



EDITING DEVOTIONALS 101

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COURSE OUTLINE

Course Description: God calls us to excellence. He doesn't take a slapdash approach to any endeavor he undertakes, as illustrated in the detailed plans for the tabernacle (Exodus 25–28) and the temple (1 Kings 6). In this course, we'll build a strong foundation for editing devotionals, construct a solid content framework, and then work on the details that add finesse to a manuscript.

This course is divided into six lessons outlined below:

Lesson One: Prepare Your Heart and Mind

- Reading the genre you edit and the importance of establishing a personal quiet time
- Developing a biblical worldview: What's nonnegotiable?
- Establishing theological boundaries: What if I don't agree with the author's theology?
- Understanding our primary roles as a Christian editor: ambassador of Christ (the living Word) and guardian of the biblical truth (the written Word)

Lesson Two: Devotional Basics

- What is a devotion? What is a devotional?
- The basic ingredients of a devotion: Scripture text, scriptural exposition, real-life connection, and reader takeaway
- What makes a devotional sell well? What connects the devotions in a devotional? What is a niche market?

Lesson Three: Effective Devotional Construction

- Length: Keep it short
- Organization: Keep it clear
- Content: Keep it simple
- Construction: Keep it concise
- Topic: Keep it basic
- Scripture: Keep it relevant

Lesson Four: Handle the Word of God with Care (and Prayer)

- Fundamentals of editing content: what the Bible says about the character of God and about his relationship to people as well as what the Bible says about itself
- Evaluate context: consider when the verse was written, who spoke those words, to whom they spoke, and in what circumstances the words were spoken
- Help authors to avoid erroneous content, attributions, and applications by using credible sources and good research skills
- Require authors to make clear why the Scriptures they use are relevant to both the topic and the reader

Lesson Five: The View from the Pew

- Help authors achieve an effective balance of truth and love through a gracious tone, simple language, and a humble attitude
- Help clients maintain balance between transparency and TMI (too much information)
- Help authors avoid formulaic solutions or promises they can't guarantee
- Guide clients toward topics and Scriptures that haven't been overused

Lesson Six: Jots and Tittles

- What services do you offer? Will you check the accuracy of Scripture references and quotations?
- What style manual should you use for devotionals—*The Chicago Manual of Style*, *The Christian Writer's Manual of Style*, or both?
- Understand the fair-use laws that govern Bible citations and recognize the differences among various Bible translations
- Capitalization issues that often arise in devotions
- Help clients avoid Christian jargon (Christianese)
- Should pronouns that refer to God be capitalized?
- Format Bible quotations correctly: ellipses, italics, quotation marks, capitalization, and punctuation
- The dangers of using online sites such as Goodreads and BrainyQuote