



THE SENDING FORTH: *Where in the World Will God Take Your Words?*

Melanie Rigney and Lora Zill
St. Davids Christian Writers' Conference
June 21, 2012



Ready to go public with your writing?

1. Golden Rule #1: Be Ready. Work at the craft of writing and learn about the publishing industry—newsletters, books, magazines—before you start submitting your work. Don't be afraid to write for free.
2. Golden Rule #2: Analyze Your Genre. Doesn't matter if you're writing poetry, fiction, or non-fiction, short articles or romance novels. What are the conventions (word length, structure, etc.) for what you're writing?
3. Golden Rule #3: Do Your Research. Who publishes the kind of writing you're doing from writers like you?
4. Golden Rule #4: Read the Guidelines. Then follow them. Don't send poetry to a publisher who does only children's chapter books. Don't send a query about a Christian novel to an agent whose specialty is academic works.
5. Golden Rule #5: Polish, Then Release. The only way they can say yes is if you send it out. The only way you'll get to yes is by hearing no a few times, and improving your work.



The Eternal Questions

- Can I make a living as a writer? *It depends on how hard you want to work, how open you are to improving your writing, and a little luck.*
- How do I find an agent and/or publisher? *By approaching the ones interested in writing like yours.*
- What do they want? *Exceptional writing from an author with access to the people who will buy the work... and make money for the publisher and agent.*
- Why do I want an agent or publisher? Why shouldn't I self-publish? *Maybe you should. What are your goals and expectations? How hard are you willing to work at this?*



Real-World Experience

- Successful query letter (Melanie)
- Successful book proposal (Melanie)
- Behind the editor's desk (Lora)



Translations

- **Query letter:** One-page pitch. First paragraph: Provocative “what if” or “did you know” that will keep the agent or editor reading. Second paragraph: How you’ll deliver on the promise of the first paragraph, how long the article/essay/book is/will be, a quick snapshot of the plot/flow of the work. Third paragraph: Why you’re the one to write it—think credentials and connections. Usually needed for articles and publisher/agent pitches.
- **Synopsis:** Typically, either one page single spaced or three to five pages double-spaced that takes your book from start to finish (no holding back on the ending).



Translations

- **Competitive/comparable analysis:** Other books published in the past three to five years by authors like you that have done well in the marketplace. (Do NOT say your book isn't like anything out there or trash the competition.)
- **First rights:** What you're selling if something hasn't appeared anywhere before. If it's already been on the Internet, you can sell **first print rights**. If at all possible, don't sell all rights.
- **Pay on acceptance or pay on publication.** The first is preferable; you get your money as soon as the editor decides the work is publishable. Otherwise, no payment until the work is published.



Translations

- **Kill fee.** If a publisher agrees to buy your work and then decides not to publish it. The work reverts to you.
- **Advance.** Typically on a book, and it's unlikely to exceed four figures. You'll get a certain amount of money that then will count against the book's royalty payments once it's published.
- **Platform.** What you're going to do and who you know who will do things to help sell books. This includes public speaking, columns, social media, activity in related associations, and the like.
- **Self-publishing.** You make all the decisions—editing, cover and interior design, marketing---carry all the costs, and keep all the profits.



Some of the World's Best Resources

- www.publishersmarketplace.com
- www.writersmarket.com
- www.macgregorliterary.com
- www.stevelaube.com
- www.terrywhalin.com
- www.writersreaders.com
- www.parapublishing.com