

Volume
XV
Number 7
Summer
2007

Inside:

- 2 ➤ Writers' Toolbox
- 3 ➤ Discipling Journal
- 4 ➤ Amy Foundation Board
- 5 ➤ Amy Internet Syndicate
- 6 ➤ Amy Writing Award Winners
- 8 ➤ The United States—A Disciplined Nation

A Newsletter of the Amy Foundation



Everyday Faith changes lives

By Jan White

I believe God ordains that certain people cross our paths during our lifetimes. At the Florida Christian Writers' Conference over 13 years ago, I met one of the godliest and most humble men I've ever known.

A quiet unassuming business man named Jim Russell from Lansing, MI, along with his wife, Phyllis, came to encourage Christians to write for the secular market, especially newspapers. I attended his workshop. He said surveys found that most newspaper readers turn to the editorial page first, giving us a great opportunity to speak to thousands of people about scriptural principles.

I will always remember his passion for God that I felt burning in my heart as I listened to his vision for discipling our nation. Mr. Russell emphasized the power of the printed Word of God according to the promise of Isaiah 55:11, "It shall not return unto Me void. But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

He stressed writing the truth in love concisely and accurately, while including a verse of Scripture. Whether or not a reader understands or agrees

with my words, God's Word will accomplish what He intends.

In God's plan, a few months after I heard Jim Russell speak the publisher of the *Andalusia Star-News* contacted me about writing a weekly religion column. Almost 13 years and 700 columns later,

I still write a weekly religion column. An editor a few years ago named it "Everyday Faith." Then, about three years ago, an Enterprise, AL newspaper began publishing my column.

Every week I pray, "Lord, what do You want me to write in this week's column?" My prayer becomes more urgent the closer I get to the deadline.

Many years ago, while journaling one day, God spoke to me the words every Christian writer needs to remember: "Your words don't change hearts. I change hearts with your words."

I have been submitting an entry to the Amy Writing Awards for at least 10 years. This year I questioned whether I should send in a submission because I knew, once again, the competition would be stiff. I'm glad I didn't give up.

Winning the Amy Writing Award has encouraged me to keep on keeping on. In a small town, I can speak from the platform of the printed page to a

Continued on page 3 ➤

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.

Jan White won the First Prize award from the Amy Foundation's 2006 Writing Awards. Her article and biography can be found on page 6 of this issue.

Technical tips from our archives

Who or Whom?

- The word "WHO" is used to perform the action (Subject).

Ex: This is the boy who wrote the poem.

- The word "WHOM" is used to receive the action (direct object).

Ex: This is the girl for whom he wrote the poem.

Punctuation: Commas & Quotation Marks

- Use a comma to separate words in a series. Do not use a comma before the conjunction.

Ex: Some fruits of the Spirit include love, joy, peace and kindness.

- A comma must separate an introductory clause from a main clause.

Ex: If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

- Always place commas and periods inside the closing quotation marks.

Ex: She likes to sing "Amazing Grace," her favorite song.

- Place semicolons and colons outside the closing quotation marks.

Ex. Also included in "The Greatest Commandments": Love your neighbor.

- Place question marks and exclamation points inside or outside, depending on the function: if the mark punctuates only the quotation, place it inside; if it punctuates the whole sentence, place it outside.

Ex: I enjoy the song, "Have You Seen Jesus My Lord?"

Ex: Why do you call me "Lord, Lord..."?

Keeping to Only One Tense

When editing your writing, check to see whether you have been consistent in your use of past/present/future tense throughout your article. Unless you are denoting a shift in time it is illogical to shift tenses.

INCORRECT: *I went to the window and there I see a rare and beautiful bird.*

CORRECT: *I went to the window and there I saw a rare and beautiful bird.*

While this inconsistency may seem very obvious within a sentence, it is very common for writers to "lose track of time" and shift tenses within the body of an article or letter.

Subject/Verb Agreement

- When using a singular noun or pronoun, you must use the singular verb as well; plural subjects demand a plural verb. Take care to determine which noun is the subject!

Ex. Several verses were used in this letter (Plural)

This group of verses was used well. (Singular)

Mary and John have given their best. (Plural)

Harper & Rowe is a large publishing house. (A company name is a singular entity.)

- If the subject of the sentence is in first, second or third person, the verb must match:

INCORRECT: *When someone writes a letter, they should be polite.*

CORRECT: *When someone*

writes a letter, he should be polite.

This may seem simple, but be careful! There are a number of complications that can trip you up. The best way to avoid problems is to consult a good grammar guide to learn the most common mistakes and how to avoid them.

These tips come from our Writing Resources, found online at amyfound.org. Go to our Church Writing Group lesson plans and scroll down to Technical Tips.

Where else can you find writing advice and technical tips?

Purdue's Online Writing Lab (OWL), found at owl.purdue.edu, offers free writing advice, newsletters, links, and examples to help you improve your writing technique.

The **Web English Teacher** at webenglishteacher.com has a searchable web site with helpful links on a wide range of topics.

Also be sure to consult style guides for writing. The most authoritative guides are the **Modern Language Association (MLA)**, the **Chicago Style Manual**, **Gregg Reference Manual**, **American Psychological Association (APA)**. These can be found online or purchased in book stores.

One old standby includes Strunk and White's **Elements of Style**, still available in bookstores.

Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero-Tolerance Approach to Punctuation by Lynn Truss uses fun and humor to educate.



Editors:

Shaunna Howat
Linda Wacyk

Published quarterly by the Amy Foundation, a non-profit corporation promoting Bible education. For subscription or information about Amy Foundation mission or ministries, call 517.323.6233

email:
amyfoundtn@aol.com

Coaching Doctor Jay

by Tim Wymbs

He came to The New Life Drop-in Center like most new workers: tentative. But I could tell by his soft clear blue eyes and smile he had a heart for the homeless, addicted, ex-offenders and prostitutes we served. My team leader advised me of his impressive credentials, i.e., a PHD in family relationships.

He said, "Please let Jay shadow you for a couple of weeks. I believe he'll do well with us."

When we began working together Jay mentioned to me, "Though I have much book knowledge, you have the practical experience. I want to learn all I can from you."

Humbly, I looked at him and said, "You have the degrees. I have some know-how. Let's go to work and serve the people

that come to us and see what happens."

Jay and I worked well together for one year until he moved onto other responsibilities in another department where he served for the next three years.

"I've been asked to pastor a church outside the city," he said. "I'd like to give it a try."

"We'll miss you Dr. Jay," I anguished.

My wife and I visited that country church one snowy Christmas Eve. Jay introduced me to some of his congregants as the man who taught him much about working with hurting people. He humbled me again.

Today I thank God for people with great educations like Dr. Jay who are still eager to learn and serve Him by helping others.

Tim Wymbs is a retired crisis intervention counselor who currently serves with his wife as a full time volunteer at the Monroe Bible Conference in Montrose, PA.

► Everyday Faith Continued from cover

great many people – some of whom may never attend a church.

It's still hard for me to believe that one of my columns has been chosen for the Amy Writing Award. It proves once again that God's Word is true. God can do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).

My only regret is that Jim Russell isn't here to see the fruit of his labors. As his family and friends, you know very well the godly legacy he has left behind. I too feel I am part of his legacy because God used him to make an impact on my life. ◀

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 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.

*My Father is glorified
by this, that you bear
much fruit, and so
prove to be My
disciples.*

John 15:8

Communicating Christ Effectively to Secular Audiences

Amy Syndicate contributor Rusty Wright delivers this workshop around the country, but you can experience it in the comfort of your own home. Learn how non-Christians think and feel, what they want and why. Discover practical tools for analyzing your audience, including their religious persuasion, intellectual level, psychological makeup, needs, moral attitudes, issues and heroes. Tap readers', listeners', or web surfers' felt needs, grab attention, touch hearts and minds, and sensitively communicate spiritual truth. Useful ideas to help Christian communicators connect with secular audiences and nudge them toward faith.

Links to online video workshop and audio workshop, plus handout and Audience Analysis Chart (digital versions) are available from RustyWright@aol.com.

Writing Resources

**Sally E. Stuart's
Christian Writers'
Market
Guide 2006**

stuartmarket.com

The reference tool for the Christian writer:

- contains more than 1,100 markets for the written word;
- lists publishers by the topics they publish;
- describes contests, writers' conferences and groups;
- includes a directory of editorial services, literary agents and market analysis.

Meet the Amy Foundation Board

Mike Mirakian, pastor of Bretton Woods Covenant Church, has served on the Amy Board since 2001. He shares a few notes about his life as a pastor and as a disciple of Christ.

Married to Laura, they raise two young kids, David and Noelle, in Lansing, MI. Mike gave his heart to Christ as a child – age 6 or 7.

Both my parents are followers of Jesus, and they were the best and most consistent models of a Christ-like life. Not only did they help me know who Jesus is and take me to church, but they also encouraged me to study the Bible and explore God's riches for myself. Their love for God and His word has been the greatest influence in my life.

As a pastor, I encourage many people to grow in their relationship with Jesus. Aside from my public roles of preaching, teaching and leading the

church, I also meet privately with several people. I pray with them, I listen as they wrestle with the challenges of life, and I encourage them to develop characters that honor Jesus.

I accepted Jim Russell's invitation to join the Board because I have a passion for discipleship. I also have a strong interest in journalism, and I was excited by the opportunity to combine ministry and writing.

It is my hope and prayer that God enables the Amy Foundation to reach a new generation of followers of Jesus. Our culture desperately needs compassionate, intelligent Christian voices publicly sharing God's word in relevant ways. I pray that God will move the Amy Foundation to the front lines of discipling and Christ-honoring media in the new century.

About the Amy Foundation

The Amy Foundation, founded in 1976 by W. James Russell and his wife Phyllis, was named after their daughter. The Foundation is best known for its Amy Writing Awards, which is a call to present biblical truth reinforced with scripture in secular, non-religious publications. It is acclaimed as the most popular journalism contest in the nation. All of the Amy Foundation's programs are specifically designed to encourage and equip both professional and non-professional writers to develop and use their skills to the reclaiming of America. It is our hope that you will use its resources to participate in fulfilling Jesus' final instructions as stated in The Great Commission.



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

Requiem for a Great Woman

By Gary Hardaway

About ten years ago two internationally celebrated women, adored by billions, died within a few days of each other. Mother Teresa's long life of ministering to the cast off women and children of Calcutta came to a natural end. The ministry, however, continues — a lasting legacy to her unquenchable love for the hopeless and passion for serving God.

Princess Diana, killed in a car wreck around the same time, could probably count more thrill-seeking, idolizing fans. Still stunningly beautiful at thirty-six, fabulously rich, royal by both blood and marriage, the princess epitomized the ultimate fantasy of those who feast on tabloid glamour and vicarious soap opera.

Mother Teresa. Princess Diana. Could two lives — and deaths — be more unlike one another? The princess hurled into infinity in a screeching mass of twisted metal, with a drunken chauffeur at the wheel. The nun, quietly passing into eternal rest, hoping her Lord might be able to say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into your master's joy."

I thought of this stark contrast a couple of weeks ago as Ruth Graham lay dying. I even hoped that her passing might conceivably edge out some of Paris Hilton's face time on cable news. No such luck. As one fed up commentator wryly quipped, "We'll always have Paris" (Remember Bogart/Bergman 1942).

But chances are we won't always have Paris. Paris habitually drives drunk. Paris weaves in and out of one stupor after another, lost in meaningless partying and shameless porn. She's going to look like fifty

before she's thirty, if she makes it to that age. Barring a total shift in character, self-destruction seems almost inevitable.

Remember Anna Nicole Smith, dead at 39. Marilyn Monroe, 36. Janis Joplin, 27. Judy Garland, 47. The law of averages caught up with all. It disregarded talent (or lack thereof), looks, money, sexual prowess, and celebrity rankings. A more elegant expression of this law goes something like this: whatever a person sows, he or she will reap.

Those who knew Ruth Graham absolutely insist that without her Billy Graham would never have become who he became nor sustained his ministry over the past 60+ years. She gave every ounce of her being to him and their five children so that he could concentrate on global outreach.

The many millions who have experienced new life and hope through the Billy Graham's message owe a large debt to his stalwart life partner. She never faltered in her commitment to serve them so that he could give himself to the spreading the Good News of Christ. She was the one indispensable member of the Billy Graham team.

Whatever God did through Billy, Ruth Graham shares in the "harvest." Her legacy includes broken persons mended, broken homes reunited, and wandering souls redeemed by "amazing grace."

Sometimes redundancy is necessary. Ruth Graham, age 87, passed into eternal rest hoping her Lord might be able to say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into your master's joy."

Her husband, children, and many Christian friends declare, "She fought the good fight, she finished the race with distinction." To such faithful folks Mrs. Graham's Bible says, "you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Meanwhile, one can hope that it's not too late for Paris Hilton — or anyone else on the downward spiral into an early grave. But reversing years of decadence and dissolution takes far more than a sudden surge of will power. It takes a Higher Power, energizing and transforming mere human resolve.

That's something Billy Graham — and his beloved Ruth — can tell you all about.

Winning Strategies

For avoiding "turn-offs" to readers of secular media

Prize-winning authors, when surveyed, said too many Christian writers:

- have trouble explaining religious issues in secular terms.
- feel it is impossible—or inappropriate—to break into the secular market.
- believe they must tell the salvation story in every article they write. This simply isn't the case. First, it's impractical. Second, secular editors won't tolerate it. Third, many other truths must be told in a fallen world to help prepare people's hearts for the gospel. Whenever one defends a Christian public figure who has been unfairly maligned; whenever one takes a stand for good; whenever a Christian helps convince another of one truth, he or she prepares a reader to hear more truth in the future.

Gary Hardaway is executive director of Summit School of Ministry in Northwest Washington. He holds a PhD in foundations of education and is a member of the National Association of Scholars. He has taught in universities in the USA, Lithuania and Canada.

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.

Forgiveness is the Key to Unlocking Hatred

First Place Award of \$10,000

by Jan White

A horrible tragedy occurred in rural Pennsylvania last week when a gunman walked into a one-room Amish schoolhouse and killed five schoolgirls.

It's inconceivable the evil that one person is capable of committing against innocent human lives. The Amish community - grieving their great loss - has asked for prayer and privacy following the shooting rampage that also wounded five other girls.

News reports of the shocking tragedy tell of a disturbed man filled with hate toward himself, hate toward God, and "unimaginable emptiness." In the aftermath of the tragic event, reporters have repeatedly been amazed that the Amish people have emphasized the need for forgiveness, not anger, toward the gunman.

"We're very concerned that no message of revenge gets out. We believe in forgiveness," an Amish man was quoted as saying. Another said, "We want to forgive. That's the way we were brought up - turn good for evil."

It's inconceivable that a community suffering such a senseless tragedy could make contact with the gunman's family with the message of forgive-

ness. Amish elders went to meet with the gunman's widow. Marie Roberts was reportedly invited to attend the girls' funerals.

One Amish woman said, "We can tell people about Christ, and actually show you in our walk that we can forgive; not just say it, but in our walk of life. You know you have to live it, you can't just say it."

Watching and reading about these Amish people, I thought of the saying, "Preach the Gospel, and if necessary, use words." Last week they preached to the world the forgiveness of Christ who, while dying on a cross said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

One newsman made reference to the statement, "To err is human, to forgive divine." Extending forgiveness in this situation would be humanly impossible were it not for their faith in Christ that enables them to show His compassion.

What is forgiveness? "Forgiveness is surrendering my right to hurt you for hurting me," according to psychologist Archibald Hart. "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive," C.S. Lewis once said.

Hopefully, you and I will never have to forgive someone for something so horrendous as murdering our children. But, are we willing to forgive the friend or family member who hurt us this week or even many years ago? Sometimes we find it hard to forgive ourselves.

Holocaust survivor Corrie Ten Boom has written, "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness."

Ann Curry, a *Today Show* anchor, commented after covering the tragic event, "I realize I did not know what forgiveness was until now." Would someone learn the meaning of forgiveness by looking at our lives?

Jan's articles and devotionals have appeared in numerous publications. She has worked for three newspapers and written a weekly religion column for her local newspaper, The Andalusia Star-News, for over eleven years. Jan and her husband, Greg, live in Andalusia, AL. Her acceptance speech can be found on page one of this issue.

You can read the full text of all 15 winning entries for 2006 at www.amyfound.org.

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

It is Time to Forgive

Second Place Award of \$5000

By Dr. Sam Smith

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your sins." [Mark 11:25]

This is a long time coming. I have been studying, learning and teaching the importance and the power of forgiveness for many years. There are few things more freeing than forgiveness, and as Christians, we know that God expects us to forgive others as we pray for Him to forgive us.

Every time I hear another lesson on forgiveness, I search my heart and soul to sincerely try and find anyone I have not forgiven in my life. For years I have thought that I had forgiven everyone that I believed had ever hurt me or wronged me in any way.

This morning, as I heard yet another sermon on forgiveness, I realized that I have been harboring unforgiveness toward someone I don't even know or have ever met. I have repressed it so deeply that I haven't even really thought about it in years, and I now realize that it is a hindrance to my walk with my Lord.

I am telling you about it now in hopes that it will prompt you to search your heart, and if you find any unforgiveness there you will be able to free yourself, too.

In 1988 my 16-year-old daughter Stacey died from injuries sustained in a car wreck. She was riding with some friends on their way to lunch from high school. It had been raining, and as they topped a hill a pickup was in the middle of the street and forced them off the road. They ran through

a wooden fence, and a 2x6 struck Stacey in the head and face, causing fatal injuries. The driver of the truck that forced them off the road did not stop. No one was able to identify the driver, and to this day we do not know who it was. People that witnessed the accident knew it was a young person, a boy they think, but no one has ever told us who it was – and I think it best that I never know.

As I write this, I cannot describe the feeling I have in the pit of my stomach. Some things about that day I simply cannot allow myself to dwell on, and I now realize that I have not permitted myself to think about the driver of that truck. In repressing those thoughts, I know I have never gone through the process of forgiving him or her, and I know God expects me to do it now.

Why now and not sooner? I really don't know, but I imagine one reason is so I will write about it now in order for someone reading about it to find the healing that I know I will experience. I can think of no better reason, can you?

As painful as it is to write about this, I have to tell you this: I feel a weight lifting off my shoulders and my heart at this very moment. I have needed this far too long. Someone reading this needs it just as much. If it is you, please don't miss what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Allow Him to reveal to you whatever and whomever you have been harboring resentment towards, and pray for the strength to forgive them. We no longer have to live with the pain and the strain that unforgiveness

causes. God wants us to be free from it, and now is the time to let it go. Go to your Bible and study all that is written about forgiveness. If you still can't let it go, go to your Pastor or some strong Christian friend that you can talk to. Don't pass up this opportunity to receive the healing that the Lord has for you. I know it will make your life better.

One more thing: If by any chance the person who was driving that truck that September day in 1988 should read this article, please accept the forgiveness I am offering. If you have been suffering from feelings of guilt, I ask you to forgive yourself. I know it was an accident, and from the deepest part of my soul I pray for you to feel forgiveness and peace. If you do not know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, I pray that you would open your heart to Him. If you do know Him, I pray this brings you closer. God bless you.

For everyone else, if the Spirit has revealed anyone that you need to forgive, I pray that you will forgive them now. You will find supernatural peace and healing when you do. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Dr. Sam Smith is a Doctor of Chiropractic in Jacksonville, Texas. In 1998, Dr. Smith began writing columns for the Jacksonville Daily Progress. Dr. Smith ministers to bereaved parents through the Butterfly Ministry in memory of his daughter, Stacey. Its mission is to tell others of the perfect love, mercy and grace of Jesus Christ, who is the only source of true peace and healing and the way to eternal life in heaven.



THE AMY FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2007



3798 CAPITAL CITY BLVD.
P.O. Box 16091
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48901

OUR WEB SITE:

WWW.AMYFOUND.ORG

EMAIL US AT

AMYFOUNDTN@AOL.COM

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANSING, MI
PERMIT #503

The United States—A Discipled Nation

A Call To the Work of Teaching Obedience:

Discipling My Neighborhood

1. I will pray every day for spiritual guidance in defining and doing the work of discipling our neighborhood.
2. I will begin by being a personal example of a disciplined and obedient Christian.
3. I will work to meet the special needs of the underprivileged and society's outcasts lovingly teaching obedience to Jesus' commandments in the process.
4. I will bring a loving, caring presence to the elderly, the sick, the orphans, and those in prison, always teaching obedience in the process.
5. I will subscribe to the local newspaper to be informed of the issues and present God's truth in teaching obedience through letters to the editor, guest editorials, and book reviews; thereby using this public medium available to every Christian to make disciples of thousands in our neighborhood.
6. I will pray for and befriend all those in authority so I may teach obedience of Jesus' commandments.
7. I will participate in local responsibilities such as school boards, PTA, local government, news distribution, entertainment and the arts so I may teach obedience of all Jesus commanded.
8. I will start with my neighbors, those who live next door to me, that I may teach them obedience of all Jesus commands us to do.

The Amy Foundation also offers a Discipled 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.adisciplednation.com.

