or ideas on my computer?”
- “Do I have an outline and a title?”
- “Do I know what the main idea of my book is about?”
- “Is this my first book?”

**B. Make sure that your book is aligned with, and does not contradict, Xulon’s Statement of Faith.**

Our statement of faith is listed on our website and if you have any question as to whether your book would be outside of what Xulon will publish, please contact your Publishing Consultant.

**C. Be certain that you are following the manuscript guidelines from the very start.**

Before you begin to write, make sure that you have read the guidelines for how your manuscript should be created and what format it should be in. This will allow you to set your book up correctly from the start. Make sure that you are using the correct digital format for Xulon Press. Manuscripts can only be submitted to Xulon in either Microsoft Word, or in a professionally-created PDF file.

When you begin to write in Microsoft Word please remember you do not need to hit the “Return” key at the end of every sentence. Let each sentence naturally end and transition to the next line on its own. This will eliminate any “Hard Returns” that could delay and add additional expense to producing your manuscript. If you need help in understanding the guidelines for creating your manuscript, please contact your Publishing Consultant.

#### **D. Determine your audience. Who are you writing this book for, and who will be reading it?**

Great authors write with a reader or an audience in mind. Two of the best selling self-published books of all time were written by the authors for their children. They had no idea that there would be thousands of other children just like their own who would love the book. Are you writing to encourage single mothers? Are you writing this book for someone who is hungry to know more about the history of the church? Are you writing to persuade someone to see a different theological view or truth? Who are you writing this book for?

Describe in the best detail possible what they are like, and as far as you can, determine what is the best way to talk to or communicate with them. For instance, you would not write to a child using deep theological words that only scholars would understand. If you were writing a book to encourage Christian men to be strong leaders for their families, you would want to write in such a way that the readers would be challenged and engaged. While there is no simple answer for every book, it is vital that you know whom you are writing this book for.

#### **E. Build a spiritual foundation of prayer and continue to pray throughout the process.**

For Christian writers/authors there is a special and unique difference in their message and the values they express through their written work. For the Christian writer, there exists either a special reason to write or at least a significant influence on their writing. As Christians, we are different because of what we believe in and who we believe in. For that reason, the greatest person we can turn to and to draw from is God. For the Christian writer the time to pray is **before... during and after.**

**Pray before you write.** Ask God to guide you and inspire you. Most likely you have arrived at this step because you have developed a strong desire to share a message, a story or a truth that you feel is important for Christians to know about. Even if the book you want to write is not focused on a Christian teaching or testimony, it is written from a Christian point of view because you are a Christian writer. Ask for help before you write.

**Pray while you write.** Discouragement, “Writer’s Block” or just the general loss of your initial inspiration can plague or hinder any author as he or she tries to complete or expand their initial thoughts into a full manuscript. Remember your source for everything that pertains to life and your ability to accomplish the task of being a Christian author. Remember that as a Child of God you have a helper that you can turn to for encouragement, enlightenment, wisdom and strength. While you are writing, turn to God and ask for His help.

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

*(Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)*

**Pray after you write.** When you are finished writing, remember to thank God for the help that he provided while you were writing. Ask Him to use what you have written to glorify

His name and to make a positive difference in the lives of those who read it. Pray for those who are working with you on the production and publication of your book. Pray for the designers and for anyone who is involved in producing and promoting your book to the world. Pray for open doors and opportunities to introduce your book to others who would enjoy or benefit from its content.

**F. Consider purchasing your publishing package before you write your book, or at least early in the process.**

One of the most effective steps you can take to ensure success, and to help motivate and inspire you to complete your book, is to commit yourself to finish your project by purchasing your publishing package early. Authors that have a monetary commitment to their book find more resolve and focus in finishing their manuscript than authors who are waiting until they are finished writing before they purchase their publishing package. Like everything else, when we fully commit our finances, we then fully commit our time to the process.

Another benefit of securing your publishing package early is that you can normally secure it when the package is on sale, or the offer is exactly what you want. For authors that wait to purchase their publishing package only when they are finished writing, they are limited in their choices of special sales or discounts. Take the time to look for the right price and then commit yourself to the process that is before you.

## STEP 2 BEGIN TO WRITE!

In other words, begin writing today. The hardest thing that most authors have to overcome is procrastination. The cemeteries and mausoleums that surround us today are in a sense filled with books and stories that were never told and never written. Open your computer, grab a journal or even a digital recorder, but do something now to overcome any desire to procrastinate. Even if you feel that you do not know enough to get started, make the decision to learn as you go.

You have an idea, a dream or a vision. You believe God has told you to write a book. Begin by just writing the thoughts you have about that subject or truth. Habakkuk 2:2 says, “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.” I believe that the Psalmist has said it best, “My tongue is the pen of a skillful writer” (Psalm 45:1).

No matter how much we teach you on how to write, one of the most important steps in writing a book is just to stop talking about it and get started. Many times authors will talk about writing and can even tell their story, but they don’t have anything written down. They have never gotten beyond their dream, idea or vision. Start writing now! Even if it is

messy and unorganized it is now out of your head on the paper. Discover the truth that great writers have to get something written before they can really write their greatest work.

In fact, **“Every great writer is really a great re-writer.”** Great writers know that they must get their thoughts and ideas recorded before they can really begin to organize and clarify them into what will eventually form a well-written manuscript. If you think of a story that you would want to include in your book, write it down. You will come back later to re-write it and or build around it. The problem most people have in getting started is they are trying to write a completed manuscript in their heads before they put it on paper. They are trying to make the first draft the final manuscript. Think of the beginning of your writing process like molding and shaping a chunk of clay into what would eventually become a beautiful vase. You must first drop the clay on the wheel or board before you can begin to mold and shape it. This step is simply to begin the process, and watch what happens as you step out and start writing. Have you ever heard that it is easier to turn a car that is moving forward? Once you start moving, you will find that one thought written down leads to other thoughts you wouldn't have had if you had never written down the first thought.

STEP

## 3 ORGANIZE YOUR THOUGHTS AND IDEAS INTO A WORKABLE OUTLINE.

**Begin by writing down some ideas that you have for the *title*.** Jot down every title and subtitle that comes to mind for your book. One of these may end up being the title of your book and another may be used as the subtitle. Your title is a magnet to attract ideas, principles, story lines and points that you wish to make. Rarely is your first title the one you end up with, but it marks the starting line for your race to finishing your book.

**Write the *premise*.** When you start your book it is important to write out a premise statement that establishes the main idea, the basic concept, the foundational principle, personal story or instructional topic of your book. For example, if you are writing a book about the Sermon on the Mount, then you need to determine what the book is going to cover and how it will clearly summarize or specifically detail the ideas, principles, truths, teachings and material you have gleaned from your study of the Sermon on the Mount. Ask yourself, “What am I seeking to clearly communicate to my reader?”

The premise should be brief and to the point. Once a premise is written in one to three paragraphs, go back and make certain that the basic idea of the book is communicated clearly. Then, let other people read the premise and see what questions they ask. Doing so will enable you to add to the premise any additional content needed to answer questions a reader might have about what is in your book. If you, the author, don't know what you are trying to communicate, you will never be able to communicate it clearly to a reader. The premise is carried throughout your book. It needs to be just one basic idea.

Your premise is the plumb line for communicating everything in the book. Every chapter, every poem and every part of your story—whether it is a biography or an autobiography, a novel or a piece of nonfiction—must be tied to the central story premise and direction for your book.

**Invite feedback from others.** Once you have a premise written and all the benefits are clearly explained, let other people read it. Ask family members and friends to read what you have written about your book project, and ask them to give you feedback. There are also many writing organizations such as Word Weavers and Christian Writers Guild that can provide support. Look for others within your own church or community of friends that want to support each other while they work on their own manuscripts.

Here are some questions you need to ask them after they have read what you have done.

*1 - Is the reason for the book being written clear?*

*2 - Can you tell others the purpose of the book in your own words?*

*3 - What benefits would others receive from reading your book?*

*4 - Who do you think would be interested in this book?*

*5 - What is the market for the book?*

*6 - Would you buy the book? Why, or why not?*

*7 - What topics need to be included in this book?*

Once you have some feedback on the premise and benefits of the book, then go back and rewrite the premise, as clearly and sharply as you can, listing all the benefits you want the reader to receive from reading this book. Now you are ready for the next step.

**Create a chapter outline.** Now it is time to list all of the major topics, ideas, concepts, and principles that you believe should be covered in your book. This list will eventually be refined into your chapters. Don't worry right now about the order of the chapters. You can put an order to your chapters later. Right now you simply want to get the main concepts written down. Spend some time doing this. Once you have made your initial list of topics and chapters, let it sit for a few days and come back to it after you have had time to think, pray and meditate on the material. Then add to and subtract from your list.

Once you have your list of chapter titles and topics, go back and write a paragraph or two with your main idea for each chapter. Just as the book needs a premise, each chapter needs a premise.

- What are you going to communicate in this chapter?
- What do you want the reader to learn?
- What is the material you want to share with the reader?
- What benefit will the reader get from this chapter?
- What will they further understand once they have read this chapter?
- What will they be able to do as a result of reading this chapter?
- How will this chapter change the reader?
- What kind of transformation, information and new dedication to God or to others will they desire to make as a result of reading this chapter?

## STEP

# 4

## TURNING YOUR OUTLINE INTO A MANUSCRIPT!

We have just finished talking about and writing down the premise and the outline to set up the structure and skeleton for your book. Now it is time to follow the road map you have constructed for your book and put it all together. This step contains specific tips on how to bring everything together to complete your book. Up until now, you only have the framework for your book. Now it is time to begin to piece it all together and expand the main points of your outline.

**Tip 1 – Get your story or message into a verbal or written format.** Some people are better speakers than writers. Using a keyboard or a computer is difficult for them. They are verbal, not visual, in their style of communication. If that is you, here is what you do: dictate your book and get it into a verbal form. Don't try to dictate too much at a time. A good rule of thumb is to dictate one chapter or key idea at most during a recording session.

Then find a person to transcribe your recorded material. You can either contract Xulon for transcription, or ask someone you know who can type the recorded content into Microsoft Word, making sure to follow the guidelines that Xulon Provides for manuscript preparation and submission. Another way to get your audio down on paper is to use a software program like Dragon™.

If, like most authors, you decide to type out your book yourself, use Microsoft Word. It is by far the most commonly used software for writing, and what Xulon requires if you are submitting your manuscript as a word document.

### **Tip 2 – Follow the “C’s” of Communication**

You are trying to communicate an idea and you want to be as clear as possible. Follow the rule for the “C’s” of communication. Remember, a book is about communicating an idea, a concept and information.

**Clarity** – You want to write as simply, clearly and directly as possible. Put your chapters in order so that your message or story flows smoothly and understandably. You are not trying to impress the reader with your academics or theological knowledge. Write simply, directly and clearly. If you write with clarity and communicate with words that anybody can understand, you will reach those you are writing for.

**Consistency** – As you are writing, do not go off on rabbit trails; stay focused on and consistent with the premise. Every chapter needs to line up with the premise of the book. That is your standard. If you deviate too far from the premise, you are writing another book. Do not introduce confusing ideas and concepts that might be great for the reader to know, but don't fit with the purpose and premise of the book that you are writing. Be consistent.

**Caring** – You want to communicate that you care about and understand what the reader needs. The readers need to know that you are on their side and that you are seeking to share out of a caring mindset. If the reader feels that you are trying to speak down to them, put them down or be critical of them, or in any way use or abuse them, they will not be interested in continuing with your book. Have someone else check your writing for the tone you are using. People still need biblical correction, but they can tell if the writer is caring or just trying to win an argument. Be caring and people will read what you are saying, even if it sometimes contradicts what they believe or how they are living.

**Concise** – Watch out for redundancy. Often a writer will say the same thing a dozen different ways. While repetition works well when communicating verbally, it doesn't communicate well in print. Be careful not to repeat phrases or stories over and over again throughout the book. Simplicity, brevity while completing your thought with just the right nouns, lots of action verbs and very descriptive adjective and adverbs will season your message just right.

**Continuous** – Keep your plot, message, story and book moving. Don't bog down in a sidelight so that your book loses momentum. It is a known fact that most book buyers never finish the books they purchase. Granted, some readers are lazy or find themselves distracted, but write so the book moves the reader through a continuous journey. Don't get waylaid in circular arguments or reasoning. Move forward. Start, focus, continue through your story or message to stay on course, and then finish strong. Picture a road map of where you want the reader to begin and where you want them to end. The chapters between the Introduction and Conclusion are the places they will need to visit to reach the final conclusion.

**Tip 3 – Decide the “person” or “voice” you are writing in.** What does this mean? Ask yourself if you are you going to write your book in the first person singular or plural (I or we), second person (you), or third person (they). Be careful when you write to keep the “person” the same in each paragraph or section of your book. If you are addressing a reader as “you” do not switch the person in the middle of the paragraph and start writing with “we.” Be consistent.

- You may prefer to be more removed and less direct when you write, so use the third person “they” as opposed to the more personal “we.” Using “they” and “one” makes the style more neutral, distant and abstract.  
For example: “One may think that all writers are experts in their subject.”
- If you are going to include yourself with the readers, then use “we.”  
For example: “We think that all writers are experts in their subject.”
- Or you may choose to simply address the reader directly.  
For example: “You may think all writers are experts.”

Be consistent in the person you choose within each paragraph. Also avoid preaching at the reader. When you do use the word “you”, be certain that it is more of a teaching or personal style and less of an accusatory style. If you come across as being judgmental or condemning, the reader may not want to read what you are writing and your message will be lost.

**Tip 4 – Do not add spacing or use repetitive punctuation.** Many authors double space after a period or a colon. Publishers have their own software that will automatically add spacing, so when you submit your manuscript you do not need to insert any additional spacing. Do not add additional spacing between pages either. It is not necessary to use “hard returns” when you type sentences. Let the program format your line returns automatically. You do not have to put in page breaks as long as the editor or typesetter sees your new chapter titles.

Putting multiple question marks or exclamation points at the end of a question or exclamation is not necessary. Some writers frequently use this technique to “drive their points home”, but it is very wearisome for the reader to wade through lots of exclamation points or question marks, so avoid this.

**Tip 5 – Quoting Scripture.** One of the most common mistakes that new authors make is overwhelming a reader with a large quantity and volume of scripture quotations. You do not have to prove every point you make with a scripture quotation. What is helpful to your readers is to let them know where to find the scriptures that support and confirm what you are saying. Here are some important points about using scripture.

- Decide what version of the Bible will be your default version. Your default version is the translation that you quote from most often. This may be the New International Versions (NIV) or it could be the King James Version (KJV) or you may decide to use the New King James Version (NKJV). There are many other versions that you can choose from, but choose one that you quote from most often and that will be your default version. When quoting from your default version, it is not necessary to cite the version with every verse. The reader will know the default version by seeing it listed on the copyright page. When you submit your manuscript, Xulon will ask for the versions of the Bible that you used within your manuscript.

- When you quote from a version of the Bible that is not your default then it is important for you to use a parenthesis citation, which includes the scripture reference as well as the Bible version.

For example: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him would not perish; but have everlasting life” John 3:16 (KJV).

- When you are citing a biblical reference, simply include the reference as part of your paragraph when it is relatively short (i.e. one to three verses).

When the reference that you are quoting is longer than three verses, you can set it apart by indenting it. When you indent, use quotation marks, not italics. Notice that there is no reference to the version of the verses cited below. This would indicate that it is from the default version listed on the copyright page of the book. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was G o d . He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light that shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent by God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.” John 1:1-7

- Don’t overuse italics or bold highlighting. You can make it very difficult for your reader to read your book if you make the common mistake of putting all your scripture passages in bold or italics. The only time you need to put your scripture in bold or italics is if there is a word or phrase within the text that is there for emphasis, and you are going to be referring to that word or phrase in your explanation or exposition. Whenever you change a text, be certain that you alert the reader to any change that has been made for emphasis, or is your own paraphrase.

For example: “For God so **loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16 (NKJV, emphasis added).

- If you choose to use italics when you cite a long passage of scripture after you’ve indented it, then it is not necessary to use quotation marks. Note, you still need to use the quotation marks for any dialogue within the verses. Also note the reference at the end of the quotation is not italicized.

*On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’s mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’s mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” John 2:1-5*

- One way to make it easier for the reader to read your book and not be tripping over a multitude of scripture citations is to put the citation as an endnote either at the end of each chapter, or at the end of your book. By this method, the information of where the scriptures are taken from is available and the reader can look up the passages that are of interest to him or her.
- When abbreviating books of Scripture, be certain to use the correct abbreviations. Xulon preference is not to abbreviate scripture books since abbreviation styles vary and not all readers understand the abbreviations. The best style is to spell out the full name of the book whenever a book of Scripture is cited.
- It is incorrect to cite a passage within a sentence by saying:  
     In Matthew chapter 4 verse 21 we read, “Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John.”  
 The proper way to cite a passage within a sentence is:  
     In Matthew 4:21, we read, “Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John.”

**Tip 6 – Quoting from other sources or reference works.** The same general rule holds for quoting from books, magazines, the internet or other sources. Remember that plagiarism is a crime, which means when you quote or refer to specific ideas from other sources you must be certain that you give credit to the source. However, if the idea is a common cliché, aphorism or historical quote that is so general it has become part of conventional wisdom, no quotation is necessary. For example, if you use phrases like, “A penny saved is a penny earned,” it is not necessary to cite Ben Franklin as the author of this common aphorism.

With quotes from other historical figures like George Washington or Winston Churchill, you may cite their works, but it is not always necessary to identify the exact reference work and page number from which the original quote was taken. You might quote the historical figure and identify the source from the internet, which includes many sites of famous quotes. If you do, then simply reference the site in your chapter notes or endnotes.

When quoting any other reference, be certain to quote the author, the work, the publishing city and company, the date of the publication and the page number the quote was taken from. I recommend that you pick up a copy of “The Chicago Manual of Style” if you really want to know how to best list and format your chapter notes or end notes. At Xulon Press, as with many publishers, “The Chicago Manual of Style” is the editing “Bible” for correct grammar, punctuation, formatting, etc.

“The Chicago Manual of Style” explains the proper use of footnotes and endnotes:  
 “Footnotes are properly so called when they appear at the foot of a page. In a journal, endnotes appear at the end of an article; in a book, at the end of a chapter or, more

commonly because easier to locate, at the back of the book. A note number should be placed at the end of a sentence or at the end of a clause. The number follows any punctuation mark except for the dash, which it precedes. It follows a closing parenthesis.”<sup>1</sup>

Example of proper footnote or endnote placement: “This,” wrote George Templeton Strong, “is what our tailors can do.” (In an earlier book he said quite the opposite.)<sup>1</sup>

If you are submitting your manuscript as a Word Document for Xulon Press to format, you will need to follow the guidelines that call for you submit your footnotes as endnotes instead. Please refer to the guidelines for submission for direction on endnotes.

**Tip 7 – Use proper sentence structure.** Do not use sentence fragments; write in complete sentences. If two sentences are very closely related in their thought, combine them with a semicolon.

For example: “I am going to the store; now is the right time for me to go.”

Use an extended hyphen (m-dash) at the end of the sentence when clarifying the last thought or word in that sentence.

For example: “I am an author—a bestselling author.”

Avoid the use of excessively long sentences. Some authors are like St. Paul; their sentences tend to be a paragraph in length. Compound and complex sentences are needed when writing, but avoid excessive usage since they will bog a reader down and often obscure your train of thought. Clear communication requires clarity. Keep your sentences crisp and to the point so the flow of your thought keeps consistently moving forward.

**Tip 8 –Use Verbs, Nouns, and Adjectives Properly.** We would encourage you to use verbs and very descriptive adjectives and adverbs, but avoid repetition. Change your adjectives so that you are not using the same adjective over and over again. Use action verbs rather than a lot of transient verbs.

For example, this is a poor use of a verb: “There are many authors who write using the same words over and over again.”

Instead this sentence should read with more action, “Many authors use the same words over and over again when they write.”

**Tip 9 - Page Numbering.** It is helpful to use the Microsoft Word function for numbering pages while writing and even editing your manuscript. However, when preparing your manuscript for press you need to remove all page numbers from your manuscript. The typesetting team will set the numbers of your pages for you as your book is formatted.

**Tip 10 – Using numbers within your text.** When using numbers in your text, spell out numbers up to one hundred, and then use Arabic numerals for numbers over one hundred.

For example: “There are five chapters in this book, which is more than 128 pages long.”

It's impossible, even when you follow all the above tips and reread/correct your manuscript a number of times, to edit your own writing with the highest level of excellence. Very few authors have been trained as editors and even bestselling authors look to editors to correct and polish their writing so that punctuation and grammatical mistakes are eliminated. We strongly recommend that you have an editorial diagnostic done on your manuscript to describe what you can do, and what a professional edit can do, to take your manuscript to the highest level of writing and professional presentation.

Three levels of professional editing are available for you:

- 1) *Copyediting* – Copyediting corrects grammar, punctuation, incomplete sentences, typos, spelling and incorrect or confusing formatting. Subject-verb agreement is checked; consistent voice and tense are maintained. Proper referencing and quoting sources are also checked. For excellent writers, a solid copyedit simply catches and corrects the errors that their eyes have missed. Remember, errors in your manuscript diminish sales, embarrass you, detract from your credibility as a writer and often cause the reader to stop reading your book.
- 2) *Line Editing* – Line editing includes copyediting and goes deeper into the structure of your manuscript correcting awkward and confusing sentences and paragraphs. Line editing also inserts or improves subheads, pull quotes, chapter titles, transitions between chapters and chapter sections and, end of chapter summaries. Additionally, formatting tools that improve a reader's progress through the text like bullet lists, text boxes, sidebars, effective use of italics, bold and underlining to give emphasis to the text, etc. will be covered by this kind of edit. Line editing also helps to finish incomplete thoughts, catch theological mistakes, proof biblical texting, and improve the clarity and completeness of content.
- 3) *Developmental Editing* – This level of editing is the most comprehensive. Developmental editing includes copyediting and line editing. Additionally, everything in the manuscript is improved. Order and flow of the chapters and the material within the chapters are strengthened, rewritten and supplemented to extend, develop and supplement content. End of chapter checklists, summaries, or interactive materials are added or developed. Pull quotes are developed and inserted. Additional content is recommended and stronger reference material is suggested where needed.

(Read the formal descriptions of these editing services at the Xulon website <http://xulonpress.com/services/editorial-services.php>)

Remember as we said previously, errors in your manuscript will...

- diminish or limit the sales of your book
- embarrass you and detract from your credibility as a writer
- often cause the reader to stop reading your book due to errors and mistakes

Authors may try to save some money by initially skipping editing. This can be a costly mistake that also embarrasses the author in the long run. Investing in the quality of your manuscript through professional editing will enhance sales, take the quality of your writing to the highest publishing level, and make reading your book an easy and enjoyable experience for your readers.

#### Our Commitment to You!

Xulon Press is dedicated to empowering and assisting you in writing, publishing and marketing your Christian book at the highest quality. Your representative is dedicated to giving you the service and mentoring you need to publish your book that will inspire, instruct and impart to others the wonderful message God has given you – obey God's mandate for you to write the book!

Get started, push through and finish your book with excellence to God's glory.