

***Writing as a Ministry for God's Glory***

**by Kathy Collard Miller**

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Contact Kathy at [www.KathyCollardMiller.com](http://www.KathyCollardMiller.com)

## Introduction and Welcome

I can tell you want to be a writer! You are reading this book! You have a worthy desire inspired by God. It may be His will to use you in wonderful ways to minister to many people. I know! I've seen God's work through me and it's thrilling to look back and be surprised by God's orchestration of my own beginnings into writing as a ministry.

My interest in writing goes all the way back to my childhood. I loved being at my desk and touching paper. I didn't know what a writer was back then but I loved to put words on paper. I excelled in my English writing classes and even tried writing a novel while in high school. Also in high school, I was editor of our school newspaper.

As an adult, that dream of writing was put on a back burner because I really didn't know how to make a writer's life come true. Then a traumatic experience turned my life around. I had been married seven years to Larry, and I was the mother of a two-year-old daughter named Darcy and an infant named Mark. I couldn't handle life, marriage, or mothering and physically and emotionally abused my two-year-old daughter.

But God was faithful and after showing me the underlying causes and solutions for my problem, awoke within me a desire to share my story after I attended an community adult education writing class. I wrote a query letter to *Moody Monthly* magazine and they wanted to hear about my story. After I wrote it, they purchased it. I was thrilled.

Some time after that, with trepidation I attended a writer's conference and began considering writing a book. That first book, entitled *Out of Control* came out in 1984. It recently has been updated and republished as *No More Anger: Hope for an Out-of-Control Mom* with Elk Lake Publishing, Inc.

After *Out of Control* was published, I continued to attend writers conferences and grow in my understanding. Doors of opportunities through books, articles, and then speaking opened up. I could see God leading me more deeply into a writing ministry. I considered myself the most fortunate of all people.

I still am most fortunate because I love what I'm doing. I'm the author of over 50 books and over 1,000 magazine articles, blog posts, guest posts, and contributions to other books.

I'm thrilled to share with you what I have learned which I trust will support and inspire you if God is calling you to a ministry of writing.

—Kathy Collard Miller, [www.KathyCollardMiller.com](http://www.KathyCollardMiller.com)

Kathy Collard Miller is the author of over 50 books and can be reached through [www.KathyCollardMiller.com](http://www.KathyCollardMiller.com). Her books are available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). She is also a speaker who has spoken in over 30 US States and 8 foreign countries. As a lay counselor, she meets frequently with those looking for greater sanctification.

## **Chapter 1** **Writing an Article**

**by Kathy Collard Miller**

*Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness.—Isaiah 30:8*

This first chapter covers a basic that will help you fulfill your calling. Most beginning writers find it hard to believe God wants them to write an article first. They believe only a book will be a witness to God. But consider this: for most of us, our book might sell 10,000 copies but usually it's less than 5,000. In contrast, an article usually reaches a much wider audience of readers than that. Especially with on-line magazines and blogs, etc, your article will reach many more people than your book ever could.

Don't discount the value of an article for reaching people. Plus, you will accomplish an article's completion more quickly. And thirdly, each of your articles on the same topic could become the chapters of your book. You are writing your book as you are writing chapters and creating interest.

But before you can write an article, you'll need to consider the topics you could write about. Here are some potential article ideas. You may or may not feel qualified to write about one or many of them at this moment, but have no fear. You can still consider writing about a topic in the future as you continue studying and researching on the topic.

### **Topics for Articles**

From this list, indicate which of these subjects you have an initial interest in:

Bible application  
Business  
Celebrities  
Children's stories/articles  
Christian character development  
Christian education  
Contentment  
Cults/Occult  
Devotional readings  
Divorce  
Emotions  
Environment  
Family  
Finances  
Grieving  
Handicapped individuals  
Healing  
Health  
Home schooling  
Marriage  
Missions/Missionaries  
Parenting  
Personal experience  
Relationships  
Salvation story

Self esteem  
Single life  
Sports  
Stress  
Successful people  
Theology  
Witnessing  
Worship  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

In the beginning, it's best to write about what you know. As you research other areas, you'll write about those because you can become an expert through research and experience.

In order to write an article, we need to research. There are two primary ways for gathering your material: in a physical file and in a virtual file. You'll use both. As you read through the following information, apply it to your physical or virtual file.

Label a physical or digital file folder for each area you've picked from the above list. Every time you find something about one of your chosen topics, insert it into the appropriate folder. If you find something that applies to more than one area, make a copy and put it in both folders. You never know whether something you see could be of importance for an article or book later. It is a much bigger problem to have too much material to choose from, rather than too little.

And yes, you are gathering material for both an article and a book at the same time.

### **Permissions Information**

As you do your research, you'll most likely find a lot of your material comes from books you read. It's important to be accurate in recording where you found your material. It can be very time consuming later if you don't know where you found something and then have to try to find it by flipping through a book. And often, we can't even remember what book we found it in.

In order to prevent that kind of problem, track the Permissions Information by including this information with each piece of research from a book, article, or any kind of virtual, digital source:

- a. title
- b. author/writer
- c. quote by original author/writer (if the author is quoting someone else)
- d. year the book, article, etc. published
- e. publishing company and its city
- f. page(s) number; for Kindle or ebook, note the page or Location.

If using material from a blog or other source, copy the link in your search bar and make a note of that.

If your material is from a magazine, then you would record similar data, except you will also note the magazine name and page number(s).

Later, as you write your article or book manuscript, include this information in your manuscript so that it will always be available. The final article may not include that information, but it will be up to the editor whether he wants to include it or not.

### **Ideas for Researching**

Here are some ideas for researching. You can find material in:

a. Pastor's sermon. This may be an important source, especially if you're writing something based on a particular passage of Scripture and your pastor address those verses. It's amazing how the Lord often works that way. Or it may be he'll say a quote or quip that applies to your material. If he doesn't give the source of his material, it would be wise to check with him later for that information.

b. Television. You never can tell what you'll find of value, even from watching television. I remember hearing a cute quote about worry while watching TV and have been able to use it for years.

Some informative, instructional kind of programs even make transcripts of the program available. That would be a valuable resource, especially on projects dealing with scientific information.

c. Radio. Just like television, the radio can be an important source. Some writers I know carry a small, portable tape recorder with them, especially in the car. Of course, your cell phone is always a valuable source for recording information.

d. Books. Books are usually the best source of information. I have found my church library to be an important research resource. I don't have to buy the books and if something is lengthy, I can just make a copy. If your own church doesn't have a big library, see whether a large church in your area won't mind having you check materials out of their library.

If there is a publisher who tends to publish books regularly on the topics you cover, write them to see whether you can receive free review copies, especially if you are willing to write an on-line review, for instance, on Amazon. A writer friend of mine who frequently writes on parenting receives books about her favored subject. The publishing company knows she is a good person to receive their books because she also leads seminars on that topic and recommends books to others. That relationship was of benefit to both my friend and the publisher.

e. Personal Bible study. As Christian writers, much of our material will be based on Scripture. As we study the Word, we will have insights and ideas that will later be used in our articles, books, and blog posts.

But if we don't write down or record our thoughts and ideas, it will be lost to us. Therefore, it's a very good idea to have some sort of file where you can list the different topics and ideas you have covered in your Bible study work and in your journal. If you have recorded your thoughts and insights in your journal, you could jot that date on a piece of paper and drop it into the file folder referring to the topic you wrote about in your journal. That way you will not have to rewrite all of the information.

On my e-reader, I have categories/collections of e-books. I highlight or highlight and make a note in the e-book the information I want to remember for possible use.

Another idea is to have a virtual file folders with the name of every book in the Bible. This can become an important place for putting information about a particular verse or passage you are studying. Then when you want to refer in an article or book about a particular verse or passage, you can pull up the file for that particular book of the Bible and have it available.

It is a good idea to have paper and pen or pencil always available. It's particularly important to have your paper and pen or pencil on your night stand beside your bed. Writers know we often get our best ideas in the middle of the night. We wake up with this brilliant idea knowing it's so wonderful we could never forget it. But of course in the morning, we've forgotten the idea and are kicking ourselves trying to remember such brilliance. You never know when a wonderful idea will spring into your brain, so have the ability to make note of it all the time.

### **Self Help Article**

Self help encourage and inspire a reader to deal with an area of need in their lives with practical ideas and instruction.

As you think of this kind of article, and actually any kind of article, consider these possible openings. I'll also include examples of each.

1. *Examples of other people struggling.* "Ray and Jean have two children and a fairly satisfying marriage yet Jean is troubled by one aspect of their relationship. 'Ray sometimes get stressed out from his work,' Jean told us, 'or he feels depressed about something. I know when something is bothering him, but I'm never sure what it is. It could be me, for all I know. When I ask him about it, I always get the same reply: he insists nothing is wrong.'"

2. *Anecdote of personal struggle.* "I had prayed so many times asking God for an instantaneous deliverance of my anger. I just didn't understand why He didn't answer my plea. But in time, God revealed the underlying causes of my anger and empowered me to steadily become more patient. Now I have more to share with others."

3. *Refer to reader directly.* "We all face job stress from time to time, but when that stress follows

you home, your marriage can suffer."

4. *Statistic about the need.* "In 1981, there were 2.4 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces. So people assumed half of all marriages ended in divorce. But such conclusions were erroneous because they overlooked more than 50 million established marriages. Lou Harris says only one in eight marriages end in divorce, and only two percent of all marriages break up in any single year."

5. *Generalization about the need.* "I know a place in North Carolina where two rivers come together. From the top of a high bluff, you can watch the rivers move calmly toward their meeting point. But where they converge, the real battle takes place. One strong, independent stream meets an equally strong, independent stream, and water from the two churns and foams in a noisy, rushing current.

"A good marriage is similar to the merging of those two rivers. One independent person meets another independent person, and they decide to join their lives into one. Like the rivers, two marriage partners become a separate creation. But two people do not join their lives easily or without conflict."

6. *Quote about the need.* "Someone has said, 'Worry is like a rocking chair; it gives you something to do but you don't go anywhere.' We can easily think worrying is necessary, but it leaves out trust in God."

7. *Ask a question.* "How can a woman keep marital romance alive?"

### **Develop the Body of the Article**

Years ago, Marita Littauer Tedder created a formula to make this part of our writing simple. I have continued to use it both for articles and book chapters. Marita wrote, "We want our article or chapter to stand out in the minds of our audience like a pier stands out in the ocean."

She developed the acrostic P.I.E.R. to tell us the main ingredients for every main idea in our article or book chapter. PIER stands for:

P: Point: the basic idea

I: Instruction: specific ideas for dealing with the problem

E: Example: anecdotes and stories (either your own or others)

R: Reference: the authority behind your point including a Scripture, quote, or statistic.

Here's how to use the acrostic. You may be writing an article about dealing with stress, and the three main topics of your article are time pressures, worry, and unrealistic expectations. In writing about time pressures, give your basic point (P), then an anecdote (E), then a Scripture (R), and end with some practical instruction (I).

For your second main point, worry, mix up the order of PIER. The same goes for the third main category of unrealistic expectations. If you follow this formula of including those four basic areas of PIER, you will write a body of the article.

### **Potential Article Conclusions**

Here are some possibilities:

1. *A circle ending.* This is where the ending refers to what you wrote about in beginning. For instance, the article starts with how Bill and Jane are struggling in their relationship. Close the article by referring back to them with how they are applying the information in your article and thriving.

2. *A summary.* Mentions briefly each point made in the article.

3. *A future-looking perspective.* For instance, in an article about a ministry or an organization, you could write about what the group will be doing in the future. If your article is about a problem, you could say how experts anticipate it being addressed in the future by a group or ministry.

4. *An invitation to change.* This is where you would challenge the reader to make a change in their life by addressing them directly.

### **The Train Metaphor**

William Zinsser, author and writing teacher, wrote, "The most important sentence in any article is the first one. If it doesn't induce the reader to proceed to the second sentence, your article is dead. And if the second sentence doesn't induce him to continue to the third sentence, it's equally dead. Of such a

progression of sentences, each tugging the reader forward until he is safely hooked, a writer constructs that fateful unit: the 'lead.'" (pg. 80, *Writer to Writer*, Bodie and Brock Thoene, Bethany House Publishers, 1990, Minneapolis, MN)

As you write any article, think of it being constructed like the components of a train. Each component of the train represents a part of the article, such as:

*The Cow Catcher* represents the first sentence. It should grab the readers' interest.

*The Engine* is the Lead paragraph(s). It empowers the article to continue.

*The Passenger Cars* represent the body of the article. Each passenger car includes the P. I. E. R. Finally, we have the *Caboose* as the Ending.

I'm confident you'll find with more and more practice, writing an article will become easier. Don't give up if it's discouraging in the beginning. Keep at it.

In time you will experience the joy of receiving emails from the readers of your articles telling you how your words touched and changed her heart. Hone your skills and write your ideas down. Your readers will thank you.

Kathy Collard Miller is the author of over 50 books and can be reached through [www.KathyCollardMiller.com](http://www.KathyCollardMiller.com). Her books are available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). She is also a speaker who has spoken in over 30 US States and 8 foreign countries. As a lay counselor, she meets frequently with those looking for greater sanctification.