

Volume XV
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A Newsletter of The Amy Foundation



Our New Partnership

The Amy Writing Awards include an annual first prize of \$10,000. Second prize is \$5,000, third prize is \$4,000, fourth prize is \$3,000, and fifth prize is \$2,000. Up to 10 more awards for outstanding merit are for \$1,000 each.

The Awards are designed to recognize creative, skillful journalism that applies biblical principles to stories about issues and lives. The goal is for non-Christian readers to see the relevance of biblical truth and for Christian readers to become disciples.

Visit:
www.worldmag.com/amyawards/.

The Amy Foundation's Writing Awards is pleased to announce a partnership with World News Group that began in January. Since 1976, the foundation has encouraged writers to proliferate biblical truth in the secular media, a goal that World shares through its World Journalism Institute, a training program for college and career journalists.

The foundation will continue to award the prize money—\$10,000 for first place and \$24,000 more for 14 other winners. World News Group will receive and evaluate submissions, using an initial screener and then a team of two staffers to narrow down submissions to about 20 or 30. A judging panel of six final judges that includes World founder Joel Belz and World Magazine's Editor-in-Chief Marvin Olasky will select the winners. The judges will use the same criteria for evaluating entries as in years past, but with additional judging points for reporting with specific detail (see our Writer's Toolbox for more details).

The Amy Foundation's Writing Awards is pleased to announce a partnership with World News Group.

Jim Russell, Sr. and his wife Phyllis founded the Amy Foundation, naming it after their daughter, in an effort to recognize skillful, creative journalism that applies biblical principles to stories about issues and lives. Past winners have included some seasoned pros like Cal Thomas but also a myriad of gifted amateurs. "World and the Amy Writing Awards have a long history of working together to promote journalistic integrity. We are pleased to make this a more formal partnership," said Jim Russell, Jr.

World is promoting the writing awards through its print magazine and website, worldmag.com, which had two million page views in April alone. They have already run several recent articles recruiting participation for the awards. For more on World's administration of the awards, go to: www.worldmag.com/amyawards/ or send questions to amyawards@worldmag.com.

Please see Page 2 for a list of this year's Amy Writing Award winners. If you would like to receive a copy of this year's booklet containing the prize-winning entries, please send an email to: amyfoundtn@aol.com.

Spread the Word!

The *Pen & Sword* is now published online only. If you or someone you know would like to receive a notice when the next issue is posted, along with a link to the online edition, send your email address to amyfoundtn@aol.com.

Pen & Sword

Editor:

Mary Jackson
Published quarterly by The Amy Foundation, a non-profit foundation promoting biblical truth in the secular media. For subscription or information about The Amy Foundation mission or ministries, email: amyfoundtn@aol.com.

Congratulations to the 2012 Amy Writing Award Winners:

(Please click on the article titles to read these prize-winning articles)

First Place, \$10,000 - Forged through fire: A Story of Forgiveness
Bethany Starin, *Frederick Gorilla*; Frederick, MD

Second Place, \$5,000 - A man's life can be changed with forgiveness
J. Mark Fox, *Burlington Times-News*; Burlington, NC

Third Place, \$4,000 - Learning to forgive in a war
Norris Burkes, *Florida Times*; Melbourne, FL

Fourth Place, \$3,000 - Attitude of honoring our parents promotes a sense of well-being for us
Delvyn Case, *Portland Press Herald*; Portland, ME

Fifth Place, \$2,000 - J.C. Penney and the Golden Rule
John A. Murray, *The Washington Examiner*

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - Tebowing in spotlight
Jack Cavanaugh; *U-T San Diego*, San Diego, CA

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - Devastating immorality justifies harsh penalties
Pierre Eade; *Bucks County Courier Times*; Levittown, PA

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - 'Why didn't someone do something?' haunting
Shane Idleman; *Antelope Valley Press*; Lancaster, CA

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - Redeemed: The Scott Reynolds Story
Jon Kleinknecht; *Galion Inquirer*; Galion, OH

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - What children see, hear really does make difference
Carolyn R. Scheidies; *Kearney Hub*; Kearney, NE

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - We can give thanks despite tough times
Dayle Shockley; *Beaumont Enterprise*; Beaumont, TX

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - What if I don't feel love for my spouse?
Steve Cornell; *The Morning Call*; Allentown, PA

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - A letter to August
Billy Watkins, *The Clarion-Ledger*; Jackson, MS

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - Shining the spotlight on Christ
Kim Wier, *The Daily Sentinel*; Nacogdoches, TX

Award of Outstanding Merit, \$1,000 - Life is so much more than a moment in time
Michael Helms; *The Paper*; Hoschton, GA

Amy Writing Awards: Important Facts

- The deadline for submitting entries published during the first six months of 2013 is July 15, 2013.
- The deadline for submitting articles published during the remainder of 2013 is Jan. 15, 2014.
- You may make both first-half and second-half submissions, but the total for the year cannot exceed 10.
- Winners will be announced in May 2014. The Amy Foundation presents the first prize award at the annual Michigan Prayer Breakfast, generally held in May in Lansing, Michigan.
- Visit www.worldmag.com/amyawards for important information on eligibility and submission guidelines, as well as the online submission form.

Show, not Tell

By Mary Jackson

Jesus taught the masses with compelling parables. Old and New Testament stories are filled with specific detail and eye-witness accounts. But journalists often get trapped in publicizing a topic or simply relaying information.

Good editors chide writers to "show, not tell." That's because story-telling with on-the-ground reporting is more impactful. Sensory details allow the reader to see, smell, feel, or touch particular scenes and subjects.

The Amy Writing Awards has long recognized excellent writing that sheds light on biblical truth. Now, our judges are looking for stories with more reporting including specific detail: We are using a 70-point rubric (increased from 50 points in previous years) that rewards stories with strong human interest, street-level interviews, and sensory elements.

Rather than relying on reading and contemplation, stories must contain some on-the-ground reporting. Our judges will ask, **"Does the story have strong human interest,** starting with a "face" who allows the writer to show how a big issue affects an individual life?" Also, "Does this story connect the human interest to larger issues through appropriate use of studies, statistics, and other evidence?"

The Poynter Institute's Roy Peter Clark teaches this type of writing using a model called "the ladder of abstraction," created in 1937 by author S.I. Hayakawa. In his popular "Writing Tools" series for Poynter, Clark explains the model by first looking at its name: A ladder is something tangible that one can see, hold, or climb. Abstraction, though, appeals to our intellect, not our senses. It is an "idea that cries out of exemplification."

Free iPad Book Helps New Writers

Two journalism professors from Christian universities recently published a free iPad book designed to help new writers produce publishable stories.

A One-Step Guide to a Byline includes eight video tutorials from seasoned journalists such as bestselling author Cecil Murphy and two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Manny Garcia. The book focuses on finding the essential conflict that drives a story. It offers an interactive quiz, roll-over features, and Arne H. Fjeldstad's *The Theology of Journalism*.

In story writing, at the bottom of the ladder are "bloody knives and rosary beads, wedding rings and baseball cards." At the top of the ladder are "words that reach for higher meaning" such as "freedom" and "literacy." In the middle, Clark warns, writers can often get lost in bureaucracy and public policy. "Good writers move up and down the ladder," Clark writes. His book, *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*, expounds on this with greater detail.

Christian writers should approach every story with the premise that there is a God, there are sinners, and there is salvation. But rather than pontificating biblical truth, journalists ought to "show" their story's premise through specific detail, according to World Magazine's Editor-in-Chief Marvin Olasky.

In his book, *Telling the Truth*, (available for free on worldmag.com), Olasky writes: "Do not tell us that a Christian football player is big; give us his height in feet and inches, his weight in pounds; show him filling up an elevator or dancing with his girlfriend." And, "Do not tell us that a teenager has good manners: Show us how he knew which of six forks to use, that he opened doors for elderly folks, that he wrote thank-you notes before the sun went down."

This type of writing takes more time. It requires a writer to venture from his desk onto the streets, to talk to people and be observant. Often it means going back out a second or third time for more reporting. But the effort is worthwhile: These make a story come alive—and more effectively illuminate biblical truth and solutions.

"Rather than pontificating biblical truth, journalists ought to 'show' their story's premise through specific detail."

Available at Apple's iBook store, the book "is designed for new writers who want to know the bare minimum for writing an article for the popular press," said Michael Ray Smith, project director and professor from Campbell University.

Smith teamed up with Wally Metts, director of Spring Arbor University's graduate studies in communications. A non-interactive PDF is free on request for those without an iPad. Send your request to smithm@campbell.edu.

Writing tips on the Web

Listen to Poynter Institute's Roy Peter Clark's writing tools for free via iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/itunes-u/roys-writing-tools/id380130686>

World Magazine Editor-in-Chief Marvin Olasky recently posted an introductory lesson he teaches young Christian journalists at the World Journalism Institute. Read "Why Journalism Matters" at http://www.worldmag.com/2013/05/the_christian_journalist/page1

Pixar is known for its compelling story plots. One story artist, Emma Coats, began tweeting tips on how to write creative, appealing stories. Read them here: www.pixartouchbook.com/blog/2011/5/15/pixar-story-rules-one-version.htm

Attend a
Writing
Conference
this
summer:

June 19-22:
Cedar Falls (IA)
Christian Writers Workshop
Riverview Conference Center
<http://www.CedarFallsChristianWritersWorkshop.org>

July 25-27:
Midwest Christian Writers Conference
Muncie, IN – Ball State University Alumni Center
www.midwestwriters.org

July 31- Aug. 3:
Greater Philly Christian Writers Conference
Philadelphia Biblical University; <http://www.writehisanswer.com/Philadelphia>

August 12-15:
Oregon Christian Writers Conference
Portland, OR – Jantzen Beach Red Lion Hotel
<http://oregonchristianwriters.org/>

The people who ‘happen to be there’

By Chelsea Kolz

In the downstairs of a dirty, smoke-filled house I once heard this wedding toast from a man I will call “Harvey.” Serving as the best man in his ex-wife’s wedding, he pronounced, “George, I can think of no better man to raise my children.”

The threads of half-morality in this proclamation confused me about as much as the genetic puzzle of blonde-headed children who made up the wedding party.

You may think that people like this don’t exist, but they do. They live at my dining room table. Harvey, from the wedding party, and his cohort “Lyle,” a shorter Georgia man who limps because some sort of Caterpillar machinery once ran over him, have frequented our family’s home for years. They fix our cars, scrap our metal, and make us laugh till our insides shake. They love sweet meatballs, and I make extra if I think the men, and sometimes their families, will stay longer. I’ve written about them for years, for their sheer color. And because sometimes, I just need a good, human surprise. Who says missionary work has to be dull for the missionary?

The two men are among the few people I encounter who enjoy acting as muses. They aren’t too proud or suspicious or self-image-protective to be written about.

“When you write a book,” says Lyle, “Make me bigger than Harvey.”

Harvey and Lyle have about 18 teeth between them and, in the eyes of God, roughly 10 wives. God knows the circumstances in which they lost them, both the teeth and the wives.

In fact, when Harvey and Lyle first met, they pulled knives on each other down on Liberty Street. But they called a truce when Harvey needed to drive down to Pennsylvania for some cheap cigarettes. Now travel buddies, the two men have a stronger friendship than they had before the fight.

While they are not persons I long to emulate, I have more affection for this duo than some Christians of my acquaintance might think advisable. But they can tell stories as no one I’ve ever heard. In their company I have lived the process C.S. Lewis outlines in *The Four Loves*:

“The truly wide taste in humanity will ... find something to appreciate in the cross-section of humanity whom one has to meet every day. In my experience it is Affection that creates this taste, teaching us first to notice, then to endure, then to smile at, then to enjoy, and finally to appreciate, the people who ‘happen to be there.’ ... They are themselves, odder than you could have believed and worth far more than we could have guessed.”

The people “who happen to be there” will catch you by surprise.

A few weeks ago I offhandedly told a cashier at the local grocery store I felt nostalgic.

“I’m sorry,” she said.

“No,” I clarified. “Nostalgia’s good.”

“No it’s not,” she said.

I had forgotten, again, that not everyone’s memories are sweet chronicles of swing sets and pink birthday parties.

The woman fished for a good memory from childhood. She cited the time her father took her to a haunted house where she saw Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees, and Michael Meyers. “Freddy Krueger waved to me,” she said fondly. “But we got home too late that night, so my dad never took me again.”

The people who “happen to be there” can furnish some paradigm-enlarging tales. As a good friend of mine says, “We are all stories of potential redemption. It’s the details that are fascinating.”

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