

**Excerpt from *Why Become a Christian? A Spiritual Memoir*
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At the end of each chapter, to help you write your spiritual memoir, I share

Tips and Questions for Writing Your Spiritual Memoir:

- 1) Which Application Questions below are relevant to your spiritual memoir? Answer them accordingly.
- 2) Will you describe something you “woulda, coulda, shoulda” have done, but did not do? What impacts did this have on you and others?
- 3) Clearly decide Who your audience is and Why you are writing What text for this particular audience. [Because I did not align Who/Why/What enough when I first started, I had to revise my manuscript several times.]
- 4) Have you already written anything, or recorded anything, which might help you get started? [I transcribed audiotapes from presentations I gave on *my* Being, Behaving, Becoming Model to compare a Born Again Christian perspective with Humanistic Psychology and Transpersonal Psychology perspectives. This content became early chapters I wrote.]
- 5) Is there is significant content to be prepared from scratch, which is also easy to write? [I knew my book would include a synopsis of James Sire’s book, *The Universe Next Door*, because his systematic worldview comparison had given me *intellectual faith* to support my young *saving faith* in Jesus. I could easily synopsise Sire’s answers to his 8 Questions. Completing this chapter motivated me to write others.]
- 6) Will you dictate your book? [If you are a gifted speaker, this idea can work for you: I once had a roommate who “told” me his Masters Thesis while I tape recorded this, for him to get transcribed. My roommate could “talk” about any topic seamlessly, in a captivating yet factual way, but could not write like this. Because I scheduled our taping sessions and recorded them, he graduated on schedule. OR, you might consider using Dragon Naturally Speaking or another voice recognition software.]
- 7) Have you identified insights you gained from God, hard lessons learned from life, and difficulties, events, victories, and people associated with them? [If I had done this sooner, I would have spent less time adding this in later rewrites.]
- 8) Identify how you record or retain ideas and brief notes. [For many years, I’ve done this on the backs of old business cards – on a plane, while eating, anywhere I could. For this book, I wrote down whatever I thought about – overviews/outlines/concepts/notes/models – anything I might want to describe in detail later. After laying these cards on a big table like puzzle pieces, I assembled the book’s storyline – including rewrites (what to delete/modify and new cards to add). For example: my synopsis of Sire’s book on worldviews was originally the last chapter, then was rewritten as Chapter 3 because it fits best there to explain worldviews that I refer to later.]
- 9) Create a detailed Table of Contents to guide the text being prepared. [I sequenced the “storyline cards” to create a detailed Table of Contents with Headings and brief content descriptions. I did this for each rewrite to focus new text on each revised ToC, and avoid anything tangential.]
- 10) Do you know your writing style and how it will affect your writing? Make sure your writing style – Analytic, Creative, Results-oriented, People-oriented – does not take over your book. For example:
 - My **Analytic** style can cause me to plan everything, then edit/rewrite/improve everything; so writing is very slow and carefully “correct.” Sometimes, “paralysis by analysis” takes place, so nothing gets done or progress is so slow my motivation sags.
 - A **Creative** style is free flowing and tends to compose text without careful planning or even a Table of Contents; such “stream of consciousness” writing produces text quickly, but this can meander off-topic quite easily, and create a book that is needlessly too long and unfocused (especially for publishers).
 - A **Results**-oriented style will complete “something” quickly, which probably lacks details, examples, stories and other memorable material for attracting your targeted readers.
 - A **Feelings**-oriented style likes to identify the way characters feel and describe this, often by writing lots of dialogue between characters. This might be more suitable for a script than a book, or for a fiction book where a “character arc” is revealed through lots of dialogue between characters.
- 11) Make sure your writing style matches your targeted audience. To find out, have individuals who represent your audience, read your manuscript and give you specific feedback on whether your style of writing is appropriate. [One reviewer who knew me when I was a professor said my writing style – including book format and page layout – was too professorial, with too many bullet points and lengthy quotations, so I modified this as much as my analytic style permitted.]
- 12) Is your writing “sticky” (memorable and invites action)? If you are not sure, read Chip and Dan Heath’s book, *Made to Stick*. They provide many examples of how to use **SUCCES** guidelines – Simple, Unexpected, Credible, Concrete, Emotional, Story – to make writing “sticky.” Examine Jesus’ parables while using the six SUCCES guidelines – to understand how these parables are so memorable and applicable, even some 2,000 years after Jesus told them. [I used Models, Lessons Learned and Spiritual Insights to summarize what I had described, and make this “sticky.”]
- 13) What motivation will inspire you to begin? And, sustain your discipline to finish? How will you overcome barriers (e.g., writer’s block)? Answers to the questions above might be pertinent here.