



Nonfiction Book Proposal Guide

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ANNOTATED

## TITLE PAGE

### Nonfiction Christian Living Book Proposal (or another nonfiction genre)

#### Title: Subtitle

***The title communicates the book's premise.*** What is the book about? If the title is too clever or vague, it doesn't offer the reader a hook to become interested. The title should hook the reader's interest *and* communicate what's inside.

***The subtitle communicates the book's promise.*** What will the reader gain by buying and reading this book? Let the reader know what's in it for him or her when they buy the book. (5 secrets to happiness? How to make the perfect paper airplane? A proven path to worldly riches?)

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Note: You may wish to include document header or footer with:

- a. Your name
- b. Name of your book project

# PROPOSAL

**Note:** Numbered/lettered sections here are for you; omit the lettered sections, as too much formatting can distract the reader.

Your proposal must demonstrate 3 things:

- I. **Concept:** The book has a fresh concept.
- II. **Platform:** The book is attached to a large or growing platform.
- III. **Writing:** The book has strong writing.

## I. THE CONCEPT

*In this section you must convince an agent or publisher that this book needs to be published.*

### A. Premise (1-sentence description of the book's unique angle)

Hook the reader and create interest by crafting a concise and compelling description of book's thesis.

This is your unique fresh angle!

A strong premise will connect with a reader's felt need and meet that need. This thesis, or premise, is what will focus and guide both your proposal and, more importantly, your manuscript. It's the unifying theme, or thread, which holds your book together. This red thread should "peek through" in every chapter.

When an editor scans your summary of chapters, she's expecting to see how you're advancing this idea from chapter to chapter. When an editor sets down the proposal, this is the compelling idea that stays with him or her.

### B. Overview

Write 2-3 paragraphs to entice a reader to read further.

This section is similar to dynamic and exciting copy on back of a book that might grab book browser's attention, compelling them to purchase and read the book.

### C. Audience

Who is the audience for this book? Male or female? Married? Parents? Age bracket? Education? Religious affiliation? Memberships?

The very worst worst worst audience you can suggest is: *Everyone*.

It's been said, and most publishers know: *If you write a book for everyone, you end up writing a book for no one. But if you write a book for someone, you end up writing a book for everyone.*

You can communicate your intended audience in one of two ways:

1. "They are..."  
Describe the demographic of the group of people who will be reading this book.  
(Married fathers who are in the workplace, 2 children, 35-50, they use their vacation time to go on mission trips, etc....)
2. "She is..."  
Identify a particular reader in the audience.  
(Jessica is single, 25, and she lost her mother to cancer when she was thirteen. She's finishing grad school in theology and hopes to...)

Whether you describe the book's audience corporately or individually, know who your "someone" is. Tape her picture on your computer screen and write every word, sentence, page to meet her needs.

It can often help a publisher if you list "Primary," "Secondary," and "Tertiary" audiences.

### D. Need for the Book

Why is there a need for this particular book? What sorts of question are readers already asking that this book will answer? What's the benefit to the reader? Give an agent or publisher several strong reasons that readers *need* this book. Convince him or her that this book *needs* to be published.

### E. Unique Selling Proposition

What's the pay-off for the reader who buys and reads this book? What does it offer that other books do not? Communicate to a publisher the benefits to the reader.

*If a reader buys and reads this book, he or she will:*

- Think...
- Feel...
- Do...

*Because*

- X
- Y
- And Z

This lets a publisher know how your book will impact/change/transform a reader.

#### F. Biblical Foundation

If your book is faith-based, give the reader a glimpse at where the big idea of your book is rooted in Scripture.

#### G. Alternate Titles

In the event that an agent or publisher would not automatically connect with the working title you've chosen, list a few alternate titles and subtitles here.

#### H. Competition (list titles and provide 2-4 sentences of explanation)

List 4-6 books on the market that are similar to yours. Though this isn't the most glamorous section of your proposal, it's very important to publishers, and shows that you've done your homework.

For each book, give the title, author, publisher, and year of publication. Then unpack how the book is like yours and how yours is unique.

This section does two things.

1. It communicates, "There's an interest in the book, because here are a few that have done well..."
2. It also communicates, "But here's how mine's distinct..."

TIPS:

- a. Avoid referencing blockbusters—steer clear of *War and Peace*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Kisses from Katie*. Comparing your book to these may indicate naivety.
- b. Be thoughtfully critical about competition, but not unkind. (Especially if this publisher published one of these!)
- c. Be very clear about the differences between your book and the one you list, highlighting the way yours is unique.

## I. Manuscript Details

(word count, how much of book is complete, time needed to write book after contract is signed)

- Word Count:
- Current Status:
- Deadline: (Usually a certain amount of months from a signed agreement)
- Special Features: ( Informational side bars? Questions for reader at end of chapters? Downloadable devotional guide? )

## II. THE PLATFORM

*In this section you must convince an agent or publisher that you are the writer to write this book because you're already reaching readers.*

### A. Author Bio

Write this section in the third person, as if an agent or collaborator is bragging on you.

The publisher will be interested in a mention of your education, and your relevant work or volunteer experience.

Use this section to communicate why you are the right author to write this book.

Include a quality headshot and a link to the website featuring you as a writer.

### B. Previous Writing

If you've got books, list titles, years, publisher/s, sales figures. If this is your first book, say so.

### C. Endorsers

List the people who have agreed to consider endorsement of the manuscript upon completion.

Note: This is not a wish list. Please please don't list Michelle Obama, Jim Gaffigan or J-Lo unless they've actually agreed to endorse your book. For each endorser, include endorser's name, position, and your relationship to them.

## D. Personal Marketing

### 1. What you've already accomplished regarding this topic/project

- a. How many times have you spoken in the last 12 months? List your speaking gigs from the last year, indicating venue/client and size of audience. Then list gigs you have booked for the next 12 months.
- b. Have you been publishing articles relating to the content of the book? Share some of those articles/links.
- c. Are there organizations or conferences to whom you speak regularly? Explain.
- d. Facebook followers/fans
- e. Twitter followers
- f. Instagram followers
- g. Personal newsletter mailing list, # of subscribers
- h. Other mailing lists, such as the organization for which you work, to which you have access?
- i. Blog followers: how many hits per month? How long have you been blogging?
- j. Website traffic: # hits per month

### 2. What you'll do to promote this project

This is not a list of what you're *willing* to do (i.e. a glamorous 20-city book tour paid for by publisher). This is a list of what you will orchestrate to promote your book. Get creative and suggest the kinds of strategies that will work for you.

- a. Are there speaking gigs you'll secure to promote your book? Be specific.
- b. Will you write articles when book is released? For what publications?
- c. Can you be a "guest blogger" on someone else's site? Whose? Will you organize a blog tour? How many blogs?
- d. Will you be able to wrangle media opps on tv or radio? List those.
- e. Do you have a unique idea for how to create buzz and word of mouth excitement?
- f. What unique opportunities fit with who you are?

Be specific.

## E. Relevant Affiliations

Are you a member of an extensive writer's network? A staff member of a national ministry? Do you have access to a syndicated radio show? Do you serve on a college's Board of Directors? List significant affiliations that could impact book sales here. Are you connected to an organization—a ministry, business or nonprofit—that would buy copies in bulk and help promote the book?



## F. Awards and Honors

This section is optional. If you have any achievements that will benefit the book, mention them here.

## G. Future Writing

Publishers like to work with authors who might publish more than one book. Suggest a few titles, with a sentence of description each, that you might hope to publish in the future. One or more of these might be included in a series that would include this first book.

## H. Summary

Do ideas for this book keep you up at night? Have you been developing this material over the last decade? Is it already changing lives? Let publisher know why you're excited about this book. (But be sure to frame it as being about the *reader*, and not about you.)

### III. THE WRITING

*In this section you must convince an agent or publisher that you have the skills to write this book.*

#### CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Your chapter summaries are like an annotated table of contents for your book. Offer 2 or 4 sentences of description for each chapter.

1. Use creative/engaging chapter titles.
2. Make sure there is a logical flow/arc/progression to your book and allow the angle/premise/theme/focus/red-thread to be evident throughout your outline.
3. Emphasize your unique premise.
4. Include reader takeaway. Include a note with each chapter summary identifying what the reader will receive in this chapter.

#### SAMPLE CHAPTERS

Offer the publisher:

1. First chapter
2. Your favorite chapter
3. Possibly a third, if chapters are short. (Typically your proposal offers publisher 10%-15% of the book.)

\*Caution: only include an introduction if it's requisite. This is rare. More often it slows down the reader's experience of your writing. Reader is ready to launch at chapter 1!

Pages should be black Times New Roman 12-pt font, double-spaced.

Make sure they:

- (a) Demonstrate your strongest writing, and
- (b) Are error-free.

Your unique angle should shine through these chapters!