

Let Me Help You

Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write
What You Think*

Lesson 10

**THE TESTIMONIAL
BOOK REVIEWS**

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A TESTIMONIAL WHEN YOU WANT TO TELL YOUR SIDE OF THE STORY

Injustices should be aired. When a citizen is hurt by another or by the system, his story should be shared with the public.

Newspapers and magazines are the natural arena for this. Anguished people should turn this direction when they hurt.

It's not difficult to write a testimonial.

- 1) **Set the scene.**
- 2) **State the problem.**
- 3) **Hint at the solution desired.**
- 4) **Name or identify primary characters.**
- 5) **Tell when, where and how the incident occurred.**
- 6) **Tell responses, reactions, repercussions**
- 7) **Tell the story in chronological order.**
- 8) **Result**
- 9) **Lesson learned**

You may begin sentences with a prepositional phrase or with the sub-

ject—as the writer of the example that follows frequently did.

Write with restraint.

Avoid outright blame.

Remember, the fact that a publication prints your story doesn't free you from a libel suit should you name and offend someone.

Whether you are paid for the article or not doesn't matter.

Whether you write someone else's story and your byline is "by So-and-so as told to my name," doesn't free you from answering for libel in the article.

Libel is injury to reputation and it can occur in the most innocent looking stories. The print media is no place to play practical jokes on other people. Information printed must be true and exact.

Some people have called news items in to the press that have been totally wrong. They've announced that people who heartily dislike one another are engaged. They've announced the birth of supposed children to parents not married. Factual errors and language

not exact can embarrass the people involved.

If someone has seriously grieved you and you write what happened, you may not find protection if you leave out that person's name.

If the description identifies him to people who know him, he can have a case against you.

If accusations must be made, try to include comments that balance the blame and that defend the accused.

You are safe if the facts can be proved.

But you also have a right to what is called "fair comment."

The courts (in the *Hoepfner v. Dunkirk Pr. Co.*, 254 N.Y. 95) ruled that:

"Everyone has a right to comment on matters of public interest and concern, provided they do so fairly and with an honest purpose. Such comments or criticism are not libelous, however severe in their terms, unless they are written maliciously. Thus it has been held that books, prints, pictures and statuary publicly exhibited, and the architecture of public buildings, and actors and exhibitors are all the legitimate subjects of newspapers' criticism, and such criticism fairly and honestly made is not libelous, however strong the terms of censure may be."

But the right of privacy is a doctrine the courts also respect.

People have the right to be left alone to live lives free from publicity. But if

they become involved in a news event or a denial of justice to an innocent person in a matter of legitimate public interest—then the matter can be safely written about.

Writers interested in a more thorough explanation of these laws may well consult an attorney or books on libel and slander in the library. This brief discussion does not pretend to be definitive in any way. The matter is only brought up because many testimonials of injury would name the parties that supposedly have done the injury.

A **testimonial** might take any one of several structures.

1) It could begin with a high point of interest where the courtroom has stilled and the judge is about to render the verdict. It could then flash back and retell the events that brought the participants to this point. Then it can return and complete the story.

2) It might be written in a THEN AND NOW format to show what life was like before something happened and what it became afterward.

3) It might begin with the PROBLEM and end with the SOLUTION.

4) It might tell the CAUSE and then the EFFECT.

5) It could tell its story with a string of anecdotes.

6) It could be written in diary form.

Not every injustice is significant

enough to be worth writing. The writer should ponder whether the story is unique and something many people would be interested in.

Essentially, does it have human appeal?

Can it be told with enthusiasm?

Will there be “take-away” value for the reader—some good that he will get from reading the account.

That “good” need not be material in nature. It may be new insight or a warning or a revelation.

That “good” may be a welling up of sympathy for someone who really hurts.

One of the most memorable articles we printed when I was an editor with “Moody Monthly” magazine was “I’m Free to Forgive” by Goldie Bristol.

It is a testimonial of how a mother forgave the man who had killed her daughter.

She tells the story and includes how God worked in her heart.

I’M FREE TO FORGIVE

by Goldie Bristol

(1. Set the scene)

A dozen times or more I reached for a hankie, then put it back in my purse. I folded, then unfolded my hands.

My heart pounded, keeping pace with the pelting rain.

Though I had looked forward to this day, convinced we were following God’s plan, reality struck.

(2. State the problem)

We would soon face our daughter’s murderer.

(3. Hint at the solution desired)

For two years we had corresponded with him, trying to build bridges of love and trust.

(4. Name or identify primary characters)

Now, seated in the visitor’s room of his maximum security prison, we waited to meet him.

(5. Tell when, where and how the incident occurred)

I remembered well the events that brought us to this meeting—events God has used to teach us lessons in forgiveness.

November 18, 1970, had seemed like any other busy day. After a morning of errands, I had finished my pumpkin pies and sweet potatoes for our church dinner and started to take them to the car.

The telephone rang.

No time to answer it, I thought. But I did. The message shattered my soul:

“Western Union,” a strange voice said. “I’m reading a message for you from the San Diego County Coroner: ‘REGRET TO INFORM YOU OF DEATH OF DAUGHTER DIANE. PLEASE ADVISE AS TO

DISPOSITION OF BODY.”

Hot, then cold waves swept over me. I asked to have the message repeated. Only three weeks ago our lovely twenty-one-year-old daughter had been home, radiant and active. Now she was gone.

(6. Reactions, responses, repercussions)

I was numb. The banquet, so important moments earlier, was forgotten. I called my husband Bob. Then the tears came and kept coming until my head pounded.

Bob hurried home and called San Diego for more details. Our only daughter had been raped and strangled.

Surely this happens only to other families.

How wrong we were. Although we were a Christian family with faith deeply rooted in Jesus Christ, we were not exempt from heart-rending tragedy.

Soon our sons Rollie and David, both older than Diane, joined us, and together we began to experience God's healing touch.

Our anguish was deep, but God's love for us was deeper still.

How thankful I was to know the Savior in an intimate way so I could draw on His ample provisions.

How good that I could come to my Heavenly Father with all the hurts and know that He would work everything for my good as He promised in Romans 8:28.

“Will You take the sorrow of my

heart and use it for Your honor and glory?” I prayed.

And we embarked on a spiritual expansion program that still overwhelms me.

My first comfort came in knowing that Diane had received Christ as her Savior from sin. Although she had struggled through some rough years of doubt, we had seen God bring her back into fellowship.

I knew God loved Diane.

More comfort came at her funeral when one young man sought out the minister and committed his life to Christ. The floodtide of sympathy wonderfully helped.

But the fact that I was a Christian did not lessen the pain.

I couldn't smile and say, “Diane is in heaven now, and how I thank the Lord.”

Grief overwhelmed me.

Yet God was with me in that grief—helping, caring, loving, giving grace enough for each day.

Gradually He put me in touch with others of His hurting children, and I could minister for I understood.

But God had far more to teach us.

As God released our anguish, we began praying for our daughter's murderer. He certainly needed Jesus Christ in his life.

Miraculously, we found we were filled with forgiveness. Not once did we struggle with bitterness toward the one who took our daughter's life, whoever he was.

Impossible?

Before the tragic event we would have thought so. “Yet, with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

Many of our friends did not understand our attitude. Yet Scripture spoke plainly:

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil” (Romans 12:17 Living Bible).

“If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. . . . Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12: 20, 21).

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

I thought of how God forgave David of murder. What’s more, God, in Christ, took my sin upon Himself. How can I not forgive another for whom Christ died?

God commands me to forgive.

And the same Holy Spirit who gives love, joy, and peace, can also flood my heart with forgiveness.

God’s laws and the laws of government say our daughter’s murderer should be punished for his criminal acts. I agree. But does this mean I must hate and plot against him?

Scripture forbids personal revenge in Romans 12:19 and Hebrews 10:30. “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” We can count

on God to judge and handle it right.

If I held bitterness and hate toward my daughter’s murderer, what would I accomplish?

I couldn’t harm him much, especially not knowing who he was. And I could never bring back our daughter.

But I would destroy myself. If I will not forgive, I am not free in Christ. I would be bound as much as the one in prison if I let resentment and anger take over my thinking.

“Let us not deny the Lord the privilege of manifesting Himself through us with His forgiving spirit,” someone told me.

As I learned to release unhealthy spiritual attitudes and let Him rule my life, I became free to function normally again.

God loves this criminal very much and died to redeem him. Therefore, I can love him, too.

For reasons God alone understands, this young man crossed my path; and I could not ignore him.

Interestingly, as I began to pray regularly for my daughter’s killer, I began to care about what might be happening in his life.

(7. Tell the story in chronological order)

Approximately three years following Diane’s death, he was apprehended, tried, and sentenced to life in prison. Now I knew a name and location.

Would it be possible to let him

know God's miraculous work in our lives?

Through the Prison Mission Association my husband and I were able to establish indirect contact with him.

He was deeply touched and asked if he could write us via the mission.

That first letter was the most joyous and difficult composition I have ever put together. I wanted to fill it with love and understanding.

We did not want this man to believe that we condoned the crime committed against our daughter, against us, and against God.

But we did want him to believe we cared about him, and above all that God cared and was anxiously waiting to save him.

Weeks passed with no reply.

I could envision the man's emotional shock at receiving a letter from the parents of the girl he had killed. And I began to understand how difficult it might be to respond

I prepared a second letter, explaining that we could understand his hesitancy.

"It is all right," I said, "if you feel you cannot write to us, but we are interested in keeping in touch with you."

Then we received a letter from him.

I wept.

Our kindness to him had hurt, yet was comforting. He hadn't realized there were people anywhere in the world, he told us, who would place their concern for him above their

own deep hurt.

Two years of correspondence followed. We learned to be honest with each other and to trust each other.

"If you ever come this way," he wrote once, "make it a point to visit me. I am sure God has not led us this far without intending that we meet some day."

So here we sat in the prison. We believed the Holy Spirit had guided us, but my heart raced.

Then he entered. Tall, handsome, cleanly dressed, shaven.

The love God had given me overflowed. We opened our arms and our hearts to one another, embracing and weeping together. The chaplain wept openly.

"It was like parents receiving their long lost son," he told us. "God was at work."

As my husband and I stood with our arms around our young friend, we felt an immense joy, knowing we were obeying the Lord as best we understood.

God made us comfortable together, and we visited three hours. We shared real feelings. We didn't try to pretend. We shared our families and our faith in God.

We went to a small chapel gathering of inmates and told of God's miracle of forgiveness in our hearts for our daughter's killer (without identifying him).

And we told of God's provision at Calvary.

Hardened criminals cried.

As we left, our friend said, “I am not yet born again. I can see it’s a tremendous commitment; and when I make it, I want it to be genuine. Please keep praying for me.”

We respected his honesty.

(8. Result)

More lessons lay ahead.

We had been home only a few months when our prisoner friend wrote that he no longer desired to correspond.

This cut like a knife.

I felt as though another very special person was taken from my life. He had received us so warmly and seemed reluctant to have us leave.

What happened?

(9. Lesson learned)

As I read the Scriptures and prayed, I began to see that I wanted to be in on the act when God saved him.

Now I probably would not be.

God convicted me of my selfishness. God was fully capable of completing the work He had begun. He didn’t need me.

So I learned a new step of trust as I relinquished my friend to God.

I took my hands off and left him in God’s loving hands.

This took a while.

But when I became willing, I was freed from my despair.

I still care for him and always will.

We continue to pray for his salvation.

I don’t claim to understand all of God’s ways, for His ways are higher than ours. But it seems God has given me a forgiving spirit, and I am glad.

I make no claims for the future; a spirit of unforgiveness could rear its ugly head anytime.

But I know it is possible to freely forgive.

If God can work in my heart in this situation, I can trust Him to keep teaching me His ways.

Notice that the writer used the frame and flashback method. She began the article in the prison waiting room as she and her husband waited for the man who had murdered their daughter to appear.

Then she retells the story of how she learned of her daughter’s death. She uses a chronological structure for that and in the midst of it shares her deep belief in God. She quotes Scriptures to show that her faith rests on what God has said.

She mentions that friends did not understand that she wasn’t bitter. She tells of the man’s capture and imprisonment and how, finally, two years after that, she was able to arrange a meeting with him at his prison.

Then she picks up the story again:

“So we sat in the prison.” She writes simply.

Then he entered.

She has so opened her heart to the reader up to this point that when she opens her arms to her daughter's killer, we understand the weeping.

She concludes the story by continuing the chronology. She foreshadows what is to come by saying, "More lessons lay ahead."

She ends with the lessons she learned and a general statement that she doesn't understand God's ways.

The very end comes with her saying she can trust God to "keep teaching me His ways." This looks ahead with optimism and confidence.

The article also shows how a writer can pull the reader right into the story. She pays attention to details: "A dozen times or more I reached for a hankie, then put it back in my purse. I folded, then unfolded my hands. My heart pounded, keeping pace with the pelting rain."

Goldie's article is simply written but eloquent. Study it.

But remember, testimonies don't

need to be this profound. They can be joyful accounts of celebrations and victories and personal hilarities. Their human interest can be warm and humorous.

They give a writer the occasion to tell his story with all the color and grace and personableness he can muster.

Whatever message you convey, bring to the writing of it all the naturalness you possess.

Be yourself and let what you think shine through.

Remember that earlier word of caution:

Your subject must be significant if you want an editor to publish it.

If you don't know whether it is significant or not, write it anyway and submit it.

If the editor doesn't think it is, he/she will send it back home to you if you have included the postage.

Remember, it is cheaper to run off a fresh copy than pay return postage.

A BOOK REVIEW TO SHARE WHAT YOU DO AND DON'T LIKE ABOUT IT

Many magazine and newspaper editors rely on the book review to attract readers.

In 200 words a good review will crystallize the essential meaning of 200 pages. The reader, saved the purchase price and the hours it might take him to read the volume, can talk knowingly about it and give people the impression he is well read.

That's a cynical view and it would be wrong to consider that the only reason. A good review can and does stimulate sales. That's why publishers send free review copies to book editors and those editors send them on to reviewers.

Want to be that reviewer and get a free copy plus \$20?

Write the editor and tell him you're available. Ask if there is an applica-

tion form to fill out. Most editors will want to know that you are educated and discerning. Although some are more interested in getting the reaction of an average reader, editors do want to be sure that what they get from a reviewer is literate and insightful.

So an editor has sent you the book.

Now what?

You read it.

Then you study it.

If it has a preface, you absorb it. Do the same if it's called, "Introduction." You want to find why the author wrote the book.

Study the table of contents. Why did he organize the book the way he did? What is he really trying to say? What's his theme?

Theme?

That's what the author means but doesn't say. In "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" the author never states the theme, but it's there. It's: "Take what

isn't yours and you risk getting caught."

In "Little Red Riding Hood" it is: "Under no circumstances should little girls stop and talk with strangers."

Your ability to perceive what the author is saying will enhance your review and endear you to the editor. He's tired of book reviews that are nothing more than a resume of the book jacket, a rehash of the table of contents or a love letter to the author.

If the theme doesn't come to you, don't sit at your word processor for 40 hours waiting. Go on without it.

On your rough draft (hopefully, you always have a rough draft and never consider the first draft as God's gift to humanity), write your name and address in the upper left-hand corner so the accountant will know where to send the check.

A third of the way down the page write the title of the book by so and so. Follow that with the name of the publisher, the number of pages (including the index) and the price.

Don't use the title again to begin the first paragraph.

Let the author's name springboard you and your reader into the review:

Jim Johnson, a well-known writer, minister, and missionary, bares his soul about his fear as he faced a quadruple open heart bypass. At age 50, he . . .

What worries Blainires, contemporary prophet and friend of the

late C. S. Lewis, is that we stand far too close to the blurred margins of modernism. He challenges the Christian to . . .

Leilani Stumpf has run a fine-toothed comb through the manias and morals of dozens of Washington bureaucrats and discovered the government needs a shampoo.

Or begin with an assessment, but state it in a fresh way:

This book deserves a wide reading, but it will not grab everyone at first blush . . .

This book is for atheists . . .

More pop psychology? Yes, but that doesn't make this a bad book . . .

The essential book review boils down to three points:

- 1) What does it say?**
- 2) How does it say it?**
- 3) So what?**

The review should be an objective account of what's going on here and in no way should it pander to any special interest.

The good reviewer opens up the can of spaghetti (as it were) and pours out the contents. He doesn't examine each noodle. He doesn't have time. But he certainly counts the meatballs and

gives them a prod.

He looks for consistency in sauce and firmness in “flesh.”

Do the contents do what the label says they do or is what we have here actually a can of worms?

Sometimes a successful author coasts. His contract calls for one book every two years and he fulfills his obligations. A discerning reviewer catches him in the act and holds him accountable.

Two reviews, one long and one short, will illustrate these points.

The first was written by William F. Luck, M.A., Assistant Professor of Theology at Moody Bible Institute. We printed it in “Moody Monthly” magazine when I was senior editor there.

The book is *The Screwloose Lectures* by Larry Richards. It was published by Word Publishing Company of Waco, Texas. It contained 169 pages and sold for \$6.95:

This obvious take-off of (C. S.) Lewis’s classic *Screwtape Letters* is almost worthy of the comparison. Richards inverts eighteen lectures on Christian ethics and places them in the mouth of a demon named Screwloose. This ‘field tempter’ has been asked to be the visiting lecturer on the ethics of Hell at Underworld University. Being a street demon and not an ‘ivory pit’ academic, Screwloose approaches his subject from a very practical perspective.

Richards’ gimmick aside, the book provides a needed balance to a subject which is often presented too abstractly. In the first section he talks about ethics and human personality: self-image, emotion, motivation, belief, and will.

In each case he attempts to show how our failure to find balance in understanding ourselves leaves us vulnerable for ethical failure. It is a very helpful section, with the exception of his repeated insistence that ethics deals only with actions, not emotions or beliefs per se. The Sermon on the Mount reads otherwise to me.

His second section deals with key terms of Christian ethics: law, freedom, authority, truth, guilt, forgiveness, and love. It is excellent. Richards carefully shows how, by misunderstanding God’s meaning of these terms, we are able to do what is wrong and think that we have done right. Controversial here, he criticizes “chain of command” authoritarianism.

Unfortunately, his last section gives doubts about the dust jacket quip that “all Hell is horrified at the disastrous security leak.”

Here Richards’s cavalier attitude toward ethical theory catches up with him. He discusses capital punishment, homosexuality, women’s liberation, and abortion. To him they are examples of four purportedly distinct categories of contemporary problems.

In most cases he comes down on the side of the elect angels, even if a bit ambiguously; but there is a marked arrogance toward attempts to get there in any other way than his. He dismisses deterrent arguments for capital punishment as unbiblical. Deuteronomy 13:10f says otherwise.

His treatment of homosexuality is tarnished by his hedging “usually” on the experiential origin of homosexuality, thus allowing a loophole for some homosexuals to contend that they, at least, were born that way so are not accountable for their acts.

The chapter on women’s liberation is a case of fence-straddling, and it is not clear from my reading of the Bible that sex roles are as irrelevant to the discussion as he states (pp. 151-52).

But most distressing of all is his treatment of abortion. From the obvious fact that there cannot be “total confidence” about the biblical teaching on this subject, Richards hastily concludes that a person’s beliefs on it are “private doctrines.” His actual engagement with the biblical text is limited to some off-handed comments about one of the most controversial passages (Exodus 21:22-25), and his interpretation of it is one of the more unlikely available.

This is most inadequate, and his ensuing call for humility and tolera-

tion of others’ opinions is actually a rather arrogant call for people to adopt his unsupported middle-of-the-road position . . . which, incidentally, he refuses to specify!

The first three quarters of the work is near brilliant, and well worth the purchase price. But, to be honest, the last quarter smells a bit of brimstone.

You know, when you finish that the reviewer has thoroughly digested that book. He has done the reader (and magazine editor) a real service. He stated the theme of the book.

In each case he attempts to show how our failure to find balance in understanding ourselves leaves us vulnerable for ethical failure.

He discusses the book section by section and holds the author accountable. He doesn’t wait until he has reviewed the whole book to judge the separate points. He does that as he goes and carries us along with him.

Oh, it is possible and permissible to summarize the whole book at once before criticizing any part of it. There is no strict “way” to do any of this writing. In fact, we look to the enterprising reviewer to use all sorts of different techniques and structures in his reviews.

This reviewer has brought us back to the beginning in his final sentence and this is a strong technique. It ties the review together. He’s brought us full circle and we’re satisfied with his “But, to be honest, the last quarter

smells a bit of brimstone.”

But did you catch the writer’s own bias by his use of the adjective “obvious”? His sentence, “From the obvious fact that there cannot be ‘total confidence’ about the biblical teaching on this subject (abortion), Richards hastily concludes that a person’s beliefs on it are ‘private doctrines.’”

We editors did not catch it. Certainly the murder of children is addressed in Scripture.

But this proves the point that reviewers can give their own slant on the material they are presenting.

To give you ideas on the kinds of remarks reviewers are making consider these, taken at random from the book review section of the magazine I edited.

The book is balanced theologically and highly readable. It is written by one who has had a long acquaintance with the Spirit’s power and clearly longs for more. It deserves the wide acceptance it is receiving.

Reading this book could be hazardous to a lack-luster Christian life.

The last section of the book discusses brainwashing, deprogramming and adjustment. Some helpful suggestions are given, but no “easy answers.”

Because each chapter contains an average of only nine pages, the reader is left wondering about many aspects of the composers’ life and beliefs.

Had the author spent more time on how to accomplish the task than on the constant challenge to do it, the book would have been more effective.

Obviously, this kind of grappling with profound ideas is not for relaxed easy-chair reading. It asks the reader to bring the same rigor of mind to his task as that which went into making the book.

Unfortunately, this book is marred by an unevenness of style. The author apparently is at times trying to speak the language of the “man on the street,” but his scholarly sections tend to be repetitious and he sometimes belittles those whom he should be trying to reach.

It may be that this defeats his purpose. Those who are not theologians will be sometimes bored, and some theologians will think this author despises them.

The book’s faithfulness to the Bible text, its beauty of expression, its inspirational quality, its presentation of a subject too much neglected, and its aim to incite to action can be appreciated best by reading it aloud.

I reviewed an autobiography for one edition of the magazine.

It was *Foretaste of Glory* by a great woman, Mrs. Ann Warris, founder of an organization called Arizona Bible

Women of Tucson. The book contained 206 pages and cost \$5 for its paperback edition.

Being an autobiography, the book brought the reader chronologically through the writer's life. The reviewer cannot report every wart and wrinkle. He has only 280 words—actually, 279 in this case. The review must be the essence of the book, no more, no less:

Many Bible women have something in common, it seems. Call it a Timothy syndrome—they have been born into Christian homes and from childhood have known the Holy Scriptures which make them wise. They follow on to know the Lord; and, knowing Him, they minister.

Foretaste . . . , an autobiography, not only shows how God prepared one such woman for spiritual ministry, but also traces the beginnings of the Arizona Bible Women organization, a cassette ministry distributing lessons taught by the author.

Born of old Covenanter stock (her great, great grandfather was shot off his horse and killed for preaching the gospel), Warris is in a sense telling how she climbed on to take up where he left off.

In her childhood she was sickly, “but far from saintly.” Did she falter? Yes. Fail? No.

Her spiritual concern for her unsaved father and girlhood friends, for her high school, for

friends in her adult life as she entered business as an accountant shows she learned early to prove God's faithfulness.

As soul winner and Bible student, she set her goal on foreign missions only to find “it was the geography of the commission I had mistaken.”

As Bible class ministry opened for her in Arizona, she promised to develop it only as God provided.

He did.

Some readers may blame her for a subjective dependence on intuitive leading, as with Bible in lap she waits to hear God speak. But she walks by faith. God obviously leads.

She faces heartache, disappointment, blood disease, a threat of blindness; but the book is in no way macabre. Actually, it reduces to eight words—Mary's words: “My spirit doth rejoice in God, my Savior.”

The paragraphs are short. Some contain only one sentence. Not every sentence starts with the subject. Some start with a participle or a prepositional phrase or an adverb clause.

Some sentences are long; some, short. When the title is mentioned, it appears as only the first major word printed in italics and followed by an ellipsis: *Foretaste . . .*

This technique points us to the book without taking our time for a repetition of the whole title. We know what the title is. Avoid using it again and again.

Once more, a review is a distilla-

tion. It's a knowledgeable, objective recounting of contents. It's a judgment. It should be as interesting as the book it reviews, if not more so.

I wrote this one for the book review section of "Moody Monthly" and took in three books at once. Of interest to me is that I was a prophet. This review appeared in the October 1979 issue:

The Search

by Carol Fister Olvera

Rachel's Hope

By Carol Gift Page

Margo

By Jerry Jenkins

Jeremy Books, Edina, MN

Approx 200 pages, paper, \$2.25 each

Long an object of jokes often richly deserved, Christian fiction has evoked little interest among adults; so where there has been no demand, there has been no supply. Now here comes young Jeremy Books with a brace of first novels that may well anticipate a reversing trend.

The authors have considerable writing and publishing experience and the spiritual pedigree to take a genuine evangelical stance. They know the meaning of conversion and the cost of dedication to Christ.

Their characters shed the naiveties of shallow faith by grappling with essential issues (abortion, drugs, infidelity, threat to life) and by ultimately finding the rewards of

faith-at-work.

The Search, multi-dimensional, keys on two youngsters lost in a snow storm.

Rachel's Hope follows a breaking marriage.

Margo reaches for proofs that an unlikely suspect has committed murder.

Olvera asks if God is sufficient to take the shards of shattered hopes and piece them together. Can He cope with business failure, death, divorce, and children lost in snow?

He can.

Page asks if He can reassemble a fragmented family when the gospel has been the wedge that has driven it apart.

He can.

Jenkins wants the soul that sins to be the soul that dies. His characters must mass the evidence.

They do.

That "He can" and that "they do" may flaw the realism of each book, but the genre of the short paperback novel gives license for that.

Although these authors tie a neat package on the last page, they don't let us walk away free. There's a penalty to pay and each exacts it. The characters do suffer; but, unfortunately, the brevity of each book cuts short the implications of that suffering.

It's exciting to have young Christian journalists come forth with first novels. Hopefully, writers with

this much gift will be shortly back with more.

They have been back and they have given more. Later, as managing editor, I printed *The Search and Margo* in separate issues of the magazine, to my knowledge the only time full novels have been printed in Christian magazines.

Also, of interest to me, Carol Fister had been a student of mine at Multnomah School of the Bible.

You want to develop a career writing book reviews?

Clip them and file them. Use them for reference when you've caught the eye of a book editor and he sends you a freebee.

Who knows?

Good work writing reviews may land you an assignment. Good work on assignments may land you a job on staff. I know. It happened to me.

But let's not get off the track. Book review editors tear their hair over the reports they get—especially those that come in to them from free lance writers. They want the reviewer to concentrate on the book and on what the author is saying. Three quarters of your review should tell what the author is presenting. The final quarter can be your own evaluation.

Now, you need to check with the

editor before you write your review. Some editors are writers themselves and don't want to hurt the author of the book or the publisher. They know a peptic review can hurt sales. Perhaps they want to do all they can to encourage publishing companies to buy large ads. They don't want a critical review. You need to know this at the outset.

Given the green light to be critical, you can, if you wish, saturate your piece in disdain.

You can knock the book in the first sentence and sock it, mock it, rock it, shock it throughout.

But you've got to cover the book.

I know.

You're thinking, "Okay, Professor, you said that twice. How many times do you have to repeat it? Are you trying to fill up space?"

I've been book review editor on a national magazine staff. I've torn my hair over reviews I had to edit. I'm simply pleading for responsible reviewing.

The reviewer's key?

COVER THE BOOK!

In our next lesson, we will cover the expository article and the nostalgia piece.

Professor Dick