

Want to Write a Book?



Engage Your Mind

Suellen Estes

WRITE THAT BOOK

Engaging Your Mind

©Suellen Estes

<https://ChristianBloggersInternational.com>

Have you been thinking about writing a book?
Have you been planning to start a blog?

Have you been mulling over your special ideas? Do you dream about the impact your story will have on the lives of others?

I know how that feels. In 2010, I wrote my first book. Most people – including my own family – thought that I had just suddenly decided to write. But that was not the case. I had spent years – even decades – quietly thinking about writing.

There were times when I would think of a great title. Other times certain subject matter would come to mind. I would think and dream about writing, but I wouldn't really do it.

Why?

The task seemed too hard. Where would I start? How could I get anything published? Would anyone want to read what I had to say?

All of those questions would rise to the surface and I would push the project aside.

Maybe someday.

Finally in 2009, I got the courage to give it a try. After my first publication, I continued to write so that now I have quite a few books on Amazon in hard copy and on Kindle. And I plan to continue writing for many years to come.

Since that first publication in 2010, I have discovered many people who are just like I was. They have ideas and they have a desire, but there seems to be such a tremendous gap between the desire and the finish line.

They just never get started.

This E-book is addressed to those people. Maybe you are one of them.

Maybe you have things you want to share with others, but don't know how to get started. Or maybe you are timid about attempting the project. Thoughts flood your mind. What if I fail? What if nobody wants to read what I write?

Well, if that's you, then it's time to push those thoughts aside and begin to accomplish your dream.

So come with me as I share some thoughts which might help you get started on a truly great adventure.

God Wants Many Voices.

Have you thought about that? God wants many voices to share His messages. There are millions of people who need to know Him and need to hear His encouragement and wisdom.

No one has a message which will impact every individual. Needs, desires, and cultural preferences are different. Message effectiveness is also influenced by age, gender, nationality, and profession. What can bring new hope to a stay-at-home Mom is not what can energize teens as they head for college.

Many and varied needs require many messages and many messengers.

So your part is important. The people who need to hear from you are waiting to hear just what you have to say.

Don't let your doubts stop you in your tracks!

So if you are longing for this dream but are also a little scared, a little nervous. Know that those are obstacles faced by everyone starting something new. You may be your own worst enemy. The good news is, if you're your own worst enemy, then the only thing standing between you and that book or that blog you've always imagined is... you!

And once you recognize the issues that are holding you back, you can address them, one at a time.

That's what I hope to help you to do in this E-book. I'll discuss some of the main ways you can achieve lasting change and progress towards your dream.

It might not be easy, but it'll be life-changing – if you are willing to do the work.

We'll be focusing on taking thoughts captive – and having our minds agree with God's plans.

1. Do You See Yourself as God Sees You?

Proverbs 23:7 says that "As a man thinks within himself, so he is."

You may have heard it said, "If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you're right." That saying is true.

Try this little exercise: Stand up and extend your arms out on both sides of your body. Close your eyes and, turning at the waist, see how far you can twist to one side without causing yourself bodily harm. Open your eyes and make a mental note of where you are pointing behind you. Now, close your eyes and imagine yourself going a little farther. Ready, twist! Open your eyes and see if you surpassed your previous point. If you're like most people, you did.

Why didn't you go farther the first time? For the simple reason that you didn't think you could. Once you imagined yourself going farther, you did.

It's not very complicated!

If your mental beliefs impose limits on your physical stretching, it makes sense that they'll limit your mental and spiritual achievement, too. So you need to ask yourself what limits you're putting on yourself.

Are your dreams big enough?

Do you doubt what you can achieve?

Are you accepting less than the best because you think you're too young? Too old? Too poor? Too uneducated?

The first step in changing your boundaries is to raise your “deserve” level. God wants us to achieve more, but we often block ourselves by our wrong thinking.

Let's take a look at three things which block you from accepting the reality that you deserve the best.

The First is Envy.

Envy is the result of a scarcity mindset. You think that if someone else gets something – a great job, a book deal – that you can't have it, too. Or you may feel overwhelmed with someone's achievements and start feeling small in comparison.

That is not the way God works. He has special plans for you, and for everyone else. We are not to compare ourselves to others, but to rejoice in the part our God has for us. When you find someone you admire in your field, use their example to inspire you rather than depress you.

The Second is Fear.

Fear. Oh, that, you may say.

Fear is one of the greatest demotivators. It's hard to feel limitless and powerful when you're shaking in your shoes!

It's natural to feel scared when you are breaking outside your normal boundaries, but remind yourself that all growth takes place outside your comfort zone. To grow, you must push your own limits, by definition. Get comfortable with discomfort – see it as a sign of growth, much like

aching muscles indicate you have worked out hard and are coming closer to your goal.

The Third is Laziness.

Uh-oh. Laziness.

We get used to where we are and decide it's good enough because we don't really want to have to work harder. Time for a harsh truth: If you want an extraordinary life with God, you're going to have to go to some out-of-the-ordinary measures. That means praying, listening to God, talking to yourself, and doing whatever it takes to motivate yourself to move beyond where you are right now.

Moving upward and onward starts with believing you deserve to have more and be more. It's essential to own your dreams – and dream bigger than you have before.

2. Who Are Your Companions?

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wisemen will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

It's been repeated so often that it's basically law at this point: Your achievement will average that of the five people you hang around most.

Whether it's literally true or just sort of true, it doesn't really matter – the point is, if you want to be successful, you have to surround yourself with successful people.

If you want to run a triathlon, hang out with Ironman-types. If you want to lose weight, surround yourself with people who are doing it. If you want to be a published author, go where the published authors are.

There are many reasons to hob-nob with people who have achieved the goals you aspire to:

They show it can be done.

Often we think that success happens to “other” people, not people we actually know. When we spend time with achievers, though, we see that they're really not much different from us. They have dogs who chew the furniture, they have kids who sometimes are too noisy, and nosey neighbors just like the rest of us.

By demystifying those who live and breathe where you want to reside, you gain a realization that you can do it, too.

They know what it takes.

We tend to believe the “overnight success” stories. But talk to the Ironman athlete or the best-selling author, and they'll tell you that it took a lot of hard work to get where they are.

The bad news: It takes extraordinary effort to achieve extraordinary results. The good news: Once you stop believing that luck determines your success, you'll see that if you're willing to put in the time and the sweat, you can have whatever God is leading you to do.

They share their secrets.

It may be nothing more than where to buy the best business cards, or how to promote your book on Social Media, but these little secrets add up – and they provide help that goes beyond what you might read in books or magazine articles.

They want you to succeed, too.

Most successful people know that there is more than enough to go around, and they're happy to see you get your share, too. Being surrounded with people who have an abundance mindset will help you think of all you can achieve in this life, not all that you can't.

They show the gaps in your knowledge, skills, and behavior.

If you see that most of the people who have lost a significant amount of weight and kept it off all bring their lunch to work and work out at least an hour a day, you may commit to finding more time to hit the gym. If

you see that those who have published their books, tend to turn off the TV more and spend more time praying, then you will do likewise.

Model yourself after those you admire and you'll find yourself becoming more like them, success and all.

You will emulate those you esteem and those you find as companions. That's just a fact of life.

3. Forward, March!

Life is all about choice. Will we wear the blue dress or the red dress, or pants instead? Will we have GrapeNuts or All-Bran for breakfast? Will we take the car or walk?

Yes, these are seemingly simple decisions that you may think don't belong in a book on how to accomplish your vision. But when it comes down to it, the decision to quit your job, start a business, lose 100 lbs., or write your book are no different physiologically speaking than the decision to go to Chick-Fil-A instead of McDonald's.

What is different is the amount of strife and angst we place upon ourselves.

And one major source of that angst is when we choose to assume the outcome of our decisions will be bad instead of good. We then revisit our decisions over and over again in the hopes that things will become clearer the second (or third, or fiftieth) time around.

You've done this before: You make an informed decision. You know that there is a special topic you want to write about. Or maybe there are several. You look at all sides of the matter. Maybe you even make a "Franklin List" where you list all the pros and cons. You consult a friend or an expert or two. Then you decide.

And you immediately second-guess yourself. You assume you made the wrong decision. You wonder, "What if...?" What if no one is interested

in that subject? What if no one likes my writing style? What if I am into pride when I announce that I am writing my blog?

Then you put yourself right back to square one – agonizing over that decision again. Not only are you right where you've started, you've also managed to kick yourself in the self-confidence and waste some time. And it's not like you've gotten some great information that would've affected your decision; you're right where you were, with the same information you had before, struggling with the same decision you've already made once.

Here's what to do instead: Go through the same careful process of decision-making, then let it go. Tell yourself you're stuck with it. Assume you made the right decision instead of the wrong one. Move forward, move upward, move onward.

Sure, you can revisit the past, wondering if your decisions could have been better or the outcome could have been different. It's up to you. But no going backward. It only wastes time.

4. No Doubt Allowed Here

James 1:6-8 Let the man ask in faith (for wisdom) without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. Let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

You say, "Let's go to the drugstore. I need a new pair of reading glasses." Your friend says, "Are you sure? We could probably get the same thing cheaper at the mall."

You say, "I hired a new accountant." He says, "Are you really ready to invest in that?"

You say, "I'm joining 24-Hour Fitness." He says, "Bally's is running a special this week."

And if you were to take his advice and go to the mall, fire your accountant, or head over to Bally's, he'd have problems with that, too. That's because his input isn't a matter of helpful suggestions; it's only designed to make you question your own choices.

If you had a friend who constantly questioned every move you made like this, you'd probably not spend much time with him.

If this behavior is so unacceptable in our friendships, why do we do it to ourselves? We choose – and then we immediately revisit that decision over and over again. Here's the problem: Sometimes there are no “right” decisions. There are only choices we make and live with. We have to have confidence that God is leading us, and that he will be guiding us into right decisions.

That's why to take yourself to the next level, you need to let go of doubt. Accept that you're working with imperfect knowledge and that you're a smart cookie and that you will indeed make some mistakes along the way. But tell yourself that whatever happens, you can handle it.

If you pay \$5 too much for reading glasses, you can live with that. If you hire an accountant and discover you're really not ready, you can let him go. If you join the “wrong” gym, you can always switch.

Often we think that we are at the whim of circumstance and we can't control the outcome. Not so! If you chose to buy a Toyota instead of a Honda, YOU get to decide whether that was a successful outcome. Does it get you from Point A to Point B? Does it get the required gas mileage? Is it a safe ride? (By the way, these are probably all items you considered before you made your purchase!) If the answer is “Yes,” then congratulations! You made a successful purchase!

The situation with your writing may be a little different. The “success” criteria are not as clear-cut, but your influence on the outcome is no less significant. You can hustle, work extra hours if need be, commit to writing as much as you can, and thank God for giving you the

opportunity to learn some lessons along the way. Someone is going to benefit by what you have to say, and you will be growing in your ability to write with clarity and purpose.

Commit your plans to the Lord, and you will succeed. Commit to the work He has called you to, and He will give you the ability to bring it to fruition

5. Who Are You Following?

Paul said, "Follow me, as I follow Christ."

The most successful people in life all had one thing in common: They had someone to help them navigate their path. A mentor, a coach, a personal trainer, a teacher: Someone walked beside and ahead of them, helping them make their way.

If you were attempting an African safari, your most important decision would be who would lead you on your trek. Hopefully, you wouldn't go online and do a search for "Cheap African safaris." You also probably wouldn't choose the guide with the best profile picture, the most Facebook friends, or the biggest safari hat.

How would you select your guide? Through reviews, referrals from friends, and possibly some interviews.

How you select your writing mentor should be no less thorough. Don't select someone just because they're the "guru du jour," or the dude that seems to be everywhere or has great on-screen presence. Sure, it's great to be hot, but there are other considerations to make sure you're selecting the right guide for you. Here are some things to think about:

Where are my weaknesses now? Writing? If a blog, website building?

What specifically am I hoping this coach or mentor can help me achieve?

How do I work best – could I find a forum online and talk about my questions with several peers? Or do I want to have one-on-one chats?

Do I have money to spend on a coach, or do I need to stick to free advice?

Do I need someone to give me “tough love” or be a sympathetic guiding presence?

Different coaches and mentors have different styles. Some are no-nonsense taskmasters; others have a more gentle approach. Some are great cheerleaders, while others are better technicians. Some are great connectors; others are in-the-trenches comrades. No style is right or wrong; there's only “right” or “wrong” for you. If you need someone to help you figure out how to set up a website and online shopping cart, a cheerleader isn't going to do you much good.

By the same token, if you need someone to inspire you and introduce you to potential joint venture partners, a well-connected “you can do it!” type may be perfect. No matter how nice, talented, or charismatic your coach is, a mismatch will cause you nothing but frustration.

To really move forward towards your goal, a mentor can be a perfect springboard, helping you move past obstacles and other blocks. But not all coaches are created equal: Find the one that matches your needs.

6. What Is Your Success History?

I Samuel 17:36 (David said), “Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God.”

Even if you're not quite where you want to be, you still have a history of success. You've graduated high school, done well on a test, lost weight, had a great friendship, or otherwise set and achieved some sort of goal. By analyzing your past successes, you can find a lot of clues about how

you best work and what you can do to set yourself up for future success.

I recommend mining your own past for success stories because not everyone works in the same manner. You may read a book about adopting a low-carb diet and losing 20 lbs. in two weeks. Wonderful! But right next to it on the bookstore shelf is a high-carb, low-fat diet that promises the same thing. And right next to that is the Zone diet, which is next to the Raw Foods Diet, which is next to... well, you get the picture.

Not everyone's body is the same. Not everyone's brain is the same. Nor are your motivation, history, goals, or personality. That's why looking at your own history will be a huge clue as to how you can replicate your own patterns of success.

Here's what to ask yourself, as you are reviewing your past history.

When did I set this goal? Did I consciously set it, or was it an unconscious goal?

How analytical was I in charting out my path?

What kinds of obstacles and challenges arose, and how did I handle them?

Who helped me along the way? What specifically did they do to assist me? (Concrete skills, advice, sounding board, cheerleading...?)

Was I accountable to someone along the way? Who and how?

Did I track my progress? How?

If I were going to give someone else advice about how I achieved Goal X, what would I say?

If I were to go after this goal again, the one thing that I would do differently to speed up my progress would be...?

Repeat this series of questions with several different goals – and maybe even some goals you didn't achieve – to look for patterns. You may discover you work best with an accountability partner, and when you track your progress in a visual manner. These are your patterns you can easily adapt and replicate for just about any goal you're striving for.

We can overlook our own stories when trying to learn how to succeed. That's a mistake. Often, the best indicators of future success are right under our own noses – and in our own histories.

7. Give Yourself A Check-Up Everyday

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Our lives are full of scheduled check-ups. You see the dentist every six months. You get your car tuned up every 3000 miles or so. And you should review your day every 24 hours.

Why so frequently? After all, you could do this once a week or month, or even once a quarter. Well, you should review your progress at different time frames, but there are several reasons to review your activity daily:

1. Because you're looking for a big breakthrough, and if you wait too long between assessments, you can find you've let weeks or even months go by without even thinking about your writing.
2. Because it's easier to correct a minor slip-up. An inch off-target now becomes a mile or more when multiplied over time. Make the fix now and you won't have to deal with the big problems later.

3. Because it's less intimidating. Sitting down for an hour or two to review a month's worth of activity can be overwhelming, but taking five minutes at the end of the day can become a relaxing bedtime ritual.
4. Because your actions are fresh in your mind. You'll forget lots of details if you wait too long to go over your schedule and activities. It's hard enough at the end of the day; don't wait a week or more.

Here's what you should ask yourself at the end of the day:

What did I do today that I was proud of?

What one item on my to-do list made the most difference in the achievement of my goal?

What one item on my to-do list is left over, but should have been done?

What took longer than I anticipated?

What took less time than I anticipated?

What did I enjoy doing the most?

You can easily go through these questions in five to ten minutes. You might even consider writing the answers down; it will take a bit longer, but having a list of your answers can be invaluable to figuring out where you're wasting time, what your highest-value activities are, and what you can change.

You might find that just by paying attention to what's going on in your life, and where you're spending your time, you will naturally make adjustments that put your schedule more in line with your goals.

8. Why Are You Doing It?

If you're finding yourself mired in muck, longing to jump forward to success, it could be a matter of not having strong enough motivation, or

not reminding yourself of why you want to write. As a result, you can start slacking, sleeping in instead of writing your daily five pages on your book, or just letting yourself forget that you want to do it.

In the inspirational movie, “Invincible,” walk-on Philadelphia Eagles player Vince Papale keeps a heart-cutting note from his ex-wife in his locker. He regularly takes it out and reviews it – not to beat himself up, but to remind himself in a very visceral, emotional way why he must succeed.

While I don't necessarily recommend that you encourage your friends and family members to write you letters, telling you what a loser you are, there is something to be said for negative motivation.

Even more inspiring, however (and somewhat easier on the ego) is positive motivation. Knowing you want to see awakening in our world and knowing that your words could make an eternal difference in someone's life, can keep you focused and moving forward.

Habakkuk 2:2 Write the vision and make it plain – that the one who reads it may run.

Here are some ways to keep your vision in front of you:

Create a vision board. Cut photos, words, and other images from magazines and glue them, collage-style, on a piece of posterboard. Hang it somewhere you can see frequently. (Hint: You can do the same thing digitally by creating an electronic vision board and using it for your desktop wallpaper).

Write your vision in large letters. It helps to keep your plans in front of your eyes so that you will not forget.

Write it everywhere. Put post-it notes on your car's dashboard, on your bathroom mirror, on your checkbook, in your day planner or calendar. The constant visual reminder will keep you focused.

This really works! When the Lord called our family to move 400 miles away and begin a new work for Him, we had received a confirming prophecy from a visiting minister. My husband had this message to us posted everywhere! Kitchen cabinet doors, bathroom mirrors, car mirrors, closet doors, the refrigerator. Everywhere we looked, there was the reminder that we were doing the right thing. When things looked tough around us, we read those words. They kept our faith level high.

Go audio. Record your goals on a digital voice recorder and play it back, or read it out loud each morning and evening.

Make it vivid. Like Papale's note, make your reminders emotion-laden. Picture yourself standing before an audience sharing your revelation. See the people reading your book or blog and having the turnaround they need. The more completely you can view your future, the easier it will be to latch onto it and use it as a guiding light.

When we begin our plans, we are usually excited and motivated about our projects. As we go along, however, it's easy to lose the vision and lose the enthusiasm. Having constant reminders will help us keep the vision and stay motivated to accomplish it.

One of the keys here is experimentation. If you've always tried positive motivation, maybe it's time to change things up and brandish the stick instead of the carrot. You may even want to review your "patterns of success" (see section 7) for keys to your personal motivation recipe.

9. No More Distractions

Proverbs 21:5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage.

The dog needs a walk. Your leg hurts. The dishes/grocery/laundry needs to be put away. You really should change your email signature. Is it time for a new header on your site? Maybe another color background for your Twitter profile page...

If you let the voices in your head – what esteemed writing teacher Natalie Goldberg calls your monkey mind – take over, you will have a very clean kitchen floor, but not much else to show for your work day. Distractions are everywhere, and you must guard against their infiltrating presence as firmly as you would guard against a thief in your home.

From email to laundry to researching your dog's itchy ear on petcare.com, the tasks that pull us away from our goals aren't inherently bad – and that's the problem. They seem like good, productive activities, something any fine upstanding home- or pet-owner would do. But there's only one problem: They aren't moving you closer to your goal. Instead, they're taking you farther away.

If you want to make big progress, you have to cut the distractions – no matter how worthwhile they seem. Here's how to keep your eyes on your prize and your seat in your desk chair (or wherever it belongs):

Make a list – and stick to it. The to-do list is like marching orders from your general. Make it and stick to it. You can rearrange the spice cabinet or de-tick Fluffy after you've finished your daily goals.

Do the tough stuff first. Get the hardest (and usually most value-packed) tasks out of the way early in the day. That way you won't be distracted by the minutiae of daily life that seem to breed and multiply with each passing hour.

Give yourself regular breaks. Sometimes, some of that “life” stuff has to be taken care of. Give yourself regular mini-breaks of 10 minutes a few times a day to take care of calls to the vet, kitchen floors, etc. But set a timer and drop what you're doing when your 10 minutes are up.

Keep a list of short tasks. One of the reasons we get pulled off track is that we come to a standstill. We've completed a big task and have yet to start the next round, or we're waiting to hear back from someone before we can proceed. These natural lulls are common places for our monkey mind to sneak in. Instead of allowing your imagination free

rein, have a ready list of activities related to your goal that take less than 15 minutes. Pull out the list and knock something off instead of getting pulled away.

Be ruthless about banning any distractions from your life. Each minute you reclaim is like a huge stepping stone towards your goals.

10. No Excuses Here

In the immortal words of one of the greatest philosophers of our generation:

Do or do not: There is no try. --Yoda

I know that it's not scripture, but that little green guy had it right: When it comes down to it, your excuses don't matter.

When you have a goal of writing, excuses could easily bog you down so that you never accomplish what you desire. There will always be minor crises that attempt to stop you, but when you keep your eye on God's goal for you, you will not be delayed for long.

You do it, or you don't. There are no points for trying. Once you accept that, you can move out of victim mentality and realize it really is all up to you.

The other thing you can be sure of is that 99.9 percent of people aren't really mindful of your plans. Whether you finish your book or start your blog, or not, they're going on about their life, without much regard for you and your goals.

What it really comes down to is that it's all up to you. That's a little scary, but it's also very empowering. That means once you make up your mind, no one can hold you back. In fact, if you look at the top excuses for not executing on ideas, as presented by the Behance Team on American Express's www.theopenforum.com, you'll see that most are completely within your control.

<https://ChristianBloggersInternational.com>

I don't have enough time. We all have the same amount of time. In fact, someone who is busier than you are is doing what you want to do, right now.

I'm afraid I can't write as well as so-and-so. Fear is an emotion. You could just as easily decide to be inspired by so-and-so's success.

It's not the right moment to do it. It's never the right moment, because there is no right moment – there is only now.

Excuses are nothing more than a matter of opinion. **Change your mind; change your life.**

Conclusion: Take The Quantum Leap

You have in your hands ten ways to launch yourself forward toward your goal of writing your book. Go through this E-book and flag a few of the suggestions that grab you right away. Test them out, see how they work for you, and do it again.

Whatever God calls you to in your life, you can achieve. And I hope this short guide will help you get there.

May your journey be Forever Upward!