

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write  
Articles*

*Lesson 11*

**PROBLEM AND SOLUTION  
SUNK AND SAVED**

By Professor Dick Bohrer, M.Sc., M.A.

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24 Ways to  
**Sell Your Homework:**  
Articles

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| LESSON 1         | Master Your Library   |
| LESSON 2         | Phrase Sentences/Short sentences  |
| LESSON 3         | Simple humor<br>A-B-C<br>Sheer nonsense<br>The parody                               |
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# PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

**Most men get married for just one reason: to live with a woman. Ever since Adam, the problem has been how to do it.**

Margaret Blair Johnstone wrote that more than thirty years ago in an article she did for Collier's magazine. My point in mentioning it is that it proves there are articles out there that recognize a problem and set about showing how to deal with it.

For the record, Mrs. Johnstone suggests that when men act like men, when they're aggressive, when they're appreciative, when they're thoughtful, when they realize marriage is we—not you and I, then they have solved the problem.

**Problem and solution** stories usually have a hero in conflict with God or man (or woman) or nature. The hero may be human or inanimate (like a vegetable or a building) or abstract (an idea). He tries to solve his problem—he **MUST** solve his problem—because he will lose something significant if he doesn't.

**His problem** must be worth facing and worth reading about.

When the problem is a certain person's problem rather than a problem for all men (as in the Johnstone article), the pattern can follow the fiction structure fairly closely. It will probably

set up in the following manner as you:

1. Describe the problem
2. Identify what's at stake
3. Force an immediate decision
4. Let the hero back off
5. Move toward a confrontation
6. Have the confrontation
7. End with success or failure or an open end (neither)

You use this kind of structure when your person has been trying for quite a long time to find a solution for his problem. You show what it is and why it's significant for him to find a solution. He has an opportunity to win out, but he's uncertain and backs off. Then he tries again and finds an answer.

Perhaps you're writing about an inventor friend of yours who hasn't gotten to first base with any producers. He has an engine that runs on air and no one will give him a hearing. Finally, one company says it will listen; but he backs off, fearing they'll make fun of him or embarrass him or steal his idea. But he needs the money. He makes another appointment, goes for it and sells the product. Success!

Or let's say your character is on trial for his life. What then?

This is the way one writer handled that problem:

**Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they**

should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover.

Describe the problem

Pilate then went out unto them, and said, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"

They answered and said unto him, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."

Then said Pilate unto them, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."

The Jews therefore said unto him, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"

Identify what's at stake

Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Pilate therefore said unto him, "Art thou a king then?"

Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the

world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Force an immediate decision

Pilate saith unto him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews and saith unto them, "I find in him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

Then cried they all again, saying, "Not this man, but Barabbas."

Now Barabbas was a robber.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they smote him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him."

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe.

And Pilate saith unto them, "Behold the man!"

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify him, crucify him."

Pilate saith unto them, "Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him."

The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to

die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

Antagonist backs off

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, “Whence art thou?”

But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto him, “Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”

Jesus answered, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.”

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, “If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.”

Move toward a confrontation

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, “Behold your King!”

Confrontation

But they cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him.”

Pilate saith unto them, “Shall I

crucify your King?”

The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was,

**JESUS OF NAZARETH  
THE KING OF THE JEWS**

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, “Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, “I am King of the Jews.”

Open end conclusion

Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.

In this passage, Pilate is forcing questions on his Prisoner. But we know, actually, that he, Pilate, is the one on trial.

For your assignment, write a problem and solution feature.

In your opening, you set the scene. You name all the people who will appear in the article, even though some of them may not appear until later. That way, we’re not surprised when they

come; and they don't give the impression that the author is bringing someone in from out of the blue to solve a problem he can't solve any other way.

**Establish your viewpoint.**

Whose story is this?

Is it yours as the narrator?

Or are you having the principal character tell the story as a first person?

Or do you pick up a friend of his who watches and who has been in on this problem since the beginning and have him tell the story?

In the opening section tell what the person with the problem is looking for. Tell the solution he wants, the Holy Grail he hopes to find some day.

In the body of the story show us how he confronts the problem he has.

**How does he try** to solve it himself?

What help does he get?

What hindrance?

**Go carefully** through this process so the reader can see that this problem is really significant. If it's only like milk spilled on the table and anybody could wipe it off, it's not worth telling.

Don't give the ending away. Let us see how impossible the problem is to solve.

Heighten the suspense by spelling this out. If your person suffered because there was no solution at this point, tell us—show us that.

Then show us how he made his decision that brought him out of his dilemma into success or failure or neither.

**After the climax**, remember you have to pull off a believable and satis-

fying ending. As in the Nicklaus story and the Crosby story, you could bring in an anecdote. Or you can describe the success he won—or what failure is doing to him. Tell us he will try again. If you can, end on some kind of up-beat.

Sometimes, you have a reversal of this. At the first confrontation the hero wins success.

Then, later, everything falls apart and he's a failure. This kind of story happens in real life. You the writer need to realize that it's grist for a very interesting article.

**Now, think** through your life. You've had plenty of problems. Tell how you solved one. Take us through the fears, the waiting, the complications, the anguish. Show how you tried to solve things by yourself and failed. Then show that you finally did win out and how you did it.

Remember, your willingness to tell the whole truth will be what will make your article fascinating for readers.

**Maybe you** have a solution to the problems other people have. You can begin with a question that names the problem as I did in the following article. I used a Bible passage to show the solution for unnamed problems. The article falls apart at its questions.

## Every Boy Has an Enemy

By Dick Bohrer

**Got any enemies you think are impossible? Someone at school or in your neighborhood who pushes or punches or pokes you or teases you**

just to make you angry?

Someone who does his best to get you in trouble?

Everybody has enemies.

Even kings have enemies.

You're a king, you know, if you've accepted the Lord Jesus as your own Savior. The Bible calls us kings and priests. We'll rule cities some day, so we're kings-in-training now.

So, as a king, you've got a real enemy: Satan.

He'll do anything he can to make us angry or get us in trouble or push us down.

Ever hear of Adoni-Bezek? He was a king.

He wasn't only mean and wicked, he was a king-spoiler.

When he went out to battle, he would capture enemy kings and bring them back to his palace. At one time he had 70 captive kings.

And because he was mean, he wanted to do more than keep these men in prison. He wanted to use them for ornaments in his palace so people would not only see how great he was, but would fear him all the more.

He wanted to shame these kings. He wanted them to suffer for fighting him and he wanted to spoil their honor so that no one would ever want them for kings again.

Satan hates us for accepting the Lord as our Savior. So he does everything he can think of to spoil our testimony and keep people from even wanting to hear about the Lord from us.

If you were a king-spoiler, what would you do to shame your captive kings and make them suffer?

Adoni-Bezek must have thought and thought. If he cut off their heads, they would be dead and their suffering would be over too quickly. Besides, his servants would have all the work of burying the 70 kings.

He could put out their eyes; but then, someone would have to lead them around. That would be too much work for everybody else.

He could cut off their ears. They would suffer and look silly, but being a little hard of hearing wouldn't be much punishment for enemies.

He could cut out their tongue, but then he wouldn't have the pleasure of hearing them moan as they complained about their punishment.

If he cut off their hands, he'd have to feed them. If he cut off their feet, he'd have to cart them around.

What could he do that would shame them and make them suffer?

"I've got it!" he shouted to his servants. "Cut off their thumbs and their big toes."

"Is that all?" his servants must have answered.

"That's enough," the king said. "When they eat, they'll have to shovel the food into their mouth. They have no thumb to help them lift it. They'll have to bend over and eat like the dogs they are."

"But why cut off their big toes?" his advisor would have asked.

"Cut off their big toe and they

can't walk. They can only crawl.”

The servants and soldiers of Adoni-Bezek did just what he said. They cut the thumbs and big toes off the kings and forced the prisoners down on their knees to scoot around like dogs and fight for scraps under the king's table.

Adoni-Bezek's plan was perfect. No one would ever again want a foolish-looking man for a king. Kings are noble men, not sloppy dogs. Not one of the prisoners would ever be able to act like a king again.

And Satan wants to do just that very thing to us. If he can make us look foolish or sinful, he can spoil our testimony and keep us from telling others about the Lord Jesus.

So Satan is looking at us all the time, trying to find some way to defeat us. If he can get us to be disobedient to our teacher or our parents, he'll see to it that people say, “I wouldn't want to be a Christian, if they act like that!”

If he can get us to lose our honor so that no one will trust us, he has won.

If he can get us to lose our courage so that we act like cowards and run away from trouble or a chance to witness, he has won.

If he can get us to forget about being polite even, so that we are rude to people, he has won.

Satan hates boys and girls who want to be pure, loyal, obedient and dedicated to Christ; and he will do everything in his power to spoil our

testimony.

But must Satan and Adoni-Bezek always win?

We find the answer in the Book of Judges, chapter one, where the people of Israel wanted to get rid of the enemies that still lived in the land that God had given them.

They prayed to God for help and He heard them. God hears us too when we pray and He will give us His plan for defeating Satan.

“Judah will go up and fight,” God said.

Judah was the tribe of kings. God had his own kingly tribe to take care of King Adoni-Bezek.

But Judah did not go alone. The men of the tribe chose soldiers from their brother tribe of Simeon to go along with them.

“Come up with me into my lot, that we may fight against the Canaanites,” Judah said, “and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot.” So Simeon went with him.

This was good strategy.

Do you have a problem with Adoni-Bezek you can't solve? Do you have a flaw in your life you can't conquer alone? Confide in a Christian brother—a good buddy, your dad, your pastor, your Brigade ranger—and pray together about it so that you can fight together against it.

The first step to victory was for these Israelites to pray to God. The second step was to confide and make plans together. The third step was to fight!

Judah went up to fight and the Lord delivered his enemies into his hand and he killed 10,000 men. And they found Adoni-Bezek and fought against him, too; but he ran away.

This is just what the New Testament says. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” Judah resisted and fought and King Adoni-B. ran away.

But they caught him and taught him his own lesson. They cut off HIS thumbs and HIS big toes.

Adoni-Bezek said, “Seventy kings, having their thumbs and their big toes cut off, gathered their food under my table. As I have done, so God has done to me.”

And that is exactly what Christ HAS done to Satan. Our King has spoiled Satan and his kingdom. Christ by dying on the cross for us took away Satan’s power—all of it. No more must we be Satan’s slaves, groveling under his table for the crumbs he wants to give us.

We kings-in-training have power from our great King to keep us from bending the knee to Satan and serving him.

In fact, Satan himself must bow his knee before the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you know? Adoni-Bezek died only when he was taken away to the city of Jerusalem.

Satan let loose to prowl around your heart can still cut YOU down. But you take Satan back to Jerusalem, to Calvary, and show him

where the Lord Jesus died. Stand on the fact that He has made a captive of Satan and your enemy is now powerless to spoil your testimony.

Remind the Lord every day that you are believing that what He has said is true for you.

Ask Him to live His life in you and to resist Satan through you. And when you are tempted, sing the following song (to the tune of “Into My Heart”):

Rule in my heart.

Rule in my heart.

Oh, rule in my heart, Lord Jesus.

Yes, rule today.

And rule always.

Oh, rule in my heart, Lord Jesus.

Only when He is ruling in our heart can we really live the life of a king-in-training.

The Bible is full of lessons that can be applied to the heart and life of your readers. Study it and ask God to open your eyes and heart to the truth of what He would like to teach you—truth for you and truth for you to teach others through your writing.

That article broke into manageable pieces when a new question was asked.

The range for problem and solution articles is vast. Here comes a mother with an autistic child. Catherine Legend writes an article called “Little Girl Without a Smile.”

Her first sentence is simply a declarative sentence that goes back to the origin of the problem.

**Her birth was uncomplicated.**

Apart from the fact that the child cried for long periods at a time—a condition they assumed was colic, Anne Marie seemed normal enough. There always seemed an explanation for her behavior.

Catherine narrates how the child did not develop normally as she grew. She seemed to withdraw more and more within herself. The first half of the article describes how the parents tried to reach her, how to pierce the shell she'd raised.

Unable to solve their problem, they turn to a pediatrician who diagnosed her as having infantile autism.

**This child was linked into her self, with no desire to be linked to us.**

The article transitions on this sentence:

**I prayed ceaselessly, weaving my prayers into the fabric of my daily life. "Lord, take my hand, lead me, show me how to bring her home."**

They learned of the work of a Dr. Ivar Lovaas at UCLA, using one-on-one behavior modification teaching. It was a clinic that had had success in bringing autistic children to reality.

The second half of the story details the solution, telling how those trained technicians succeeded in drawing Anne Marie slowly into real life

Tapering toward her conclusion, Catherine says she and Marc may never know what faulty connections were rewired in Anne Marie's brain nor what neuro-chemical processes were reactivated in her recovery.

**Nor will we care, as our daughter emerges into the light of human lov-**

**ing and lifts her eyes to ours.**

The child now lives as a happy three-year-old who smiles, tells stories, asks questions, gives spontaneous hugs and kisses, climbs into bed with them for a snuggle early mornings.

The article ends:

**Recently I heard her walking down the hallway, opening doors and asking, "Where's Mommy?" I shut my eyes and just listened to her for a minute. *Here I am, Anne Marie, I whispered in my heart to my lost lamb come home.***

Another side of the problem and solution article is the "come to realize" structure in which a problem or a question arises that befuddles the narrator. Then, ah! So that's the reason kind of realization comes that explains what's been going on.

One delightful example by Denise Glaser Malloy appeared in Family Circle magazine in August, 2004. Called "Boys Will Be Boys," the article answers the question why boys will be boys.

It began with a telephone conversation. Denise has called to tell her husband she's coming home. He tells her the kids seem "a little wired." She laughs to herself that "now he's getting a taste of my days."

When she gets home, she finds the upstairs neat and clean, utterly spotless. But downstairs there's a ruckus.

She finds her two boys prancing in their underwear, shooting a basketball into a plastic hoop and jumping up and down on a crib mattress in the middle of their court.

Her husband lies supine on a couch watching the NCAA basketball finals.

**She fights** the urge to ask, “What’s going on here?” as she realizes she is witnessing the “living, breathing, giggling” difference between how men and women parent.

She muses that when she and the boys are home alone together they talk, they cook, they clean, they play and have “a pretty good time.”

But let her leave her husband in charge, the house turns into an amusement park.

Her boys want to show Mom their new trick. The two-year-old drags the mattress to the top of the stairs and rides it to the bottom laughing hysterically.

**She wonders** at the difference, why this testosterone thing emerges when ovaries are not present. She has found that boys will be boys. They never quite grow up when “given the chance to play.”

She ends with her realization:

**I am seeing utter joy and bliss in my boys as they share in this secret fraternity of brothers and fathers—something that I am not, nor will ever be privy to.**

Her last sentence repeats that this is something beyond her comprehension and that maybe that’s the way “nature intended it.”

**Another** “come to realize” use I find unusually memorable.

My student, Mary Ellen Gudeman, a former missionary to Japan, (she went to the field in her mid 30s after a business

career) began her autobiography with a chapter she called, “The Awakening.”

She submitted her book to about 28 different Christian publishers, all of whom either ignored it or returned it in rejection. Their letters said that there is no market for missionary stories any more. The public simply is not interested.

**What a loss** for us. What a treasure of life and lesson and culture and Christian principles in practice we are missing. Mary Ellen has paid all costs herself to publish her book.

In it, she tells the whole truth in startling fashion, a truth that hits home to all of us because it is more naked than any of us will admit. She had a problem. She had to catch her train. But someone was in the way. Without thinking, she found a solution that was expedient at the time.

We often do that, too, never realizing until it is too late that our easy choices can have eternal consequences.

Her story is our story.

## **The Awakening**

By Mary Ellen Gudeman  
Chapter One of her new book:

**If I had spoken to her, I would have missed my train.**

**I was waiting at Shukugawa, one of Japan’s Hankyu train stations.**

**People were lined up around me at the four automatic ticket dispensers. I chose one where only one woman, wearing a gray coat, was inserting her money. Two 70 yen lights—the**

cost for one stop and the cost for a platform ticket—flashed on. But she just stared at the dispenser.

*She's not getting on the train, I thought. Maybe she's meeting someone on the platform*

She hesitated.

I was going to miss my train if she didn't hurry.

Finally, she reached out and pushed the platform ticket button. The ticket dropped into the tray below, but she only stared at it.

Exasperated at having to wait, I reached over her shoulder, brushing it, to insert money for my train fare.

Momentarily, I forgot her. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw her go through the gate on my left. Pausing, she looked at the timetable overhead.

*What a thin coat to wear on this chilly March day, I thought. She must not have much of this world's goods. And 70 yen is a lot to pay just to get on a platform.*

As I went down the steps and crossed to the Osaka side, the young woman hurried up the steps to the platform for passengers going to Kobe.

I forgot the incident as I waited for my train. The 1:29 super-express bound for Kobe would need to pass through first. My ears, long accus-

tomed to the roar, almost tuned out the thundering sound of its fast approach.

Suddenly, an eerie thud, screeching brakes, then flying fragments and train-bed rocks flew around me.

Oh, no, the train had left the tracks! I grabbed my coat to shield my face.

Then just as suddenly as the horrifying episode had begun, it ended. Out of the deafening silence someone across the platform from me shrieked.

“Niku Niku (Flesh! Flesh!)” A couple of hundred yards down the tracks stood the motionless super-express. From everywhere, people hurried down the platform.

Scattered bits of a mutilated body confirmed the tragedy. Below, in front of me, lying inside the train tracks, was the gray coat, grease-and-blood-stained.

I had touched that gray coat moments before, without understanding and without caring.

She paid 70 yen for her leap into eternity.

I had paid thousands of dollars to come to Japan to reach her before she leaped.

If I had spoken to her, I would have missed my train.

And so would she.

# SUNK AND SAVED

**You find them in the comic strips and on mystery radio theaters. They fill our newspaper feature pages, our TV stations and our movies.**

**The medical team**, the police duo, the sitcom and the home sports team are all characters in the “sunk and saved” feature.

Our team is sunk. We’re six points behind. We stay glued to our bleachers or to the tube, waiting for that last-minute 99-yard pass that will see us “saved.”

**Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*** blazed the trail for all the cowboy heroics to come. Norman knights had captured the lovely Jewess Rebecca and tied her to a stake. The torch that would burn her to bacon was held aloft, ready to ignite the pyre. Across the moors comes the thundering herd of Saxon knights. Will they make it in time? Will the brave Rebecca be saved? It’s the final race to the rescue that has left Scott’s mark on literature.

Think through how many stories you’ve read and videos you’ve seen that end with a chase or a race to the rescue. Sir Walter started it and now everybody’s doing it.

Also, virtually anything can be so impregnated with horror and threat that it can be the vehicle of a sunk-and-saved story. Let’s look at our A-B-C-D categories of “Actions,” “Beasts,”

“Characters” or “Disasters.”

**Our Actions** are such things as choking, dropping, drowning, skidding, losing, starving, burning. In any one of these a person may be dangling on the edge of destruction, calling feebly for help, longing desperately for a strong hand to save him. “Hey, Elmer, where are you when I need you?” we call out to Shel Silverstein’s creature in the ceiling.

**Our Beast** may be sharks or piranhas, dragons, lions, raging elephants, mad dogs, stubborn mules. There breathes not a beast from bee to behemoth who has not constituted for at least someone a serious threat.

**Our Characters** can be burglars, angry wives, escaped convicts, stalking murderers, school teachers, ballerinas—anybody. Our inanimate characters can be failing brakes, runaway elevators, stalled cars, tractors, ropes, skates on stairs, helicopters, balloons.

**Our Disasters** can be floods, hurricanes, storms of all sorts, fires, earthquakes, avalanches, explosions and all sorts of furies.

**Write chronologically**, but fix the character we want saved in his dilemma early on in the feature.

Write reportorially. Give us a “you-are-there” feeling. Include details but don’t get us off the track with too many. We want to see, feel, relive the hero’s experiences as he lives them.

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Mention all the characters in the story on the first page.

**Tell us the time** of day and where the scene is set.

Build suspense and then dangle, dangle, dangle us until rescue finally comes.

Remember, the complication must never be trivial. It must be a threat not easily solved or evaded. We must see the hero sunk, really sunk, before he is saved. The first one mentioned in the story must be the hero—the one who is sunk and saved.

Try this technique on the following news event.

**Remember**, you are not writing news. That's been written. You are writing a feature story on this news event. You don't need to make up names to give the injured woman and her eight-year-old daughter in order to humanize this. Simply refer to them as mother and daughter. You can tell their story or, since you have the real names of the two Americans, you could tell theirs.

Start anywhere in the story—before the crash, during the crash, after the crash.

Reach our hearts.

JET CRASH KILLS HUNDREDS

## Four Survivors Found

**KITA-AKAMURA, Japan (AP) – A Japanese jumbo jet packed with 524 people crashed in rugged mountains of central Japan on Monday. Police said at least four people sur-**

**vived, but it was believed the worst single-plane crash in history.**

Television networks showed pictures of an eight-year-old girl and an older woman, identified as her mother, lying on stretchers, battered and bandaged. Fuji television said the other survivors were a man and another woman. Nagano prefectural police also were quoted as saying at least four people survived.

Three dozen helicopter-borne troops made a rope descent into steep, thickly forested mountain country this morning to reach the wreckage of the Japan Air Lines Boeing 747.

The jetliner crashed on a domestic flight from Tokyo to Osaka. The pilot, Masami Takahama, 49, had reported a door was broken, that he was fighting for control and would try an emergency landing.

Hiroshi Ochiai, a Self Defense Force spokesman, earlier said initial reports from the crash site, at about 5,000 feet, indicated no survivors among the 509 passengers and 15 crew members aboard.

JAL spokesman Geoffrey Tudor said two Americans were on the passenger list. They were identified as Edward Anderson, believed to be 48, and Michael Hanson, 40, both employees of Stearns Catalytic Co., of Denver, Colo. Neil McLagan, a Stearns vice president, confirmed Anderson and Hanson were on the airplane.

The jetliner crashed at about 6:54

(5:54 EDT), on the north side of Mount Ogura, a 6,929 foot peak about 50 miles from Yokota and 70 miles northwest of Tokyo.

The site is in a remote area in a range known as the Japan Alps. The only roads in the region follow river valleys that cut through steep, densely forested mountainsides.

In Seattle, Washington, Boeing spokesman Bill Mellon said a five-member team of company investigators would leave today for Japan. In Washington, D.C., Ed Pinto, a Federal Aviation Administration spokesman, said FAA investigators might be sent if Japanese officials requested them.

Tudor said JAL flight 123 left Tokyo's Haneda Airport bound for Osaka carrying 509 passengers, including 12 infants, and a crew of 15.

It left Haneda at 6:12 p.m. It has been scheduled to leave at 6 p.m. and to arrive at Osaka, less than 250 miles away, at 7 p.m.

Tudor said that at 6:36 p.m. the plane reported: "Rear 5 door broken, making emergency descent."

Judging from the communication, he said, "It appears the aircraft crew had difficulty controlling the aircraft."

Seiichiro Kondo, a spokesman for Nagano state police, said 1,000 police, firefighters and Self-Defense personnel were searching for the missing plane.

A live Japan Broadcasting Corp. telecast from a helicopter over the site showed pieces of still smoldering,

widely scattered wreckage. Japan Air Lines markings were clear on some of the debris.

You can rewrite news stories for feature magazines on a regular basis, but you will need to find from research more information, more facts than the reporters were able to supply when the accident happened.

Sometimes you can gain access to survivors and interview them yourself either in person or by telephone. This is how information for the following story was gotten.

Do you remember when another plane went down—this one in the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. on January 13, 1982? Only a very few survived that tragedy. One of them was Kelly Duncan, a stewardess.

When I was an editor with "Moody Monthly" magazine, I received a letter from a Sue Duffy who told us that she had met Miss Duncan and that, if we wanted, she could get a first-person account of the terrible experience.

We called Sue back at once and she sent us the following sunk-and-saved story.

## MY POTOMAC

by Kelly Duncan  
as told to Sue Duffy

It was snowing and all my passengers were concerned about the weather. I was a flight attendant aboard Air Florida's Flight 90, bound for Tampa and Ft. Lauderdale last January 13.

I watched through the window as we increased our speed down the runway. That's when I became concerned—but not about the weather.

We're not pulling up fast enough. Timing is so critical. We should be up by now.

Finally, we lifted off the runway of Washington, D.C.'s National Airport. I was relieved.

But, suddenly, the plane began vibrating. I thought it was just bad turbulence until the shaking became violent.

Sitting in the single rear jump-seat of our Boeing 737, I couldn't escape the fearful expression of the man who now turned around and looked to me for an answer.

I offered the only explanation I could. "It must be the turbulence."

The shaking became more violent. My own fear turned to a horrible panic. Our plane dropped out of the sky, scraped the surface of the Fourteenth Street Bridge, and then slammed and broke in the freezing waters of the Potomac River.

All at once, I felt nothing at all. I don't remember feeling or hearing the collision. There was no pain, no fear, and no sound. I was drifting in a white haze.

*I'm dying. But I'm not ready to die.*

Suddenly I was aware of being underwater. I swam to the top. I saw pieces of the plane and realized what had happened. I tried to swim to the wreckage. The water was so cold.

Hunks of ice were everywhere.

Then I saw another woman in the water. She was bleeding badly and screaming for help. I tried to get to her, but I was hurt and struggling just to move.

A man from shore jumped in. He was swimming toward the woman.

I tried again to reach the plane where several others were hanging on. I was so cold. It was so hard to swim. For the first time in my life, I prayed.

*God, help us!*

I fought for every stroke, and slowly I got closer.

Finally, the plane was within reach and I grabbed hold.

But my hands began freezing to the metal. I kept switching them while trying to stay afloat.

I couldn't feel my legs.

What if they freeze? What if they have to be cut off?

I prayed again.

*God, I'd rather die than lose my legs.*

"Keep moving!" someone from shore was yelling. I started kicking as hard as I could . . . and praying all the while.

I had graduated from high school five years before and was looking for adventure. I left home in Atlanta, Georgia, to join Air Sunshine in Key West. There was no Bible to take along. There never had been. Religion was even more remote than Key West.

In Florida, I had my first apartment, a car, and the life I thought a flight attendant should live. There was a lot of partying.

I was carefree and so proud to be in total control of my life. But things began to happen.

Walking into a Key West drug-store one morning, I was suddenly affronted by a man who wrestled for my purse.

His attempt failed, but he did escape with a portion of my total control. I gradually recovered my self-confidence only to lose it again.

One night, weeks later, I awoke to see a man reaching for the gun I kept beside my bed. Fortunately, my sudden movement startled him and scared him away. But my self-confidence was shaken.

With the 1979 merger of Air Sunshine and Air Florida, I was transferred to Miami and a whole new party circuit. The violence was behind me, I thought, and I could become more sure of myself again.

But I met a young man who posed this question one night, "Kelly, do you think you'll go to heaven when you die?"

"Of course," I replied indignantly, "if there is one."

Then, one day, I was simply walking through the parking lot of a neighborhood shopping plaza. It was bright and sunny, and no one suspected the well-dressed young man getting into a nearby car was a drug trafficker marked for assassination.

In seconds, a carful of Latin gunmen stopped alongside the man, opened fire, then escaped. I witnessed it all.

I dove behind a car trembling in fear, but later ran to the man's side. The helplessness of watching him die overwhelmed me.

And now it was my turn. There were five of us clinging to the wreckage and screaming for help.

Above the Potomac, I saw people.

"Do something!" I screamed. "Go get somebody! Do something!"

"Help is on the way!" they shouted back.

The water was freezing, and we kept pleading for help. But the girl next to me was silent. She looked dazed.

Someone dropped a rope into the water, but no one had the strength to swim for it.

"If you don't think you can reach it," someone yelled, "just stay there and hang on. Help is coming."

People kept watching us. If help was coming, I couldn't see it.

The water was so cold—I knew we couldn't live much longer.

*God, don't let us die in front of these people.*

I was still gripping the fuselage.

I can't hang on any more. . .

Then I saw a helicopter. I was so happy! But as it drew closer, I realized it was passing me; and I felt as if I had really reached the end.

## SUNK

I saw a rope drop down. One of the men in the water grabbed it. Then he threw it over to me.

I knew I couldn't hold on. And yet I slipped my arms through the loop, holding onto the rope as the helicopter hoisted me up. God alone kept me from letting go.

It was like a dream. When we reached the side of the bank, all I saw was hands. The hands reached out and I collapsed.

## SAVED

No more fighting, no more struggling . . . the hands grabbed me. I just wanted to go to sleep.

But the paramedic was yelling, "What's your name? Where's your family? . . ."

After twenty-seven minutes in the frigid Potomac, my body temperature had dropped to 81 degrees. I was shocked to learn my left ankle and right hand were broken. I had a gaping cut on my leg.

As I lay in the hospital, I prayed: "God, what do you want me to do? I know that You are here, and I know You gave me the strength to hold on. I just want to know what I should do."

When I woke up one afternoon, I saw a nurse standing beside my bed, looking down at me.

Through that nurse, Ann Anderson, God answered my prayer. He used her to tell me what I needed to know.

She said she wasn't supposed to talk to me about religious things, but I made her tell me.

From her Bible, she showed me that God desires I admit I'm a sinner. She showed me all that Jesus, God's Son, had done for me by dying on the cross.

I knew God was real; and, as we read, I believed His words. Then we prayed. I acknowledged my sin and asked Christ to be my Savior.

Just after Ann left my room, a friend of mine walked in—the one who had challenged me about where I'd be spending eternity.

I cried as I told him I had just received Christ. I was so happy, so excited about all that God had done for me

"I've got so much to learn," I said. "Where do I begin?"

The excitement didn't end there. As I was telling him how I'd never owned a Bible, never even picked one up, we heard a knock at the door.

A nurse walked in with a package. I opened it and pulled out a New Testament.

The gift had come from a stranger—a Christian flight attendant living in California. In her letter, she told me the same things Ann had said only minutes before.

My excitement was still at a peak when my parents arrived. But while they were there, another visitor came in, thinking I would need a shoulder to cry on.

I had never met her before. She explained she had survived the American Airlines crash in 1974.

We related our own crash experiences. Instead of crying on her shoulder, I told her I had received Christ and I credited Him for my being alive.

“Your concern with God is normal,” she said, “but that will pass.”

I was devastated.

I don't want this to pass.

Every day for weeks, my new prayer was: “Don't let me be lost. I don't want to be away from You. I don't want this to pass.”

And it didn't. In fact, I saw that my relationship with God was just beginning.

When I was released from the hospital, I returned home to Atlanta. Friends and relatives were concerned for me. They said that after going through a tragedy like that, I really ought to get some psychological counseling.

“No,” I told them. “I want to see a minister. There's only one thing that really matters to me now.”

It wasn't long before I found a church home. The timing was good because I'd soon be facing a lot of pressure. The National Transportation Safety Board had scheduled hearings for March.

Just before the hearings, my pastor spoke with me privately. We prayed, asking God to give me His strength, to give me sufficient recall, and to give me courage to speak only

the truth.

All through the televised hearings, I was answering questions and praying at the same time. I asked God to calm me inside, to make me strong.

When I left the stand to sit at the table, I had a hard time believing how calm and composed He had kept me. Although I was thankful for that, I sat down feeling really disappointed.

As I thought about the things I had said, I began kicking myself for not publicly giving God credit. But moments later, I stopped kicking. I couldn't believe my eyes.

I recognized the man taking the stand. While I was in the hospital, my mind had often drifted back to that face.

In that last fleeting moment before the crash, his was the face that held so much fear.

I had no idea he had survived. And I was even more shocked as I heard him testify.

“I'm here,” he said, “because the Lord wanted me to be here for some reason.”

He was a Christian. I was thankful God gave him the boldness I lacked.

I had no idea just how far reaching that media coverage would be. A lot of people commented about my calm composure. It even led to my getting a letter from someone else who had survived a plane crash.

“How are you so strong?” he wrote.

I wrote back, telling him about the Lord.

**He answered right away. “Kelly, I would never have opened myself to anything spiritual and listened to anybody else but another survivor. Please tell me how to begin a relationship with Christ.”**

**Some incredible timing has changed my life, too. I can see now that God’s hand was touching my life long before the accident.**

**And that’s what it’s like to belong to Him. You don’t have to be in control of it all any more.**

**I have already returned to flying with no fear—and no desire for the old days. I don’t want anything to influence me now but the Holy Spirit.**

**What I do want is to tell others what God gave me when I didn’t deserve it—the peace inside and the relief in feeling His constant presence.**

**There is a joy in my life I’ve never felt before.**

**It’s not a struggle to be happy any more.**

**That’s a perfect example of what I’ve been talking about. It was written chronologically.**

The first character mentioned was the heroine.

Sue wrote reportorially.

She gave us a “you-are-there” feeling.

She included details but she never got off track. We saw and felt Kelly’s experience as if we were in the water with her.

She went slowly through the agonizing wait until Kelly gave up. Did you notice I put a SUNK in at that point? Sue dangled us until rescue finally came.

Kelly’s complication was in no way trivial. It was a threat that could NOT be evaded.

She answers the question: Why was I rescued? For what reason did I live?

Her answer? “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Study this story. It’s so very well done.

And you learn to do likewise.

**Item:** Don't let your writing feature articles become a dead end. Once done to your satisfaction, read it over word by word, punctuation mark by mark. By now you should know how to punctuate your material.

I recommend you not let family or friends read your material. A "Mother, you're not going to let anyone see that!!" is road-runner and rabbit rolled into one. It will kill you. Let the editor judge how good your article is.

But not any editor. Make sure your article goes to a magazine that publishes that kind of material. Buy the *Writer's Market* volume or Sally E. Stuart's *Christian Writers' Market Guide*. Both list periodicals with addresses, names of editors, descriptions of what they buy and how much they pay. Sally lists Christian book publishers, magazines, Sunday School take-home papers, agents, greeting card publishers, picture book publishers, denominational periodicals, and writers conferences and workshops, plus.