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A Newsletter of the Amy Foundation



We obey, God advances

By James J. Jackson

When we work in God's service, He gives us everything we need to be effective and He leads us to the right people, place and right time. Our job is to simply go and share His love and His Word with everyone we come across.

Many Christians travel to foreign lands to present the Gospel message, helping in disaster relief, delivering eye-

When you work in God's mission fields, at home or abroad, know that His Word, "... does not come back void, but accomplishes the purpose for which it was intended.."

glasses and many other endeavors in service to the Lord. He clearly desires all of His people to share His love at home and around the world. Since we rarely see the fruits of our labors, we usually just trust that good fruits come from our labor.

Sometimes, however, the Lord gives us a sweet glimpse of His fruition, by showing us clearly that our labors are not in vain. This happened recently with the Amy Foundation ministries. The Amy Writing Awards program, for over 20 years, has offered a \$10,000

first prize, as well as about 15 lesser cash prizes for well-written, discipling and thought-provoking essays, written from a biblical perspective and previously published in a major secular publication.

The Amy Foundation often receives thank-you notes from prize winners, which are en-

couraging, but, every once in a while, God shows how He directs our efforts for the maximum impact. The 2005 1st prize-winning article, "The Martyrdom of Andy", tells of a young man who was bullied, shamed, castigated and shunned by a group of youths, and the life-long struggle of one of those youths to find Andy and apologize to him.

The article was reprinted in the *Pen & Sword*. Last month, we recounted the story of one pastor who requested 150 copies of the article to distribute to his parishioners in order to use the various principles and themes from the story in future teachings. The

winning articles are disseminated widely by word of mouth, spreading encouragement and Godly truth far and wide. Such evidence is very encouraging to

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Prayer Requests

We believe "The prayers of the righteous availeth much." We invite you to pray with us about various aspects of The Amy Foundation Ministry.

Please join us in asking for God's direction and for the leading of the Holy Spirit as we work to help Christians obey Christ's mandate to make disciples by teaching obedience of all His commandments.

Amy Prayer List:

- Amy Writing Awards — increased number of submissions in 2007.
- For the Lord to open the hearts of editors to material that we provide through the Internet Syndicate.

James Jackson is a freelance writer, former "Voices" columnist for *The Lansing State Journal*, and a current columnist for *the Valley Christian Chronicle*.

Writer's roadblock: Beginnings

by Shaunna Howat

*There's nothing to writing.
All you do is sit down at a
typewriter and open a vein.*

—Walter Wellesley "Red"
Smith

Writing probably has not changed much as a craft since its beginning so many centuries ago. David may have composed some of his psalms while out in pastures. Homer most likely had to seek out solitary moments during which to compose his epic poetry. And Shakespeare undoubtedly had to leave the noisy Globe Theater and find a quiet place to put pen to paper.

No doubt, too, writers from all ages past have encountered roadblocks and deadlines.

What can today's Christian writer do to avoid the pitfalls of writer's block? In addition to prayer, the fundamental beginning of all endeavors, writers must fall back on strategies that will get them jump-started to move past the block.

The Topic

Perhaps your topic has been assigned. Or maybe the idea has burned in your mind, and you just have to sit down and begin. Whatever the prompting, now you face a blank computer screen. Now it's time for inspiration.

Refine your topic by doing some research. Has someone already written on that topic lately? What can you learn from them? Read what you can by going to the library or searching the web. Remember, though, that what you write must be your own. You may not reproduce someone else's thoughts or words without giving them credit. But someone else's words may inspire you to

take the subject farther or down a road less traveled.

The Outline

Jot down an outline. Begin with your main thought or thesis. Never mind that this might change as you write; you've got license to refine your ideas as you go. But this is the place to begin.

Where are you going with this idea? What's your point? How will you support the idea? Find support for your idea by going to an authority whom you can quote. Use this authority to back up your main idea or as a refutation against opposing ideas. Never insult an opposing idea; simply use logical thought processes to prove your point.

Think of how you will end it all. You might give a call to action on a certain topic, or seize the moment to wrap up your thoughts neatly with encouragement.

The Energizer

So you have sat at your desk for hours and have done your research, but you still do not know where to begin. That's okay. Don't start at the beginning.

Though it seems odd, realize that your writing is your own, and you do not have to begin at A and end at Z when you write. If you have a fantastic idea for a paragraph or two in the middle of your article, write it down. You might be surprised at how those words, filling your screen, will perhaps break the logjam you had been facing. Get those thoughts out of the way and then decide how to link those from beginning to end.

The Change of Venue

Take your writing somewhere

else for a few hours if you can. Bring a laptop to the library or the coffee shop, unless you just can't handle the distracting crowds or the smell of latte wafting through the air. In that case, go to another room in the house, shut the door, and get started.

Perhaps you face a window when you write. How much time do you spend staring outside? Would it be better to turn around and face a wall?

My students tell me they can listen to music and write at the same time. Then I ask if they listen to the words, and whether the words distract them. Do they begin paying attention to the lyrics instead of their own studies? Can you say the same about yourself? Turn off the music, or at least turn off music with lyrics and listen instead to classical pieces.

The Goal

Put away your doubts. Is this what you are supposed to write? Then sit down and face it. Perhaps it's an assignment, or perhaps you have a contract to write for someone's deadline. Don't deny your deadline any longer; just begin.

Give yourself a goal. Don't leave your chair until you have filled a page. Then get up, stretch, and grab a glass of water or cup of coffee. Walk around the house and breathe deeply to air out your numbed mind. Water the plants, go out to the mailbox, let the dogs outside. But don't allow the wandering to lead you off course; tell yourself that in ten minutes you'll sit down again and fill another page.

Soon you will have it all down on paper. Then you can begin to *rewrite*!

Pen &
Sword

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Fire captain finds discipling opportunity on the job

by Timothy Moede, Fire Captain

I am the captain at station 9 in Lansing, MI., and I had a probationary firefighter assigned to me.

He was a quick learner and eager to get into a fire. His first fire was a large garage that had fire coming out of the overhead door. All you could see inside was fire.

We arrived and pulled the one-and three-quarter-inch attack hose and went to work. An hour or so later, it was out and we were repacking hose and getting ready for the next fire.

Being near the end of my career, it was "just another garage fire" to me, but to my

firefighter, it was almost overwhelming.

Back at the station, we were talking about various types of fires, priorities on the fireground, and various tactics.

I told him, "I will be taking you into dangerous and uncomfortable situations. I want you to stay close to me and do what I tell you to do, when I tell you to do it, and we'll both go home tomorrow morning."

Later that night, I distinctly remember the still small voice telling me that that was quite a sermon in those two sentences.

What a humbling experience that was.

Tell us a discipling story

Do you have an interesting discipling story to tell?

Send a vignette (200-400 words) about a situation or interaction that led to your discipling another person—or group of people—in an unusual or unexpected way. How was God faithful in helping, supporting, reinforcing or extending your obedient actions?

Send stories to the *Pen & Sword* Editors, Amy Foundation, P.O. Box 16901, Lansing, MI 48901; or email AMYFOUNDTN@aol.com.

Popular writing conferences

- **Mt. Hermon Annual Christian Writers Conference** near Santa Cruz, CA. mounthermon.org/writers
- **American Christian Writers Conference** in 27 locations throughout the U.S. ACWriters.com.
- **Blue Ridge Mountains Christian Writers Conference**, Ridgecrest, NC. lifeway.com/christianwriters.
- **Write to Publish Conference**, Chicago, IL. writetopublish.com
- **Write! Canada** Guelph, ON, Canada. thewordguild.com/writecanada/
- **Glorieta Christian Writers Conference**, Glorieta, NM glorieta.cwc.com

► We obey...

Continued from page 1

those of us involved in this ministry.

Another instance involves a small congregation in Holt, Michigan, which sent teams of missionaries to dozens of nations over the years, training church leaders and members in personal evangelism. The church would, theoretically, train others, who would train still others, etc.

The church rarely hears from those who were trained earlier, but, in 2006, an Ethiopian pastor who had been trained by a team in 1988 appeared in Holt, and told of being inspired by the training he had received. Rev. Zeleke expressed that he continued training others, and eventually entered the ministry.

So, when you work in God's mission fields, at home or abroad, know that His Word, "... does not come back void, but accomplishes the purpose for which it was intended. ◀

Winning Strategies

For becoming a powerful discipler through the secular media

- Get a professional education, including an internship, in a secular radio, TV or publication outlet.
- Invite receptive secular publications to Christian writers' conferences.
- Submit your published pieces to the Amy Writing Awards and talk about the awards within your writers' circles.
- Recognize you are to be a "doctor" to a sick and diseased world. Simply ministering to healthy friends through Christian publications is an abdication of a Christian's most fundamental mission.
- Re-educate yourself and other Christian writers in a Christian world view; it *can* be defined and applied to a variety of issues in today's world.

Quotables

"I have tried simply to write the best I can. Sometimes I have good luck and write better than I can."

—Ernest Hemingway

Child Evangelism Fellowship®

Child Evangelism Fellowship® is an interdenominational, international, non-charismatic, evangelistic outreach to children between the ages of 4 and 14. Surveys have shown that most people who receive Christ as their Savior do so before the age of 15, so we feel this is the best time to reach them.

Besides evangelism, CEF's purposes are to disciple the children after they have received salvation, and channel them into local churches for further spiritual growth.

CEF has workers in 156 countries, including all fifty States. Capital Area CEF is one of the twenty-one chapters in Michigan.

Our main outreach during the school year is the Good News Club®. These clubs meet for an hour each week, in schools, homes, daycares, and churches. We even have one

that meets in a restaurant! So far this school year, we have started 27 Good News Clubs in the 5-county Capital Area chapter. Five hundred thirteen children are enrolled in these clubs.

During the summer, our main outreach is 5-Day Clubs®. Last summer, we conducted 54 clubs, which 734 children attended. We also participated in several fairs and festivals. In those venues, over 1,600 people, mostly children, heard a Gospel presentation at least once.

In 1937, Mr. J. I. Overholt was impressed by Jesus' words in Matthew 18:14, "*Even so it is not the will of your Father, which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish;*" so he founded CEF.

Matthew 18:14 is still the reason the ministry exists.



Contact the ministry at:

4215 West Mt. Hope Hwy.,
Lansing, MI 48917

517-322-0001.

capareacef@netzero.com.



Submit Today!

15 writers will receive
\$34,000 in cash prizes

The Amy Foundation Writing Awards program recognizes writers who skillfully and creatively present the biblical position on issues affecting the world today in a sensitive and thought-provoking manner. Qualifying non-fiction entries must have been published in a mainstream non-religious publication.

Winning entries will be re-published in an annual collection of prize-winning entries.

For rules, sample articles and submission forms, visit www.amyfound.org or call 877-727-4262.



The Amy Foundation
Discipling Our Nation in this Generation

"American Idol" reflects American culture

By William E. Cripe, Sr.

If you're one of the millions who watch the wildly popular "American Idol" I trust you will appreciate what I am about to say. Week after week in these early stages of tryouts, we are "treated" to a montage of Americans who, with stars in their eyes, gyrate, rotate, vibrate, juggle and dance with a song in tow and a dream of being the next pop super star.

To be sure, many show up just to say they went; and I have to believe that many more are putting on when they get upset and act shocked when they are told they can't sing. Tear, sobs, wails and expletives often accompany the star struck entertainers, supposedly crushed to the core, when they are told flatly that they stink.

But what are we to think when the others, who are truly awful by any objective standard of talent, are honestly shaken to the core because, apparently for the first time, someone is honest with them? The fact is, being judged for the actual quality of their performance rather than the quality

of their desire obliterates the fragile bubble of self-esteem inflated over the years by the guardians of mediocrity.

Of the three judges on the show, everyone seems to loathe Simon Cowell. He is blunt, no nonsense and sometimes downright mean—all true. But meanness aside, his assessment of talent, more often than not, is dead on. And contestants leave in tears or cursing or both insisting these professionals—who make their livings assessing real talent—have "no idea what they're talking about." And why? Because they have never been told they are anything but "Fantastic!" "Great!" "Awesome!" much less that they have no talent whatsoever.

What we see in American Idol is the fruit of a hollow generation where no one was ever cut from a team, few if any have ever been allowed to "fail" and where everyone was given an award just for showing up.

And so this generation of deluded adults struggles through life bewildered when doors remain locked, and the sea does not part before them.

When God was kicked out of our schools, truth also packed its bags and children were left to find meaning in cheap diplomas and worthless awards. But the real world does not operate on the measure of one's sincerity. Hard work, in the absence of ability, is no guarantee of success.

So, instead of a red carpet, these children, now grown, get a pink slip, having been set up for failure in a vacuum of truthful honesty. These young adults are left shattered, the harvest of an ethos germinated in the soils of deceitful "Way-to-go's" and meaningless "Atta-boys."

God allows us to ignore Him and His wisdom for life, but we do so at our own peril.

"The sins of the fathers are visited to the third and fourth generation," and it is up to us to stop the delusion.

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy," wrote Solomon. (Proverbs 27:6) The young people of today have been given the kiss of death in so many ways. Who will love them enough to "hurt" them for their own good? ◀

Cripe is a pastor columnist for the *Central Maine Morning Sentinel* and the *Kennebec Journal*; he is the winner of three Amy Writing Awards.

This article is an example of the Amy Foundation Syndicate, Real Answers.™ Each month, Real Answers offers several new articles, free of charge, to editors across America. For more information, contact Don Lindman at amyfoundtn@aol.com

Read more at our website at www.amyfound.org.

Dear Amy Foundation,

I just wanted to let you know how much your Amy Awards Foundation has touched my life. When I was incarcerated in 1993, I saw your ad in Charisma magazine, I believe. Because of the reward, I began to write an article (my first). It was published on Christmas Day in the Press Enterprise on the front page of the Religious section. It was about "The Son I never Knew" and it related to the adoption of my son and the Christmas story. It was published again in the Inside Edition, Prison Fellowship's newspaper.

But the reason I am writing you now is that not only did my son see it after his birth records were opened, but now I've been to Pastor's College, am an ordained minister, volunteer Chaplain and founder of a ministry Joel 2:25 Ministries.

I now write a newsletter called The Diamond, which is being distributed into jails and prisons in California & Arizona. I hope to send it all over the US as it is for women, primarily! I hope to offer a contest like yours because I know how much the Amy Awards helped me and encouraged me to do something, even if I didn't win. It was a positive influence while I was in there and kept my mind on things above not beneath! Thank you for your ministry.

Cynthia Martinez

Come More Often, Lord

*Award of Outstanding Merit
\$1,000*

Excerpt

by Michael Helms

Mutual of Omaha's "Wild Kingdom" recently ran a story of an incredible event that occurred in Northern Kenya. It was reported that a lioness had adopted a baby oryx antelope.

Saba Douglas-Hamilton, a naturalist who worked in the area, was skeptical when she heard the story. Who wouldn't be? A lioness in the wild, or one in captivity for that matter, is ruled by its instinctive drives to kill and to eat.

Word spread about Kamunyak. The indigenous people were told of the pair and they did not believe it either until Hamilton showed them video of the two. People in buses rode out into the bush to get a glimpse of this once-in-a-lifetime oddity of nature. Of the incident, the people said, "God has come."

Amazingly, Kamunyak cared for the oryx for 16 days. Neither of them ate in that period of time. The relationship ended when the oryx was ambushed by a lion and eaten.

Hamilton reported that Kamunyak went on to adopt five more oryx antelopes. One was actually reunited with its mother. Kamunyak eventually disappeared.

I thought about this incredible show after I read an account of Ashley Smith's encounter with Brian Nichols, the man accused of murdering four people, including a Fulton County judge, in Atlanta last week.

The killings had the entire city of Atlanta on edge. A predator was loose and there was no indication that the killing would

end, but it did. It ended in the most bizarre of circumstances. The predator didn't kill when he had the chance and the kidnapped victim didn't run when she had the chance.

Smith disarmed Nichols with kindness. Against the normal instincts most would have in such a setting, she treated him as a human being even though he had brutally killed others and had taken her as his hostage.

Through the night these two people talked. She spoke of God and her faith in God. What is more important, she spoke to Nichols about what God might yet have in store for his life, even though it would not be as a free man but as a prisoner behind bars.

Later she read to Nichols the 33rd chapter of Rick Warren's book, *The Purpose Driven Life*. The chapter begins with these words: "We serve God by serving others. The world defines greatness in terms of power, possessions, prestige and position. If you can demand service from others you've arrived. In our self-serving culture with its me-first mentality, acting like a servant is not a popular concept."

As if to live out the words she had read to Nichols during the night, when morning came Smith decided to make Nichols some breakfast, an act of hospitality that seemed to touch something inside him, something still good, even amidst the savagery he'd displayed in recent days.

Against all instincts, Smith chose not to escape. He allowed her to leave to keep the appointment with her five-year-old daughter who has been living with a relative. Just a few moments later, Smith dialed 9-1-1 to report Nichols' location.

Nichols surrendered to police without a fight.

In an effort to turn her life around and move beyond her own mishaps with the law, Smith seems to have found purpose in her life through Christ and has been seeking to find her way back to a stable life. She believes that her role in the capture of Nichols is a part of God's purpose for her life.

Who can argue with that?

This story teaches us there are times when savagery can be tamed with kindness.

Isaiah prophesied that a day is coming when "the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them." Isaiah 11:6-9 (NIV)

Such a world where animalistic instincts give way to peaceful actions seems light years away. But every now and then, we hear a story that just seems unbelievable. Perhaps we can even agree with the indigenous people of Kenya that such stories mean God has come. Come more often, Lord. Come more often.

Read the entire story at www.amyfound.org.

Michael Helms is the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Moultrie, Georgia. He recently released his first book. He is a weekly columnist for The Moultrie Observer. Michael and his wife, Tina, have two teenage sons, John and Ryan.

Bible Remains Our True Compass

*Award of Outstanding Merit
\$1,000*

Excerpt

By Steve Massey

"Is this a real compass?"

The boy handed me his Bible. It was dressed in a new camouflage book cover with a toy compass hanging from its zipper.

He was rightly proud of his "army man" Bible, and I was proud of him. As I knelt to inspect the compass, I was also struck by the deeper meaning of my young friend's question: Is this a real compass?

Are the sacred Scriptures a reliable guide? Can we count on God's wisdom, as recorded in the Bible, to point us in the right direction? Is the Bible still a real compass?

Sadly, we live in a culture that devalues the word of God.

Efforts to rid the public square of Ten Commandments displays are now commonplace. In public schools, the Bible is taught as nothing more than literature, if it is acknowledged at all.

But it is a recent decision by the Colorado Supreme Court that lately has my dander up. And it is that court's March 28 decision that paints a tragic-but-true picture of how the culture at large really views Scripture.

Colorado's highest court tossed out a death sentence for a rapist and murderer because jurors consulted the Bible in reaching their verdict.

Robert Harlan kidnapped and raped a waitress. Then he killed her as she flagged down a passing motorist, according to *The New York Times*. That motorist who tried to help the woman was shot by Harlan and remains paralyzed today.

After convicting Harlan, jurors were sent away by the judge to decide whether the death penalty was appropriate in the case.

The jurors did what any reasonable people would do: They did some soul searching. They prayed. They consulted the deepest moral bearings of their personal beliefs and traditions.

To their credit, jurors served their community in the exact manner the judge had asked them to: they made an "individual moral assessment" in deliberating Harlan's proper punishment. Many jurors consulted the Bible for wisdom. Then they voted unanimously for a death sentence.

On appeal to the state Supreme Court, Harlan found his escape in America's vain disregard for God's word.

The court decreed in a 3-2 decision that the Bible constitutes an "improper outside influence" and a "reliance on a higher authority. Jurors must deliberate...without the aid or distraction of extraneous texts," the majority opinion stated.

The court's decision is not outrageous because a death sentence was reversed. The outrage is that God's word was rejected as a moral compass. Justices took to an absurd extreme a simple rule aimed at preventing newspaper and television stories from influencing jury decisions.

The result? When society asked 12 of its members to make one of the toughest decisions anyone could face, their Bible was declared an extraneous text. The very foundation of their values—God's word—was deemed an improper outside influence.

What really tugs at my conscience lately is that this out-

rageous court decision mirrors a much more meaningful decision made in the hearts of individuals, even within the church.

So often we have difficulty making decisions about what is right and wrong because we have neglected the only absolute standard of truth. We waffle in decision-making because we fail to consult the infallible counsel of God's word. How soon we forget what the psalmist sang:

"Your decrees please me: they give me wise advice" (Psalm 119:24 – NLT).

I took my young friend's Bible and examined the toy compass. I faced a few directions – first north, then south, then east. Happily, the compass worked just fine. It was dead-on in its accuracy. And I told him so.

I pray that Christians will uphold the Bible for what it truly is: the inspired word of God, living, faithful, always reliable in its counsel.

Yes, it certainly is a real compass.

***Read the entire story at
www.amyfound.org.***

Steve Massey is the senior pastor at Hayden Bible Church in Hayden, Idaho. His column on faith and values has appeared in The Spokesman-Review since 2003. He and his wife, Pam, have two teen-aged children, Jacob and Sarah.

***Watch for more excerpted
2005 Prize-Winners in future
issues of Pen & Sword.***

***You can read the full text of
these articles and all 15
winning entries at
www.amyfound.org***



THE AMY FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2007



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The United States—A Discipled Nation

A Call To the Work of Teaching Obedience:

Discipling My Family

1. I will pray and work toward the goal that each member of my family is becoming an obedient disciple, engaged in teaching obedience of all Jesus' commandments.
2. I will encourage each member of my family to read at least one chapter of God's truth daily and frequently do it together as family.
3. I will observe the discipline of praying before every meal as a family, thanking God for His food and asking His blessing on it.
4. I will honor and speak to the truth that among the greatest things parents can do for their children is to faithfully love one another and discipline it in their communication and actions. I will never let vanity, selfishness, or pride prevent me from being the first to say, "I'm sorry." This act of loving repentance heals the wounds of anger and emotional anguish.
5. I will teach and honor the biblical truth that children are to respectfully obey their parents and parents are not to exasperate their children.
6. I will encourage prayer together as a family before every major undertaking, during every family crisis, when major decisions are contemplated, and whenever any member of our family is hurting.
7. I will always make myself available for prayer or Bible study discussion, or whenever a family member wishes the privacy of more intimate dialogue.
8. I will always work for the unity and preservation of our family because I know the divine institution of marriage and family life is among the greatest blessings of the human experience.

*You can read the entire
Disciplined Nation Plan
at www.amyfound.org.*

The Amy Foundation also offers a Disciplined Nation Curriculum, a series of 4 user-friendly workbooks that tackle the tough issues of the family, and then initiates discipling activities in our churches and neighborhoods. Use them in Sunday School classes, Bible Studies, and prayer groups. The curriculum may be ordered online at: www.adisciplinednation.com.

