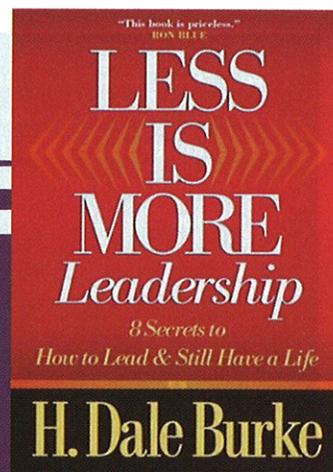
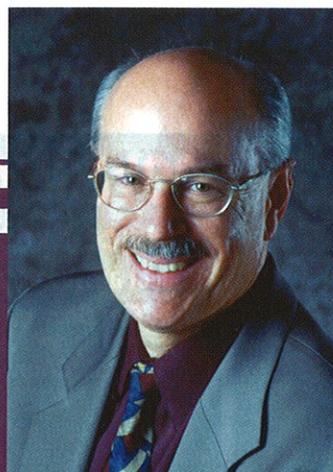
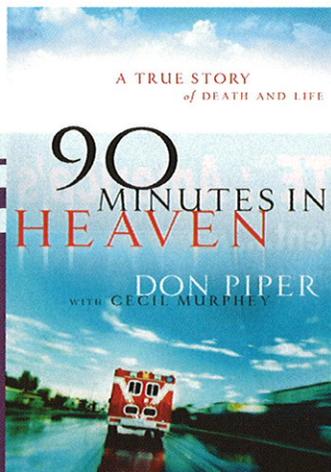
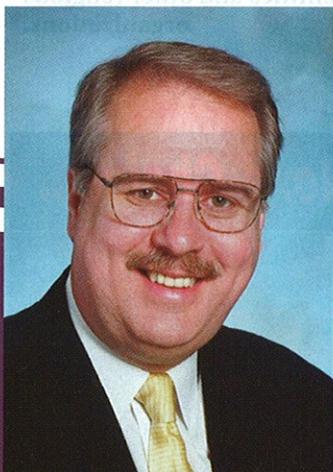


So you want to write a book?

Writing a book and getting it published is a grueling task. Here's what some authors tell about the experience.



Not every aspiring book author has a story like Don Piper. His car hit by a semitruck, Piper, a former pastor and church staff member in Texas, had a death experience for 90 minutes. Not near-death — he was killed, doctors agree, and lived to tell about it. And he does so in *90 Minutes in Heaven*, published last fall and already in its 11th printing by Revell.

The accident happened 15 years ago, and for the first nearly four years Piper didn't tell anyone what he encountered in those 90 minutes. Now the world is finding out.

And it has been a heaven-sent experience since. With sales approaching 175,000 copies, Piper was on a publicity tour in Sweden in July where the book has taken off. It came out at the same time the tsunami struck in Southeast Asia, which is a favorite vacation place for many Swedes. In addition to the Swedish edition, rights have been obtained for the Korean version in 2006 and the Chinese version in 2007, and inevitably, a Hollywood company has picked up the movie rights.

Piper's publishing life had a great start, drawing thousands to his speaking tour in Sweden, thanks to his dramatic experience, but for most wannabe authors, getting a book contract is usually less spectacular and personally hurtful.

Chuck Smith Jr., senior pastor at Capo Beach Calvary Church in Southern California, is seeing his first book in November after 27 years in ministry. *Frequently Avoided Questions* (Baker Books) is an apologetics book that answers questions asked by the new generation.

Smith was guest-lecturing at a Youth With A Mission Bible school in Hawaii when YWAM staff member Matt Whitlock suggested that Smith should write a book. They eventually decided to do it together.

Then there is Paul L. King, a theology professor at Oral Roberts University, who had written an academic article that contained a paragraph in a footnote that dealt with "binding and loosing." The publisher had wanted to do a book on that theme and agreed to not only publish a book, but to coauthor it with King.

Not a common experience, but an example that publishers also have book ideas in search of a writer. The book, *Binding and Loosing* (Christian Publications, 1999), went on to sell 15,000 copies. King switched to Chosen Books for his third book, *Moving Mountains: Lessons in Bold Faith from Great Evangelical Leaders*, which came out last September and has thus far sold 3,500 copies.

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By Ronald E. Keener

Not being choosy

Deciding on a publisher for one's first book may come down to "going with anyone who would publish me," says Bryan Chapell, president for 22 years of Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO, and a former pastor. Now author of a dozen books, he has published with Baker, Zondervan, Crossway, and now back with Baker for *Praying Backwards: Transforming Your Prayer Life by Beginning in Jesus' Name*, that came out in July.

But having gained acceptance as a dependable author, Chapell says, "Go with a publisher who has offered the most potential for the promotion of your book." That will vary with the publisher, he says, who have differing specialties. Baker has been strong on publishing homiletics texts, and Crossway on devotional materials, Chapell offers.

He also explains that publishers have only a certain number of books they can publish in any given fiscal year, and that a manuscript — no matter how good it is — may not fit that schedule. Understandably, a publisher knows what he wants to accomplish in a given market year and can say, "This could be a very fine book, but we don't have a slot for it." When that happens Chapell says not to become discouraged, but present the proposal to another publisher.

Look for an unfilled niche

David Gallagher pastors a congregation focused on people over age 50 in the Arizona retirement community of Sun City West. Almost immediately he noted the specialized nature of the ministry to older people, checked out his concepts and processes to this special congregation with others, and began keeping a journal, which he felt led to put into an organized manuscript. Those notes and journaling were published as *Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century: Step-by-Step Strategies for Reaching People over 50* (Group Publishing, 2002).

Gallagher says he developed a passion for senior adult ministry and wanted to share that passion with others. It is that feeling, many authors will agree, that drive them to write books.

With a concept and a passion, Gallagher read everything he

could find on the topic. He saw a need and tried to fill that need. Although he had sent his manuscript to Group Publishing and to other publishers, he had heard nothing from Group for months. Checking with them again, he found they had no record of the manuscript being received. "Group asked me to send it to them again, and the rest is history," says Gallagher. Manuscripts do get lost, and for Gallagher, persistence paid off.

Finding a collaborator

Working with a co-editor can be a way to make a book happen. But Chuck Smith offers that he had to rewrite Matt Whitlock's text. "Matt's a great communicator verbally, but not a writer." Smith admits too that his own writing was blue-penciled by Baker's editor.

Finding time to write when leading a church and taking on other chores is hard. The opportunity to write was hard to get for both Whitlock and Smith, but when they did, Smith says they tended to stay with the creative burst as long as it lasted — sometimes into the wee hours of the morning. Being passionate about the subject matter, and being respectful of each other's gifts, mattered a lot in getting the text done, Smith says.

Now, Smith is editing a book of sermons for his father who founded Calvary Chapel with innovative outreach to youth in the 1970s. He also wants to help his father with an autobiography.

Called to write?

For H. Dale Burke, the important question is not finding time to write a book, but asking, "Am I sensing that God is calling me to put something into written form that can be shared with others and can hence multiply its kingdom impact?" Burke succeeded well-known Chuck Swindoll at First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, CA, when Swindoll became a seminary president in 1995.

But, interestingly, Burke's more recent book, *Less is More Leadership: 8 Secrets to How to Lead and Still Have a Life* (Harvest House, 2004), took the theme that has guided his >>

David Gallagher's 5 Ps for the pastor who would be author

Prayer — "I pray over every page. When the manuscript was completed, I dedicated it to the Lord for his glory." Pray also for getting the finished book into the right hands.

Purpose — Don't write for the wrong motives: if much already exists on the same topic; if you do not have a gift of writing; if you're using writing as self-therapy; if you have an axe to grind on some issue; or if the book is not solidly biblical.

Planning — Attend writers' conferences; learn the skills of proposal submission; talk with other authors; do a one-page proposal and outline as a test run.

Preparation — Be open to advice; dedicate the book to the Lord for His glory; let God do with it whatever he desires; accept the results.

Persistence — Submit your manuscript to several publishers and allow several months for their review. Follow-up if you don't hear back after a few months. Publishers get a lot of submissions, and even good manuscripts can get lost or overlooked.

When the Web is the better publishing medium

Brian J. Dodd, a pastor, has published five books through traditional print publishing, but increasingly is inclined to turn to Web-based publishing. He was interviewed from his Winter Springs, FL home:

Church Executive: When should a pastor turn to publishing?

Brian J. Dodd: For me the reason to publish is to serve somebody, and the reason to publish on a Web site is it serves more people — at no cost to them. The Christian reason for publishing is to extend one's teaching ministry and to build up the body of Christ.

CE: How is Web-based publishing beneficial over print publishing?

BJD: Web-based publishing allows free and immediate access to anyone, anywhere. There are no shipping costs, shipping time, storage costs, and production costs other than maintaining the Web site. It also allows the

author freedom to communicate the message God has given them, without regard to the traditional publisher's concern for their "normal market" being offended. Of course, the downside is that no one is marketing the book, except what the author might do through search engines and his or her own efforts.

CE: You're troubled by the marketing side of publishing?

BJD: In 2 Cor. 2:17 it says, "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God." Web publishing seems like a more authentic approach.

CE: You had a book that sold 10,000 copies, but the publisher allowed it to go out of print and the rights reverted to you.

BJD: I will make *Praying Jesus' Way* available to anyone who wants it on the new Web site I am organizing,

www.thechurchjesusloves.org. We will put other writings and resources on the site too.

There are 60,000 new Christian titles published every year in North America, and nearly that number goes out of print each year. If that happens, you can make the book available on the Web to anyone still looking for it.

CE: This spring your book, *Empowered Church Leadership: Ministry in the Spirit According to the Apostle Paul* (InterVarsity Press, 2003), was released by another publisher in Spanish.

BJD: In May I spoke to two groups at the Expolit conference in Miami where the translation of the book was released as *Leadership With Ability*. Expolit is to the Spanish-speaking world as the Christian Booksellers' Association is to the English-speaking buyers. Now I am getting invitations to speak throughout South America.

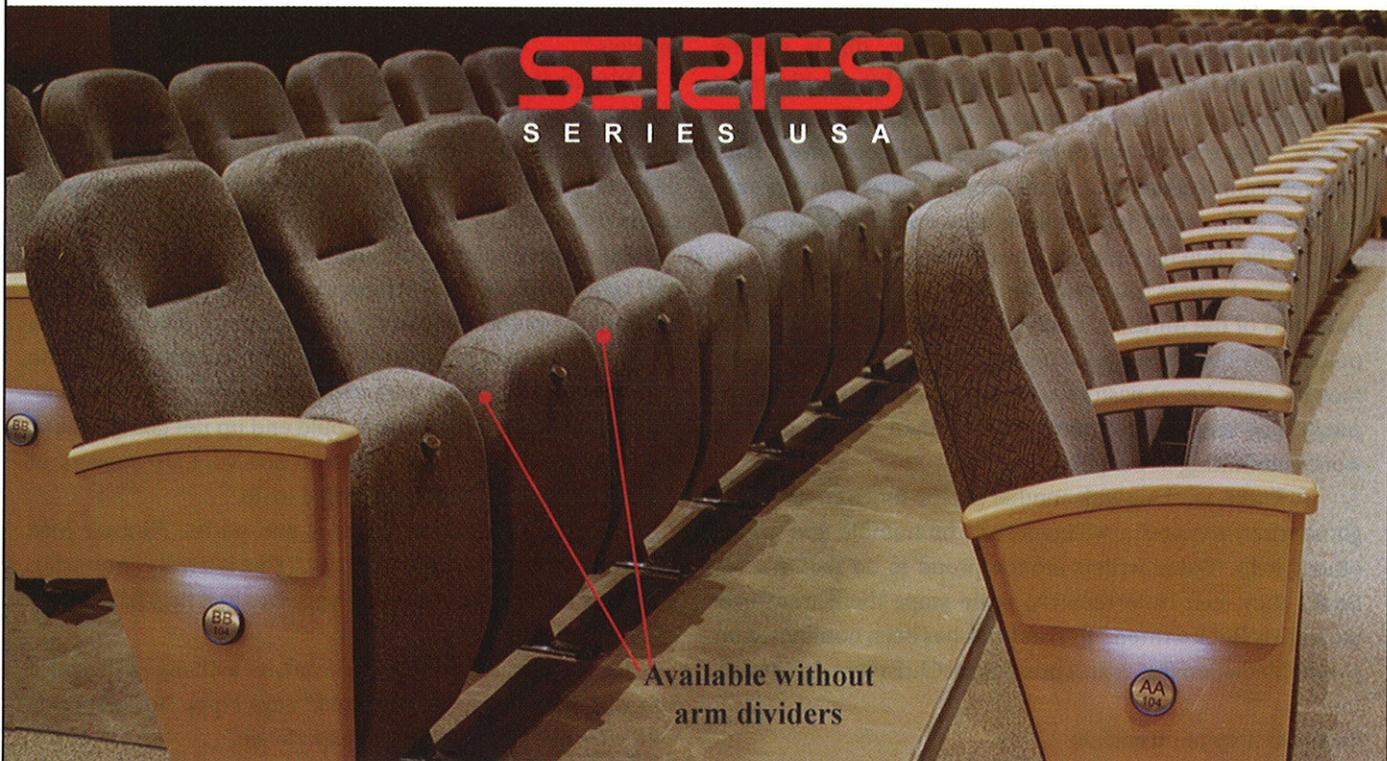
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