



JANICE THOMPSON, AUTHOR

# Write Magazine Articles that Sell

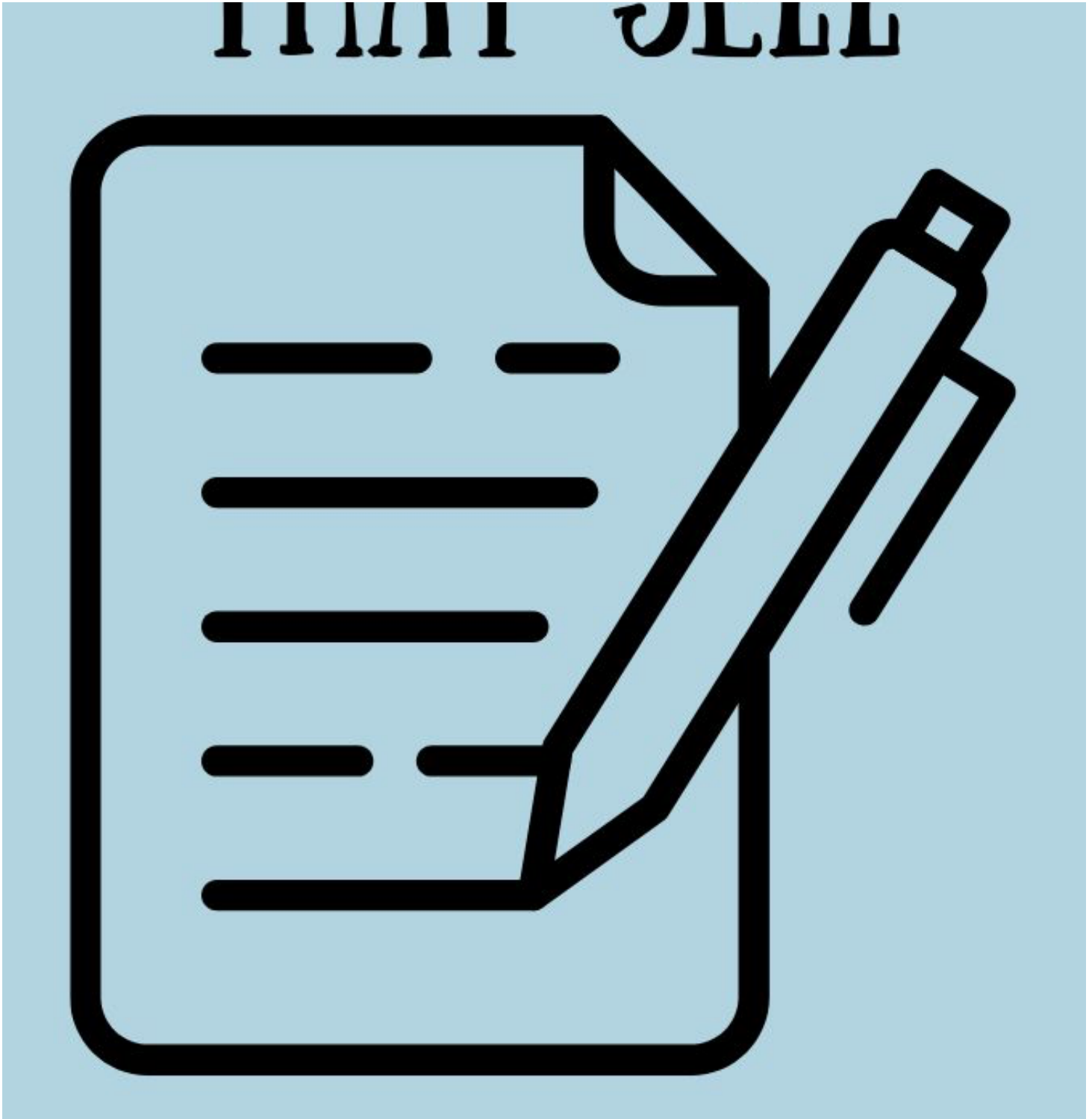
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*Everything that doesn't kill you, makes you stronger. And later on you can use it in some story.*

Tapani Bagge



WRITE  
MAGAZINE  
ARTICLES  
THAT SELL



First and foremost, all magazine articles must meet a felt need. Readers are asking questions and looking for answers. But what are those questions? What are those “felt” needs and why should we consider ourselves worthy to give answers?

- **Without looking ahead in this lesson, try to list as many “felt needs” as you can think of. What questions are readers asking about their lives?**

Whether you recognize it or not, your life experiences have made you an “expert” at one thing or another. You have the answer to someone else’s question.

- **How do you feel about that idea? Do you think you have answers worthy of sharing?**

Start with a general list like the one below, and write what you know.

### **Consider the following topics:**

Parenting, ministry, quiet times/intimacy with God, travel, marital issues, friendships, workplace issues, political issues, generational problems, home repair and improvement, stay at home mom, emotions, church government, youth groups, habits, temptations, addictions, abuse, love, spiritual healing, single parenting, romantic relationships, caring for aging parents, health related issues, weight issues, persecution, golden years, evangelism, poverty, Bible stories, faith, human rights, economic/financial issues, American government, ethnic issues, women’s issues, sexual problems, etc.

When I first did this exercise, I chose two topics from the list: temptations and weight issues.

- **Choose two topics from the list above.**
- **Why did you choose those two?**

When I did this exercise, I narrowed my list down to “jealousy.”

- **Narrow your list down to one**

I felt I had some degree of credibility because I'd spent most of my life struggling with jealousy issues.

- **Why did you choose that one?**
- **Do you have some expertise in this area? Explain.**

I then narrowed down my topic, settling on a particular scripture reference and deciding to use humor to teach a life lesson.

- **Now make your topic more specific. (For example, if you've chosen parenting, think of a specific issue or story you'd like to teach/share.)**

In my case, I titled my piece "Modern Day Donkeys" based on a particular scripture from the Bible.

- **Can you think of a possible title for your piece?**

I knew that my primary audience would be Christians who struggled with envy/jealousy.

- **Who is your audience?**
- **How will you research?**

In my case, I had to write a personal experience piece.

- **What type of article/piece will you write?** General Interest, Humor,

Inspirational, Personal Experience, Interview/Profile, Quiz, Filler, How-to, Exposé?

## Writing the Article

### **BUILDING BLOCKS: The structure of an article**

All articles (like stories) must have a beginning, middle and end.

- **Write your introduction:**
- **Write the body of your article.**
- **Write the conclusion.**

### **HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO INCLUDE:**

- **INFORMATION:** The basic (carefully researched) information in paragraph (and/or bulleted) form.
- **QUOTES:** A quote from a famous (or even a not-so-famous) person makes the piece more approachable.
- **STATISTICS:** Nothing makes you look more like an expert than adding statistics to your piece. Be sure, however, to carefully document your sources and include them when you submit.
- **PERSONAL STORY:** Don't be afraid to include at least one personal story in your article. If you're writing about someone else, make sure you get their permission first.
- **SCRIPTURE:** Start or end your piece with an appropriate scripture.
- **SIDEBARS:** A sidebar is a great "extra" to submit with the pieces. Many people use a poll or a quiz as a sidebar.

**Where to Submit:** (Writer's Market guide/website or Sally Stuart's Christian Writers Market Guide)

**How to Submit:** Fax, Email, or Snail mail? The trend today is to send via email. Most publishing houses will let you know whether or not you need a query letter. In many cases a general letter of introduction will work, along with the actual article (either attached or pasted into the body of the email, depending on the publisher's guidelines).

- **What are writer's guidelines for the publisher you're targeting?**

A simultaneous submission is when you submit the same piece to more than one publication at a time. Most houses these days take simultaneous submissions, but a few do not. Be sure you note that this is a simultaneous submission.

- **Will you submit simultaneously? If so, what houses will you choose?**

A SASE is a "self-addressed, stamped envelope." If you decide to send your article by snail mail, be sure to include a SASE.

- **What are you selling – first rights, reprint rights or all rights?** If you offer first rights, you're saying that this article has never been published before. (Selling first rights usually means that you can sell the article again and again, offering "reprint" rights.) If the publishing house asks for "all" rights, consider carefully whether you want to sell the article to them. If so, you cannot use it in other/future venues.

**Who, What, When, Where, Why and How – the Journalistic Approach**

*We were taught in grade school to answer the Five W's (Who, What, When, Where and Why) With your magazine article idea in mind, answer the following questions:*

- **Who: Who are you writing for? (Women? Teens? Married couples? Students? People going through a divorce? People in financial need?)**
- **What? What are you writing? (A personal experience piece? A how-to?)**
- **When? When will you find the time to write?**
- **Where? Where will you target this piece? (Parenting magazines? Mainstream? Denominational? Sunday School Take-home papers? Teen gossip magazine?)**
- **Why? Why are you writing this? Do you have a message to share? Can you solve a problem for the reader? Will you leave them feeling better/more satisfied than when they started?**

Good writing is clear thinking made visible. ~ [Bill Wheeler](#) ~

## **PUBLICATIONS ALL CHRISTIAN WRITERS MUST OWN:**

***Sally Stuart's Christian Writer's Market Guide***, Marlene Bagnull's ***Write His Answer***

***Stein on Writing*** (a secular book, but extremely helpful)

*I'm going to leave you with an article that I wrote a couple of years ago for the Christian market. I sold first rights to a denominational magazine, then sold reprint rights about seven months later to a national magazine.*

## Modern-Day Donkeys

by Janice Thompson

(Approximately 850 words)

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife,*

*or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything*

*that belongs to your neighbor."*

### **Exodus 20:17**

I get a little envious of others sometimes. In fact, truth be told, I often fight the temptation to crave what my friends and neighbors have. I covet.

Don't get me wrong – I've read the Ten Commandments. I know we're not supposed to struggle with envy. But this whole thing about not coveting your neighbor's donkey has always been a little hard to grasp. Is it actually possible to be jealous of a donkey, or have I completely missed the point?

In order to better understand this concept, I decided to put the scripture in modern terms. Here's what the final commandment *might* say, if the Lord had waited until the 21<sup>st</sup> century to share it:

- Don't envy your neighbor when he gets a brand new SUV and you're still driving an '84 Chevy that once belonged to your uncle, who passed it to your father, who



in turn passed it to you. Instead, thank God that you have a vehicle to drive. There are actually people on the planet who would give their eye teeth to have your car.

- Don't envy your friend when her husband takes her on a second honeymoon to Hawaii. Instead, pray for her safety, and for a season of refreshing for her marriage.
- Don't be jealous when the guy across the street can afford a landscaping service to care for his yard and yours hasn't been manicured in months. Instead, get out the lawnmower and get to work. You probably need the exercise.
- When on an airplane, don't envy the people in first class. Thank the Lord for frequent flyer miles and enjoy the ride.
- When standing in the check-out line at your local grocery store, don't envy the lady in front of you who apparently has the funds to do *serious* shopping. Thank God for your coupons and your ability to budget wisely, then wait patiently for your turn.
- Don't get jealous when your best friend purchases a really great outfit from a store that you can't even afford to walk into. Tell her how great she looks, then thank God for the clothes filling your closet.

I can't really blame the donkey for my troubles. It's not like he did anything wrong, after all. He simply existed. My reaction to him is the important thing. I must learn how to gauge my response to him. The only change that needs to take place is in my attitude.

*Do not let your happiness depend on something you may lose...*

*only [upon] the Beloved who will never pass away.*

## **C. S. Lewis**

So, how do we react when people around us are being blessed and our 'well' seems to have dried up? The answer is simple: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of Christ Jesus concerning you."

In *everything* give thanks. During the lean times, during times of plenty. When your neighbor is blessed beyond belief. When you are struggling to pay the electric bill. As you let go of temptations and take the hand of Christ.

Give thanks. This is God's final word on the matter.

But how do we get there? How do we shift from envy to thankfulness? I've discovered many practical and creative ways:

- When the Lord does bless you with a newer vehicle, take that '84 Chevy and give it to someone in need. Don't ask or expect anything in return.
- While your friend is in Hawaii, create a honeymoon at home for your husband. Turn your bedroom into a tropical paradise.
- Spend an afternoon mowing a single mother's yard. If you can't find a single mother, opt for an elderly person, or someone who is home-bound.
- Next time you travel on an airplane, give up your window seat to someone who looks like they could use a little cheering up. Take the seat in the middle and smile – inside and out.
- Take a little of your carefully budgeted money and use it to purchase groceries for a family in need.
- Go through your closet, sorting out the things you can do without – then give

them to someone who needs them.

*The desire of love is to give. The desire of lust is to get. – Ed Cole*

Funny. When I take my eyes off of my lack, the donkey ceases to exist. He has disappeared, along with all of my jealousies.

Oh, every now and then he'll reappear. When he does, I just smile...

...and look for a way to give.

### **Questions to Ponder:**

- What donkeys do I struggle with?
- What practical things can I do to turn my eyes onto others in need?

**By JThompson**  
February 28, 2025

**Magazine Article Lessons**

Edit

**← Fiction Basics**

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