Suggested Topics and Q&A for Blog/Newsletter/Podcast Interviews

TOPICS

Kathy Ide's areas of expertise for interviews:

Proofreading for book authors
Editing for book authors
Becoming a freelance editor or proofreader
Maintaining and establishing a successful editing/proofreading business
Fiction Lover's Devotional series
Today's publishing options

Q&A

Below are some sample interview questions with Kathy's responses. Feel free to copy and paste any of these you wish for a guest blog or newsletter. (The answers may be lengthened or shortened depending on your needs and desires.)

*You are also free to come up with your own questions based on anything you find on this website (for example, excerpts from **My Story**) and copy and paste the answers for your blog/newsletter.*

Podcasters may consider using these questions when interviewing Kathy on their programs.

PERSONAL

Tell me about yourself.

I've been writing for publication since 1989. I wrote *Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors*, *Editing Secrets of Best-Selling Authors*, and the *Capitalization Dictionary*. And I'm the editor/compiler of the Fiction Lover's Devotional series.

I've been a professional freelance editor since 1998, working with beginning, intermediate, and established writers—mostly of book manuscripts. In 2022 I proofread and edited some screenplays for Pinnacle Peak/PureFlix.

I own and manage Christian Editors Association, parent organization to the four divisions I founded: The Christian PEN: Proofreaders and Editors Network, The PEN Institute, PENCON editors' conference, and Christian Editor Connection. CEA sponsors the Editors' Choice Award.

I have spoken at numerous writers' conferences across the country and directed three of them: Orange County, SoCal, and Mount Hermon. I have put on Christian writers' retreats at Mount Hermon and in Southern California.

I am also the managing editor for Redemption Press.

Where are you from and where do you live now?

I was born and raised in Illinois, attended high school in Minnesota, and moved to Southern California shortly after my first child was born. SoCal is definitely my home now.

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FAMILY

Tell me about your family.

I'm married to a wonderful man named Rick. My older son, Tom, lives in Texas with his lovely wife, Ronit, and my two amazing grandkids, David and Camila. My younger son, Mike, lives in Southern California.

How has your family supported you in your journey?

When I lost my office job and decided to try my hand at editing, my hubby and I had to tighten our belts to get through those early days. And there were plenty of "feast or famine" years when some months I barely had time to breathe and other months I wondered if I'd need to get a "real job" again. But even in the lean times, my husband never tried to convince me to stop pursuing my dream. He saw how much I loved working at home and editing writers' manuscripts … and how much I enjoyed working for myself—or, actually, working for God, who brought me the writers he wanted me to work with and helped me see what I could suggest to make their writing better.

My sons put up with the belt-tightening without too much griping when they saw how happy this new career path made me. And eventually I reached a point where I had a steady stream of work and income.

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SPIRITUAL

How did you come to know Jesus as your Savior?

When I was sixteen, I spent the summer babysitting for a Christian family. Their well-behaved and compassionate kids constantly surprised me. After they went to bed one night, I listened to one of the parents' records. I heard "The Chaplain of Bourbon Street" talk about having a personal relationship with God through Jesus. His fiery, passionate preaching reached my heart.

When I got home that night, I talked to the God that preacher spoke about and did what he'd urged: I asked Jesus to come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior. Instantly I experienced a sensation I'd never felt before and have never had since. It was as if something came into my body and cleansed me from the inside out. My heart filled to overflowing with a joy and peace I never knew existed.

The next day, when the couple I babysat for gave me my last paycheck, I told them what happened to me. They eagerly whipped out a Four Spiritual Laws tract and went through it with me, praying the prayer at the end with me. But I knew my spiritual rebirth had happened the night before.

What church do you attend?

I've been a member of Richfield Community Church in Yorba Linda, California, for several years. Prior to that, I was a longtime member of the Fullerton EV Free Church when Chuck Swindoll was preaching there.

Both the senior pastor and the worship leader I loved at RCC recently moved on to other churches. I've started attending Rose Drive Friends Church because that's where my favorite worship leader is now serving.

I have a very close group of Christian friends, who happen to be writers, and we share our lives with one another through regular texts, phone calls, and Zoom sessions. We pray for one another other, support and encourage each other, rejoice with each other, and sometimes weep with each other. We get together in person whenever we can. They are my lifeline, my prayer partners, and my fellowship group.

How would you describe your relationship with God?

I study my Bible every morning over breakfast, read Christian books (fiction and nonfiction) whenever I have a few free moments, and have filled numerous journals with written prayers. I pray throughout the day, seeking the Lord's direction and wisdom in everything I do and asking for God's blessings on my family, friends, colleagues, and businesses.

I hear the Holy Spirit's voice in a variety of ways: while I'm praying or journaling or reading/studying God's Word, through the words of friends or Christian speakers, as I'm worshipping through hymns and praise songs, in the books I read, and as I'm going about my day. I hear him most clearly and powerfully at my beloved Mount Hermon Christian conference center and at Christian writers' retreats.

With all the Christian books I get to edit, and all the Christian friends I've made at the many writers' conferences I've been to, and the powerful experiences of deep connection I made with God at Mount Hermon and my Christian writers' retreats, my faith in the Lord and my walk with him have grown stronger in the twenty years I've been on this writing and editing journey than it did in all the years prior to that. He is my loving Father, my strength and shield, my defender and

sustainer. My all in all. I could not even imagine doing life without him—nor would I ever want to.

Do you have a life and/or ministry verse?

I love Ephesians 3:20–21, which says that God can do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we could ask or think or dream or imagine (depending on which version you're reading). Being a writer, I have a pretty big imagination! It's awesome to know that God is *way* bigger than anything I could come up with. That blows my mind.

My other favorites are Romans 14:11, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God" (NRSV), and Philippians 2:10–11, "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (TLB). These verses, combined with Romans 10:9, which says, "If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (NLT), give me tremendous hope and peace that *all* of my beloved family members and friends will someday praise God along with me and spend eternity in heaven with me and our Savior.

Can you share with me something that could have harmed you, that the Enemy could have used to hurt you in some way, but God turned it around for good?

I have had several of those experiences! One example is when I got tendonitis and lost my day job. When the physical therapist told me I had to stop typing in order to heal, I thought that would be the end of my writing journey. But instead, I learned how to do it without affecting my tendons. And God used that "loss" to get me into editing Christian manuscripts and speaking at Christian writers' conferences, in addition to directing some of those conferences. I love what I do so much, I'm extremely grateful for that tendonitis experience and losing my office job as a result!

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WRITING JOURNEY/WRITING LIFE

How did your writing journey begin?

Back in the 1900s (okay, the late 1980s), a friend from church asked for my help in preparing for a writers' conference she was putting on at Biola University. I ended up helping so much, she offered to let me attend the conference for free. I didn't consider myself a writer, but I was available during that time, so I said, "Sure, why not?"

That conference opened up a whole new world to me. I met people whose names were on the covers of books I had at home. I felt like I was meeting celebrities! But I soon realized they were people not much different from me. I learned a lot about writing, and after the conference I wrote an article. To my surprise, it was accepted by the first publisher I submitted it to.

I went back to Biola the following year and learned that the play scripts I'd written for my drama team at church could be submitted to publishers. I ended up selling almost every one I'd written—plus several of the scripts our drama team director had written (and given me permission to submit). I was hooked!

I went to that same writers' conference again the next year. One of the people I met there told me she was putting together a compilation of short true stories, and she invited me to submit something for her book. I did, and she accepted it. Something I'd written was finally published in a real book!

Over the next few years, I wrote magazine articles, devotionals, short stories, and Sunday school curriculum in my "spare time" and got several accepted and published (along with plenty of rejections as well, of course).

Biola stopped hosting that writers' conference in 1990, but I attended others: American Christian Writers in Fullerton, California, Mount Hermon in Central California, and a couple in San Diego.

An idea for a novel came to me, and I joined a wonderful fiction writers' critique group. I became very excited about the idea of a book with my name on it. Whenever I went to bookstores, I gazed longingly at where my spot on the shelf would be—with "Ide" coming alphabetically between "Angela Hunt" and "Jerry Jenkins." Wow!

What's your favorite genre to write?

I love lots of genres. When I first met my agent, Diana Flegal with Hartline Literary Agency, I pitched her six manuscripts—all different types! I had my book for writers (which became *Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors*), a ghostwritten memoir, a near-future speculative novel, a coauthored women's fiction, a health book, and a devotional. She loved all my ideas. And she helped me figure out which ones to work on first.

Do you have any favorite routines when you write?

I've tried various routines over the years, but the most important thing I've learned is to start each day having focused quiet time with the Lord. I have to do that before I go downstairs, because as soon as I get anywhere near my office desk, I'm drawn like a magnet to the computer. And once I start checking emails, I'm in "work mode." So first thing every morning, I pray, write in my prayer journal, walk from room to room singing praise songs. In addition to praying for friends, family, and colleagues, I talk to God about the things at the top of my to-do list, asking him for wisdom and direction on what he wants me to accomplish that day.

I spend most of my daytime hours editing other people's manuscripts, so I have to intentionally schedule time for my own writing. Since Wednesday is in the middle of the week, that seems to be the best time for me to write. (And it starts with a W, for *writing*!) So I try to spend at least some time every Wednesday working on my own manuscripts. If I have urgent things I need to do on a Wednesday, I try to get in some writing on Friday instead.

What has been the biggest help to you in the journey to publication?

My critique group was a tremendous help when I started writing. But writers' conferences were even more beneficial. The training I got from workshops was invaluable. And I always bought recordings of workshops I missed so I could listen to them later. That helped me take the "spirit" of the conference home with me. At conferences, I *felt* like a writer. Then I'd come back to "reality." But when I put on a conference recording, I got that sensation all over again. It kept the writing dream alive.

Networking at Christian writers' conferences with people in the industry—fellow authors, agents, editors, publishers—was amazing. I got the impression that everyone there actually wanted to help one another succeed. I mean, if God wants your book to get published, I honestly want to be a part of making that happen. And if God wants my book to get published, he'll make it happen for me. I don't need to step on anybody to get there. And I don't have to worry that someone else is going to take my spot on the bookstore shelf or steal my publishing contract from me. So I don't need to closely guard my secrets of success. I can share them freely. I love that about this business!

Is the "writer's life" what you thought it would be?

Not at all! Like most people, I bought into the image of a writer spending all day on the beach or at a park or in a beautifully decorated room, sitting in a comfortable chair and creating one well-crafted sentence after another. After putting all that brilliant prose on paper, she'd submit her manuscript to a publisher, and the next thing you know, she's autographing books for a long line of excited fans. I had no idea how hard it was to write a book, how long it would take, how many rejections writers get, and how many things an author does *besides* write—especially all the marketing.

I sometimes wonder whether I would have gotten started in this business if I'd known in advance all that would be involved! Guess that's why God leads us "step by step" and encourages us to walk by faith. But to be honest, there's nothing else on earth I'd rather be doing. I love everything about working in this field, and I thank the Lord every day that I get to do something for a living that I love so much.

What has kept you writing?

Seeing the power of the written word in my own life and the lives of others. And knowing that God had to call someone to write those things … and that person had to answer that call, including all the work that entailed.

What do you know now about writing and publishing you wish you had learned sooner?

I wish I would have realized what a long and complex journey writing for publication is. Like most people, when I started, I didn't see writing as a "career" that required years of training and practice. Then again, having that information early on might have discouraged me from even

trying! But I know now how incredibly rewarding it is to write something that someone you've never met will read and be blessed by. That makes all the time and effort worthwhile.

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BOOKS

Tell me about your books.

Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors came out in 2013. It gives aspiring writers, established authors, proofreaders, editors, and publishers a quick-reference tool to proofread manuscripts to catch and correct typos, inconsistencies, and errors in punctuation, usage, grammar, and spelling according to the book publishing industry's standard guidelines.

In 2020, I followed that up with *Editing Secrets of Best-Selling Authors*. It combines the editing techniques I've learned over the years with tips contributed to me by several well-known, multi-published, award-winning authors.

My *Capitalization Dictionary* was first published in 2017. I published a second edition in 2023.

I also have a four-book Fiction-Lover's Devotional series. Each book is a compilation of short fiction stories followed by brief Life Applications that encourage readers to consider how each story applies to their lives. Every chapter is written by a different author. The first book is *21 Days of Grace: Stories that Celebrate God's Unconditional Love*. Book 2 is *21 Days of Christmas: Stories that Celebrate God's Greatest Gift*. Book 3 is *21 Days of Love: Stories that Celebrate Treasured Relationships*. Book 4 is *21 Days of Joy: Stories that Celebrate Motherhood*.

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SECRETS OF BEST-SELLING AUTHORS BOOKS

How did your Secrets of Best-Selling Authors books come about?

In my work as a proofreader for Moody Press, I found myself looking up the same rules in *The Chicago Manual of Style* over and over, so I created a "cheat sheet" of the most common ones. Over the years, that list grew long enough to put into a three-hole-punch folder. And when I shared it with some colleagues, they encouraged me to get it printed and distributed. So I self-published it with the title *Polishing the PUGS: Punctuation, Usage, Grammar, and Spelling*.

When I got an agent, she encouraged me to expand on that material, include some tips from the multi-published authors I'd met through conferences over the years, and give it a new title: *Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors.* That book was originally published by Lighthouse Publishing of the Carolinas.

In my work as an editor, I've created numerous flyers on various writing techniques to send to my clients who need them. My agent encouraged me to compile those flyers into chapters and add tips from my multi-published author colleagues to create *Editing Secrets of Best-Selling Authors,* which was accepted by the same publisher that did *Proofreading Secrets*.

Which best-selling authors are featured in your *Proofreading Secrets* book?

Lisa Tawn Bergren, Renae Brumbaugh, Mary DeMuth, Lena Nelson Dooley, Suzanne Woods Fisher, Anita Higman, Randy Ingermanson, Kathi Macias, Gail Gaymer Martin, Susan Meissner, Deborah Raney, Gayle Roper, Lynette Sowell, Kay Marshall Strom, and Cindy Woodsmall.

Which best-selling authors are featured in your *Editing Secrets* book?
James Scott Bell, Brandilyn Collins, Lena Nelson Dooley, Eva Marie Everson, Suzanne Woods Fisher, Lori Freeland, Renae Brumbaugh Green, Mona Hodgson, Angela Hunt, Julie-Allyson Ieron, Kathi Macias, Gail Gaymer Martin, Susan Meissner, Cecil Murphey, Deborah Raney, Gayle Roper, Cindy Woodsmall, and Kathleen Y'Barbo.

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FICTION LOVER'S DEVOTIONALS

Tell me about your devotionals.

I edited and compiled a four-book series of Fiction Lover's Devotionals. Each book is a collection of 21 short fiction stories, all written by different authors—some new, some intermediate, and some well-known, beloved bestsellers. Each story is followed by a brief Life Application, written by the author of the story, that suggests how the messages inherent in the fictional tale can be applied to the reader's daily life.

What's unique about this series?

A lot of readers today love Christian fiction. But in their quiet times with the Lord, they want something with a little more depth … and something shorter than a novel. There are lots of compilations with short true stories out there. The Fiction Lover's Devotionals are for readers who enjoy fiction. For people who haven't discovered the joys of Christian fiction, these short stories are a great introduction to it.

Why did you write this series?

I love Christian fiction. And I've seen its power to touch hearts and change lives. But in my quiet times with the Lord, reading a chapter of a novel just didn't seem right! So I thought, how cool would it be to have a devotional with short fiction stories followed by life applications? And if each chapter was written by a different person, I could read stories from my favorite authors and also discover some new ones.

Which authors are included in these books?

21 Days of Grace: Stories that Celebrate God's Unconditional Love has chapters by Angela Hunt, Deborah Raney, Cindy Woodsmall, Tracy Higley, Cecil Murphey, DiAnn Mills, Kathi Macias, and more.

21 Days of Christmas: Stories that Celebrate God's Greatest Gift includes chapters by Lena Nelson Dooley, Joanne Bischof, Jan Cline, and Lynn Kinnaman.

21 Days of Love: Stories that Celebrate Treasured Relationships contains stories by Cindy Woodsmall, Susan May Warren, Sherry Kyle, and Renae Brumbaugh.

21 Days of Joy: Stories that Celebrate Mom features the writings of Lynette Sowell, Mary DeMuth, Deborah Raney, and Cindy Woodsmall.

Most devotionals have 30 chapters, one for each day of the month. Or 52, one for every week in a year. What made you choose to include 21 chapters in each of these books?

A fiction story takes time to develop. And the Life Applications that go with each story are crucial. My publisher thought 30 chapters of that length would be too long for the kind of gift book he had in mind, so he asked if I could reduce the word count. I told him the stories would suffer from that much cutting. So he chose "21 Days" for 21 chapters in each of the four books in the Fiction Lover's Devotional series.

How do you see people using these devotionals?

These hardcover gift books are small enough to take with you wherever you go, with chapters short enough to read anywhere. You can enjoy these stories over breakfast, at lunch break, before bed, or curled up in your favorite chair with a cup of coffee or tea.

They make terrific gifts too! I've given many away as Christmas gifts, even to people who don't (or might not) know the Lord as their personal Savior.

Can these books also be used in group settings?

Absolutely. They're great for a book club, Bible study, life group, Sunday school class, or just getting together with friends. Each book has a study guide, available as a 99-cent ebook from Amazon, that can be used for groups or more in-depth individual study.

How did you find the authors to include in these books?

I've been in the Christian publishing industry for more than twenty years, and I've attended a lot of writers' conferences in that time. That gave me an opportunity to meet numerous authors at all stages of the writing process. Most of the contributors in the devotionals are people I'd met in person or who were editing clients of mine. But I also put call-outs on my website and social media, and I received several great stories from authors I'd never met or worked with before.

How did you choose which stories to include?

It wasn't easy! Especially since I could only choose 21 chapters for each book. The main determining factor, to me, was whether the story touched my heart, whether I could sense the Holy Spirit speaking through the characters and their situations. Almost as important was the use of good fiction-writing techniques. Even the best story can be powerless if it's not told really well.

Did you edit the submissions?

Every single one. What can I say? I'm an editor—it's what I do! I did my best to keep the author's voice and style intact. But I could always find a few things to tweak that, in my opinion, made the story stronger. When I sent my revised versions to the authors, I always encouraged them to work with me on any changes I made that they weren't totally satisfied with. I wanted the final product to be something we were both excited about.

What do you want readers to take away from these books?

I am a huge fan of Christian fiction. The Holy Spirit has spoken to me many times through novels, as I relate personally to the characters and their situations. And I've heard about others whose lives were changed through a fictional story they read. I believe the same thing can happen through the short stories in these devotionals.

Also, when I'm looking for a new book to read, I tend to go for the authors I'm already familiar with. It's tough to decide which new novelists to try because I don't know what their style is and whether they write plots I'm going to like. Reading short stories from a variety of novelists all in one book will give fiction fans an opportunity to sample different authors and find new ones they enjoy.

What did *you* learn while working on these books?

I learned patience with God's timing! When the Lord gave me this idea, I thought it was brilliant. But I couldn't get a traditional publishing house to catch the vision for it. I got some interest from a few acquisitions editors, but their sales and marketing people couldn't figure out how to promote a devotional (typically nonfiction) that featured fiction stories. That was frustrating. But when God finally opened the door with a midsize traditional publisher, I got a four-book contract. And they created them as gorgeous hardcover gift books with debossed covers, full-color interior, even ribbon page markers. Well worth waiting for! And by the time the books got published, I'd developed a decent online fan base to promote them through. God knew what He was doing!

Are you looking for stories for future books in this series?

Not presently, since the publisher decided not to continue the series past the first four books. But I enjoyed putting together these devotionals so much, I can definitely see myself starting a new series of devotionals with fiction stories … whenever the Lord tells me it's time.

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NOVEL

I hear you're working on a novel. What is it about?

The story is about a NASA astrobiologist who discovers a way to bioengineer people so they can live on Mars without spacesuits or ecodomes. But NASA's administrator is intent on terraforming Mars, which would destroy any intelligent—or potentially sentient—life forms that may exist there.

What Christian message is central to the novel?

Humans often try to make God more like them instead of changing themselves to be more Christlike.

How did you conceive of the idea for that story?

My husband is not a Christian, but he supports my faith because it's important to me. One day, as we drove to visit my grandmother, who was dying of cancer, we talked about the belief that Jesus is the only way to heaven and how narrow-minded and intolerant that seems to unbelievers. Wanting to explain this concept to my husband in a way he could understand, I thought of a parallel that would appeal to his love of science and science fiction. "What if Earth was about to be destroyed, and somebody discovered a way for humans to live on Mars safely? If this plan was the only one that worked, would it be narrow-minded to promote it?" As I thought about this concept, characters and storylines sprang to life in my imagination.

How long have you been working on that novel?

I started writing it more than 25 years ago! Between my professional editing business, speaking at writers' conferences, directing conferences and retreats, writing my Secrets of Best-Selling Authors books, compiling and editing my Fiction Lover's Devotionals, starting and growing the divisions of Christian Editors Association … along with taking care of my husband and raising two sons and helping out with my goddaughter … my novel writing has taken a backseat.

But my sons are now grown, and my goddaughter is living out of state. I'm no longer putting together fiction devotionals or directing conferences or retreat. I have a fantastic team taking care of my Christian Editors Association with me. My editing business is still thriving, but I feel like I finally have a chance to carve out a little bit of time to work on my novel. I think it's finally pretty close to being ready for publication!

Has the story evolved and changed over time, or is it the same story you originally intended to write?

While the core plot idea is the same, pretty much every else is completely different!

I originally wrote the story as an allegory. My main character had the initials JC, and he had twelve colleagues with names like Judith Skerritt and Simon Serene. When I shared the first few chapters and synopsis with Steve Laube at a Mount Hermon writers' conference, he suggested I drop the forced allegory and just tell the story wherever my premise would naturally lead. Great advice! But that meant completely rewriting the entire manuscript. I adore the story and characters in this novel now, and I really enjoy working on it.

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EDITING

How did you get started with editing?

When I got tendonitis from my day job as an administrative assistant, I had to find work that didn't require using a computer keyboard or any other type of repetitive motion. Not an easy task! I starting using a professional-edition voice-recognition software program. But I couldn't find an office job that would allow me to sit around and talk to my computer all day.

After a few months of wondering what God had in mind for me, my husband suggested it might be time for me to try something new. He asked me what I would do for a living if I could do anything. (What an awesome question!) My first choice was "Write!" But I knew couldn't earn anywhere near what I'd been making in my thirty-year career, especially not right away.

My hubby asked what my second choice would be. I told him my writers' critique group liked what I did for them, and I really enjoyed it. He encouraged me to see if I could make a career out of that.

When I asked my workers' comp coordinator what she thought of my becoming a book editor, she asked if I had a college degree in English, creative writing, journalism, anything like that. I bit my lip. "Uh … I went to the University of Minnesota for a hockey game once." She was not amused or impressed. She practically patted me on the head as she said, "I'm sorry. But that's just impossible."

The minute that word left her mouth, I heard God whisper to my spirit, "You know, *impossible* is my specialty." I sensed immediately that this was something he wanted me to pursue.

How did you begin working as a freelance editor?

A friend from my church ran a manuscript critique service, so I asked her what I needed to do to get into that line of work. She told me it's basically the same thing I did in my critique group. Then she gave me a manuscript to work on.

I did the best I could on that project, though I felt like a fraud. But when I turned it in to my friend, she handed me a check and another manuscript.

Over the years, I learned there's a lot more to professional freelance editing than what I'd been doing in my critique group! But after working for my friend awhile, I started getting my own editing clients. And when technology developed that replaced pen-on-paper editing with Track Changes in Word, I found that I could type for hours—using a split keyboard, a scrolling mouse, and an ergonomic setup—without any tendon issues!

How have you experienced God working in your journey of assisting others with their writing? Are there any particular experiences that stand out as being obviously stamped with the hand of God?

So many times, as I've worked on a manuscript, finding ways to make the writing more polished, God has spoken to my heart through the author's message. These are often books I probably wouldn't have bought for myself, not being my preferred free-time genre or being written by a novelist I wasn't familiar with. But God found a way to get the words he wanted me to read in front of my eyes.

What do you love best about your profession?

I love the freedom that comes with freelancing—being able to work whatever hours I want and take time off whenever I want. But more than that, I really enjoy working with Christians who want to write what God has given them to write and helping them learn how to polish their manuscripts so the story or message is clearer and more powerful.

Mostly I love that God is my direct "boss." He brings me writers to work with, he gives me ideas for how to help them, and he enables me to be a part of the grand journey of taking a book from the heart of the writer into the hands of readers. Also, I really like working with the amazing people who are part of the Christian writing and publishing industry.

When one of my clients tells me they've landed an agent, or their manuscript got published, or their book won an award or landed on a bestsellers list, I rejoice with them as much as if it were my own writing. I am truly happy for them and their success, with no shred of envy. And when they tell me they couldn't have achieved that goal without my help, my spirit soars! I truly love being a part of their story of accomplishing their God-given dreams. That selfless perspective could only come from the Lord.

What do you like most about being a writer and editor?

I love being involved in something that has such tremendous potential to touch people's hearts and change their lives. When I see emails from people who've read something I wrote or edited, and they talk about how they came to know the Lord or turned their lives around or experienced a major blessing from God because of it, that makes all the work totally worthwhile!

Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors isn't the kind of book that you'd think would change someone's life. But if it can help a writer get a manuscript polished enough to land a book contract for it, or enable a writer to get the message in an independently published book

across more clearly, or help someone build a successful proofreading/editing business … that feels rewarding to me!

Describe one or two of the best moments in your career.

One of the most exciting moments in my career was when one of my editing clients—a dear, sweet woman I'd come to know as a close friend during the editing process—called to tell me that the book I'd helped her write had made the *New York Times* bestseller list! And I was the first person she told, after her immediate family, because she said it couldn't have happened without me. I felt *so* honored to have played a part in her accomplishing that dream.

Another wonderful moment was when an author I'd worked with *a lot* to polish her young-adult novels forwarded to me an email she received from one of her readers. The woman taught English in an inner-city high school to teenagers who hated reading. Until she introduced her students to this author's series of novels. The kids loved those stories so much, they started looking forward to quiet reading time and enjoying it. When they read about the decisions those characters made, they started making better decisions in their own lives: getting off of drugs, ending toxic romantic relationships, refusing to get an abortion, even choosing not to commit suicide. One of those students, who was flunking seventh grade when she started this woman's class, was now graduating from the tenth grade, with a 3.5 GPA, and the student thanked the woman for teaching her to love reading. Wow. I feel extremely honored that God allowed me to play a part in making that dramatic life-change happen.

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ADVICE FOR WRITERS

What is something most people don't understand about writing for publication?

Many people who've never written a book think it's easy. Just sit on a grassy knoll in a park on a sunny day with pen and paper, or maybe a laptop, and let the thoughts flow onto the paper or screen. Maybe do a quick proofread for obvious typos. Then publish it on Amazon and wait for the sales to start pouring in. If those people knew how much work is actually involved in writing a high-quality book, getting it professionally published, and marketing it to potential readers, they'd realize that what they really want isn't to write a book; it's to *have written* a book.

What else does a writer do besides write?

Writing is only a small part of the process of putting together a good book. Successful authors spend a whole lot more time editing than writing. And the best ones work with a professional freelance editor (sometimes a few editors) to make their manuscripts the best they can be.

After a manuscript is written and polished, the author needs to choose from the various publishing options available today. An author who decides to try for traditional publication needs to find a literary agent or go with a smaller press, both of which require query letters and/or book proposals—which also need to be thoroughly polished. Authors who choose self-publishing need

to learn the steps involved. Authors who wish to work with a subsidy publisher need to research the options to choose one that's legitimate and not a scam. (Note of clarification here: Since some people equate "subsidy publisher" with "vanity press," some companies prefer to use the term "hybrid publisher." But *subsidy* simply means that you, the author, are *subsidizing* the publication of your book. *Hybrid* is a combination of two things, so I would use that term to describe a company that does some things that a traditional publisher would do, at no cost to the author, but offers individual services for a fee.)

Even before a book is published, the author needs to build a "platform"—a way to get the word out about the book to the target audience. This is true whether a book is traditionally published or self-published.

What are some good first steps an aspiring author can take?

Learn all you can about the craft from reading books in your genre and other genres. Study books on how to write for publication, especially how to write in your chosen genre. Look for writing tips on the websites of literary agents and your favorite multi-published authors. Take in-person classes and online courses. Learn from podcasts and webinars.

Get into a critique group (in person or by email) or find a few critique partners—and take their suggestions seriously.

Rewrite, revise, and polish.

Attend Christian writers' conferences where you can meet kindred spirits, network with industry professionals, make connections, have divine appointments, and hear the Holy Spirit prompt you on the next steps to take. Then take those steps!

When your manuscript is the best you can make it, hire a professional freelance editor to help you get it to the next level.

Why should a writer hire a freelance editor?

It's really hard for writers to be objective about their "babies." It's important to work with someone who can be honest with you about how to make your beloved masterpiece even better.

Whether you're planning to self-publish or shoot for a traditional publisher, you want your book to be the best it can be, and a freelance editor can help you get there.

Beginning writers can learn a lot about professional writing techniques, and how to apply them to their manuscripts, by working with a freelance editor. Not only will their current manuscripts be cleaner and more appealing to a traditional publishing house, and a better experience for their readers, but they'll become better writers and more skilled at self-editing. So for the subsequent books they write, the process will go much more smoothly.

How can a writer find a good editor?

If you know writers who've worked with editors, you can ask them for recommendations. You could just do an internet search, but anyone can *say* they're an editor, so you need to do some research to see if they're legitimate—and whether they're a good fit for you. And you want an editor who's familiar with your genre and target audience. If you write suspense fiction for young adults, for example, an editor who specializes in nonfiction or memoir probably won't be a good choice for that book.

A great way to find the right editor for you is to visit Christian Editor Connection. They have established, professional editors who've been extensively screened and tested. If you go to ChristianEditor.com and fill out the form to Request an Editor, they will personally match you with the editors they believe would be a good fit for you and your project. Those editors who are interested and available will contact you directly so you can find out more about them and prayerfully choose the right one for you.

Can writers edit their manuscripts while writing them?

That is extremely difficult to do and not recommended. See, writing is a right-brained activity—it comes from the creative side of the brain. But editing utilizes the left side of the brain—the analytical side. Those two sides typically don't work well together simultaneously.

Most writers find it best to pour out their thoughts and emotions and ideas into the first draft of a manuscript, letting the writing flow freely without thinking about whether the words are just right, if they're spelled properly, or how the sentences should be punctuated. After writing at least one scene, sometimes several chapters, occasionally an entire manuscript, they take a break and do something else for a while to reset the brain's focus.

When it's time to edit your scene, chapter, or manuscript, you analyze and assess what you've written. First with a big-picture overview, then from an organizational perspective, then analyzing every paragraph, every sentence, every word to determine whether it's the very *best* choice—or if maybe it should be cut altogether. And last but not least, you need to make sure your manuscript has no typos, inconsistencies, or errors in punctuation, usage, grammar, or spelling.

If you're strongly right-brained, you may have trouble objectively analyzing the beautiful words you've created. If you're strongly left-brained, you may have trouble keeping your "inner editor" quiet while you write freely. Some authors like to edit in a different location from where they write. Or dress differently—maybe put on a special hat or sweater to trigger the proper side of the brain at the right time.

If you're so strongly right-brained that you can't edit your own writing, hire a freelance editor. If you're so strongly left-brained that you have trouble with creative writing, consider becoming a freelance editor.

What's your encouragement to help new writers keep going?

Think about something you read that touched your heart or changed your life. Consider all the steps that had to happen in order for that particular piece of writing to end up in your hands at exactly the time you needed to read it.

When God called you to write, he had specific people in mind who would need to read what he wanted you to write at a particular point in their lives. He also knew about the long and sometimes bumpy journey between that initial calling and actually getting your book (or article or script or curriculum or poem) into those people's hands. So as long as you are taking the steps he has asked you to take, and walking through the doors he has opened for you, and doing everything you can to make your writing the best it can be … you can rest in the knowledge that he is orchestrating every situation and circumstance, and He will overcome every obstacle, to get what he has called you to write into the hands of the people he knows will need to read it at exactly the right moment.

What's the best thing a Christian writer can do?

Pray. Trust. Relax. And enjoy the ride.

Pray about what you want to write, seeking God's guidance. Pray as you write, asking for God's direction. Pray for the people who will someday read what you're writing.

Trust that God has called you at just the right time to accomplish his plans for what he wants you to write. Don't be discouraged by the inevitable challenges, road blocks, distractions, and detours. Don't let the enemy steal this blessing from you and from your future readers.

If you're truly trusting God's perfect plan and timing, you can *relax.* You don't have to get upset about rejections or worry about how long it's taking for your book to get published. His path for you might not end up being what you thought at the beginning of the journey. But he will get you where he wants you to be. The words he has given you to write will reach just the right readers at just the right time—for you and for them.

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CHRISTIAN EDITORS ASSOCIATION

You are the owner and manager of Christian Editors Association. Tell me a bit about that.

When my editing business started taking off, I realized that while there were many organizations for Christian writers, there weren't any for Christian editors. On a six-hour drive home from the Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference one year, the Lord filled my mind with ideas for what such an organization could do. The next day I asked the few Christian editors I knew if they were aware of any groups like that. They all said, "No. But you should start one!"

Having no idea how to do such a thing, I learned how to create an email loop, called it The Christian PEN: Proofreaders and Editors Network, and asked my editor friends to join. They did, then invited their editor friends, who invited more editor friends. People started asking me if they

could design a logo for our group, if they could create a website for us, if they could offer online courses. Oh, yes, please! It soon became apparent that God was the "CEO" of this organization, and he had called me to get it started, then called others to help it grow.

Three years later, some of our members asked if I would create a separate organization for established, professional freelance editors so they'd know where to send potential clients who needed a specialty they didn't have. About that time, I discovered that the URL ChristianEditor.com was available. I grabbed it—and started Christian Editor Connection.

Ten years in, we held the first PENCON editors' conference … one of the big dreams I'd had on that six-hour drive home from Mount Hermon.

Soon after, I launched the Excellence in Editing Award, where established Christian editors judged recently published books written by Christian authors or published by Christian publishers. The authors, editors, and publishers behind those books that were superbly written and well edited were honored and promoted.

As each of these organizations continued to grow, I formed Christian Editor Network and brought all the organizations under that umbrella. We also formed a separate division for the online training that had become such a huge part of The Christian PEN. We called it The PEN Institute.

The Lord brought wonderful, passionate, skilled people to serve as directors over the different divisions.

You've had some name changes in your editors' organization. Tell me about that.

Some members of my team told me there was a bit of confusion about the name Christian Editor Network, since the parent organization doesn't actually offer networking. So we renamed it Christian Editors Association.

Then the director of the Excellence in Editing Award recommended it be renamed the Editors' Choice Award, to better reflect its focus on honoring books even a professional freelance editor could enjoy!

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CONFERENCE DIRECTING

How did you end up directing your first Christian writers' conference?

After attending my local Orange County Christian Writers Conference for several years, and serving on faculty for some of them, I learned that the people who'd been putting it on were handing it over to someone who had the financial ability to keep it going. But the new organization didn't really know much about our group—or about Christian writers' conferences in general.

One of my colleagues asked if I'd be on board with helping make that transition, and I eagerly said yes. Then I reread the email and realized she had asked me to be on *the* board!

As we brainstormed in our small group to see how each of us could serve best, I was chosen to be the director.

You started a new Christian writers' conference shortly after that, right?

Yes. After directing the Orange County conference for a few years, I strongly sensed God leading me to organize a separate local conference for Christian writers. I spoke with the man who'd been putting on the Orange County conference, and he encouraged me to follow that dream. So I founded the SoCal Christian Writers' Conference. It flourished for four years … until 2020. That year, due to the pandemic, we held the conference virtually.

How did you become the director of the Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference?

Almost immediately after I took on the role of director for the SoCal conference, I learned that the iconic and much-loved Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference was looking for a new director.

Knowing how much work would be involved in that, I decided I didn't have the time to be the new director. So I spread the word to people I thought might be qualified.

But the Holy Spirit kept nudging me about directing the Mount Hermon conference. So I finally looked at the web page with the job description. I felt like I was reading my own bio! Every single skill they were looking for was one of my specialties.

I still felt I didn't have time for that! But I filled out the application and trusted that if God wanted me to take on this position, he would arrange my schedule to make time for it.

I wasn't surprised when the program managers at Mount Hermon called me for a phone interview. But I answered their questions with such a laid-back, *whatever* kind of attitude, I hung up thinking there was no way they would offer me the job.

When they did, I was stunned. But knowing how much the folks at Mount Hermon pray over every hiring decision they make, I had to conclude that this was something God had chosen for me.

What happened when you started directing the Mount Hermon conference?

I loved it! I discovered I not only had all the skills needed to do the work, I had a deep passion for it. I poured my heart and soul into that position. I imagined serving as the Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference director until my bones were too old and fragile to get my body up the steps to the platform!

But four years in, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Which required Mount Hermon to cancel every scheduled event for 2020. The exciting plans I'd made for that year's conference were postponed until next year. But "next year" never happened. When the bans on group gatherings were lifted, Mount Hermon management reevaluated which of their events to bring back. And the writers' conference, being the only professional event they did among all their family-focused offerings, didn't make the cut.

I was devastated, as were many others in the writing and publishing community. I considered trying to put on a similar conference as a guest group at Mount Hermon, but the tremendous amount of work and the huge financial commitment made that challenge uncomfortable.

Did you keep running writers' conferences after the pandemic?

I continued my SoCal Christian Writers' Conference virtually for a couple of years. But I ended up needing to stop doing that due to the time and financial commitments.

I loved my season of directing Christian writers' conferences! But I've learned that whenever God brings us out of one type of service for him, that's a sign that he has something else planned for us.

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WRITERS' RETREATS

What was next for you after you stopped directing writers' conferences?

In the midst of my devastation over Mount Hermon permanently cancelling their sponsorship of the writers' conference, I got to thinking about what made that location so special. I mean, lots of Christian writers' conferences had sprung up over the fifty years Mount Hermon had been doing theirs. But that beautiful conference center, nestled among the awe-inspiring California coastal redwoods, prayed over 24/7 since the early 1900s, was unique. Writers around the world wanted to go there for the amazing faculty and program offerings. But when they arrived, they found something far more important than networking and education. They experienced incredible times of powerful personal connection with the Lord.
As I prayed for direction, the Lord spoke to my heart. *What makes Mount Hermon so special?* As I pondered the answer, I recalled how often I had told attendees, "No matter how many big-time agents, representatives from respected publishing houses, and best-selling authors you meet here, skip at least one workshop slot and spend that time alone with God, listening to his voice. If you go home without doing that, you've missed the most important opportunity of this conference."

The Holy Spirit whispered in my ear, *Let's flip those priorities around.*

I began to consider putting on a Christian writers' *retreat* at Mount Hermon, where the main focus would be meeting with God to have the kind of powerful connections that conference center is famous for. And while folks were there, they could also meet with whatever industry

professionals or fellow writers the Lord brought and even attend a few workshop-type sessions. That idea got me excited!

My previous colleagues at Mount Hermon were excited about the idea. But management wasn't on board with sponsoring the retreats. So they suggested I consider putting them on as a guest group.

I put on my first Christian Writers Retreat at Mount Hermon in November of 2021. It was a powerful experience, for myself as well as the other attendees. With so many amazing, divinely orchestrated things happening there, I decided to put on a SoCal Christian Writers Retreat the following summer and did a second one at Mount Hermon the following year. Both were wonderful!

You wrote in one of your blog posts about some spiritual oppression you encountered in preparing for Christian writers' retreats. How did you experience this, and what did you do to get you through?

A month before my first SoCal Christian Writers Retreat, a horrific situation with my goddaughter and her guardian spiraled me into the worst spiritual oppression of my life. At the same time that was happening, I realized we didn't have enough registrants to cover the minimum agreed to in our contract with the retreat center. I felt certain we needed to cancel.

But my assistant director suggested we get together with our prayer team on a Zoom call first. When we did, the Holy Spirit gave each of us the distinct message that he wanted this retreat to happen. The next day, when I contacted the facility about our situation, they graciously agreed to let us pay only for those who attended, even if we didn't meet the minimum specified in our contract. Amazing confirmation!

Everyone at that retreat told me about how God had spoken to their hearts in amazing ways. He also gave me a powerful message about how to deal with the situation with my goddaughter and her guardian—a message on "praying the positives" that has revolutionized my prayer life.

The enemy isn't happy when we're doing things to advance God's kingdom. But our God is infinitely greater and stronger than any opposition!

Are you still running Christian writers' retreats?
Unfortunately, with everything else going on in my life at the time, I wasn't able to keep doing them.

So, once again, I bade a sad farewell to that season of my life and looked for what else God might have for me.

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PUBLISHING OPTIONS

Have you been traditionally published, or are your books self-published?

My first books were self-published with Amazon's CreateSpace (their early version of KDP): *Christian Drama Publishing* and *Typing without Pain*.

I had one book published by a subsidy publisher: *Polishing the PUGS: Punctuation, Usage, Grammar, and Spelling*. Then I got an agent, Diana Flegal with Hartline Literary Agency, and she got that book republished as *Proofreading Secrets of Best-Selling Authors* with Lighthouse Publishing of the Carolinas, who later published my *Editing Secrets of Best-Selling Authors.* Both books were transferred to Iron Stream Media when they took over LPC.

Hartline worked through Amazon's White Glove program to publish my *Capitalization Dictionary*. When Amazon discontinued that program, I self-published that book through KDP.

I worked with a small, independently owned traditional press on a paperback book of devotionals with short fiction stories called *Fiction and Truth*. A few years later, I landed a four-book contract with a midsize traditional publisher for my Fiction Lover's Devotional series, put out as gorgeous hardcover gift books.

When Iron Stream Media released the rights to my *Proofreading Secrets* book, I republished it under my own imprint, Turret House Publishing, along with a second expanded edition of my *Capitalization Dictionary*.

Which publishing option do you recommend?

Each one has advantages and disadvantages, and a lot depends on the author, the book, and the author's goals for that book. In a nutshell:

If you want a publisher to do the work of giving your manuscript a final polish and thorough proofread, design a stellar cover and attractive interior, do some promotion of your book, and get it into bookstores, without costing you any money up front, traditional publishing is the way to go. But keep in mind, there's a *lot* of competition for spots in traditional publishing houses, it will take a year or two to get your book published, and you'll be getting a fairly small percentage of book sales because the publisher will need to recoup their costs for all that work.

If you plan on writing a lot of books, within a unique brand, and you have the time to focus on writing as a long-range career, a large traditional publisher could be good for you. You'll need to invest a lot of time and a fair amount of money making sure your manuscript and book proposal are professionally polished in order to stand out among all the competition. You'll also need to get an agent. And that agent will receive a percentage of your royalties. But a good agent and a good publisher can help you get established as an author.

If you want to go with a traditional publisher but aren't necessarily looking at being a career author, a small press is a good choice for you. Most don't require agents, and they can usually get your book out a little quicker.

If you have an established "platform," a way to sell books on your own through speaking engagements, contacts with good-size audiences, and/or a large social media presence, self-publishing or subsidy publishing can help you get your books published in a shorter amount of time and with more royalties coming your way. And you'll have more control over the content and design.

If you are able to find and pay for excellent editing, cover design, and interior formatting on your own, self-publishing is a great choice. If you'd prefer to use professionals that have been vetted by an established company, a subsidy publisher is a great option.

If you feel comfortable with some aspects of publishing (e.g., you're a professional editor and you have friends who will help you with proofreading, but you don't feel qualified to design a fabulous cover or do the interior formatting), you may consider a hybrid or "co-op" publisher where you can choose which services you want and skip others. (A subsidy publisher may allow you to choose your options as well.)

If you just want to get your book in print (and/or ebook), and you don't really care whether it's professionally edited or designed or how many copies it sells, self-publishing is a quick and easy way to accomplish that goal.

Tell me about your work with Redemption Press.

Redemption Press is a subsidy publisher, which means authors pay them to assist with getting their books published. It's owned by Athena Dean Holtz, who has been in the Christian publishing industry for decades. She has a heart for helping writers get the books God has laid on their hearts published and into the hands of readers who will be blessed by them. And she's made a lot of excellent contacts over the years.

Athena helped me publish my *Polishing the PUGS: Punctuation, Usage, Grammar, and Spelling* many years ago. I've served with her on the faculties of numerous Christian writers' conferences since then. I highly respect her and her vision. When she asked me to come on board with Redemption Press, I was honored to have the opportunity to work with her.

As managing editor, I've helped the Redemption Press staff create policies and procedures that help the editing process run smoothly for both their authors and their editors. I also help with evaluating editors who wish to join their freelance workforce, to make sure everyone on the editing team is an established professional who will ensure that books published by Redemption Press are top quality. It's an honor to work with such a wonderful team.

What are your thoughts about subsidy publishers?

Several years ago, these companies were considered "vanity presses," scammers that took advantage of people who wanted to get their books published but weren't "good enough" to get a contract with a traditional publisher. And there are still scams like that out there. But there are also legitimate, respectable subsidy publishers that can be a tremendous benefit to certain writers.

Self-publishing has become a viable option for some authors and some projects. It's pretty easy to figure out how to get a book on Amazon. But if you want that book to be good, to sell to more than just your family and personal friends, to stand out in the sea of substandard self-published books, you need to do everything that a traditional publisher would do for you—and do it well. That includes evaluating your book from a marketability standpoint. Critiquing the concept, flow, pace, and organization. Performing a substantive developmental content edit, line-by-line copyedit, and careful proofread for typos, inconsistencies, and errors in punctuation, usage, grammar, and spelling according to the publishing industry's current standard guidelines. It also involves excellent cover design and interior formatting. And great marketing strategies.

Those are a lot of unique specialty areas for one person to perform well. And they're quite time-consuming. So successful self-publishing authors often hire professional editors, proofreaders, cover designers, interior formatters, and PR firms or marketing specialists. But how do you find all those professionals? And how can you tell when you've found good ones?

A solid subsidy publisher has done this research for you. They've brought on established, professional editors and proofreaders. And high-quality cover designers and interior formatters. They have experience with print-on-demand publishing of print books and the intricacies of ebooks. Many offer a variety of marketing packages for authors to choose from.

What advice do you have for writers who are thinking about working with a subsidy publisher?

First, don't be influenced by people who tell you to "run away fast" from *any* company that asks you for money to help you publish your book. Not all subsidy publishers are scams.

But do your research. Look at the books the company has published. Do the covers look attractive and professional—front and back? Does the interior look like a traditionally published book? How many books has the company put out and how many copies have they sold? How many authors have multiple books published with them?

Read samples of books published by that company to get a feel for the quality of the writing and editing. Find out how many copies their books have sold. Look up the authors of books similar to yours, then find those authors' websites, go to the Contact page, and send them a message, asking for their honest feedback about their experience with the publisher.

Also, check the contract carefully before you sign. Make sure you know what you're getting for your money.

How do you spot a vanity publishing scam?

If a company tries to convince you that they're a traditional publisher, but you have to pay for any part of the publication process (including a required purchase of a significant number of copies of your book), that's a scam. (If the company is up front about charging authors for certain aspects of the publishing process, they may be a legitimate hybrid publisher.)

If a company contacts you out of the blue and raves about your manuscript or book idea and offers to get it published "for a fee," that's probably a scam. Reputable subsidy publishers don't do cold calls.

A company that will publish *anything* as long as they get paid is a vanity publisher. Legitimate subsidy publishers review submissions in advance to determine whether the subjects and themes are in line with their particular focus and if they are written well enough that, with help from their editors, the books will look polished and professional.

Vanity publishers produce low-quality books. And low royalties. Legitimate subsidy publishers offer good royalties to their authors (at least 50 percent). They typically have a variety of marketing options to help you sell your books (for various prices).

If you're thinking about using a particular subsidy publisher, you could do an internet search for the company name followed by the word *reviews* or *complaints*. If you find some, carefully read what people have said about the company. Keep in mind, almost every company of any kind will have a few complaints (just like many books have a few one-star reviews among all the five-star ones). And some people's issues may not be things you're concerned about. Also remember that a legitimate subsidy publisher will likely cost quite a bit because they have to cover the costs of high-quality professional editors, cover designers, and interior formatters.

You can also check to see whether a subsidy or hybrid publisher is approved by the Independent Book Publishers Associated. And check the Alliance of Independent Authors Watchdog List, which monitors the independent publishing industry for companies that exploit authors.

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FOR FUN

Aside from a cup of good, strong coffee, what helps you get all of your "brain cylinders" firing so you can write well?

I'm not a coffee drinker, but I enjoy a hot cup of fruity tea. And I am addicted to chocolate! But since I'm diabetic, I typically choose dark chocolate (though not the really dark kind that tastes bitter), preferably made with natural sweeteners. Choc Zero has become my favorite!

If you could travel to any location and stay there for one month (probably spending most of the time writing), where would you go?

I've vacationed in Maui twice, and it was the most beautiful, peaceful, fun, restorative place I've ever been to. If I could spend a month there (and if it was the same as it was before those awful fires), I'd get up every morning, sit on the lanai with a cup of hot peach or raspberry tea, and gaze at the ocean while engaging in an inspiring conversation with the one who created the view—and me. Then I'd take a spiral notebook and pen out to the beach, sink into a comfy lounge chair, and write. After a yummy lunch of fish and purple sweet rolls, I'd head back to my

condo, plug in my laptop, sit by the open window, and type what I wrote and edit it. When my brain needed a break, I'd hop into a rented convertible with my hubby at the wheel, and we'd go snorkeling or parasailing or white-water rafting or waterfall hunting on the road to Hana. Dinner at a waterfront restaurant. A romantic stroll along the shore watching the stunningly gorgeous sunset. (My heart is yearning just thinking about it. Anybody got a condo they'd be willing to let me stay in for a month rent-free? Haha!)

Tell me two truths and a lie. (And share which is the lie.)

1. I used to work as a graphic designer creating wine and cocktail menus.
2. I flunked a correspondence course in transcribing court reports.
3. I was once an extra in a TV commercial.

(#2 is the lie. I graduated from that course at the top of my class.)

Can you share with me a favorite book you've read?

Well, the Bible, of course. I've read it from cover to cover several times, and I still read from it every day. The Holy Spirit always reveals amazing insights that fit situations I'm going through at the time.

Aside from that … I loved Francine Rivers's *Redeeming Love.* When I neared the last few pages, I read as slowly as I could to savor the experience. When I'd finished the last line, I held the book to my chest and sighed in total contentment. But then I literally threw it across the room because I was so upset that my experience with those characters was over! Of course, I scooped it back up and apologetically cradled it in my arms.

If you were stranded on an island, what are three things you couldn't live without?

Besides food, water, and shelter, I'd say the Bible, my husband, and a laptop with WiFi.

Favorite dessert?

Chocolate-covered strawberries. My dad bought me some as a special treat when I was a teen and I have adored them ever since. Milk, dark, white, or swirled … as long as there's no nuts or coconut added!

Share one pet peeve you have.

The popular use of *literally* for emphasis when referring to something that could not possibly *actually* happen—that drives me nuts. But my absolute biggest pet peeve is that Webster's dictionary added that as an alternate definition for the word. Seriously, how can one word mean two things that are diametric opposites?

Name three places you'd like to travel to.

1. Lake Powell. About every other year, several of my family members get together and share a houseboat, a motor boat, and jet skis for a week on Lake Powell. When my hubby and I get up every morning, we grab a quick breakfast, throw on floppy hats, water shoes, and life vests, and hop on a jet ski together. We ride till lunch, come back and eat, then go out again till sunset, exploring the many inlets surrounded by tall sandstone cliffs. Dinner with the fam, a bit of amiable conversation, a few hours of sleep, then out on the jet skis again.

2. Europe. I've never traveled outside North America, and I would love to see the iconic landmarks … and castles. Lots of castles!

3. Anywhere that I can see the Northern Lights—preferably without getting too awfully cold or spending an exorbitant amount of money.

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CLOSING

How can people find out more about you?

My website, KathyIde.com, has information about my editing services, my Christian Editors Association, and my speaking engagements. I have a blog and a newsletter with tips for writers and publishing industry news. Shorter tips and announcements are posted on my Facebook page, www.facebook.com/Kathy.Ide. I also have a Facebook profile, https://www.facebook.com/KathyIde.AuthorEditor.