

Writing Devotions Workshop

What is a devotion?

A devotion gives readers a precious gift of wisdom carefully packaged with love. Short and tightly written, a short inspirational piece reveals one Biblical principal. Readers seek out devotions, in snatches of time, to fill their minds with uplifting thoughts and to be inspired by how God works in the lives of people.

Length

The average daily devotional is 250-400 words and pays a \$10-\$25. They are widely read and so your thoughts and words can touch many lives. A devotional in *Upper Room* is read by millions of people on more than forty countries.

Focused writing

To write devotions, learn to use few words to convey an image that illustrates a message. I discovered the key to writing devotions in proverbs 25:11, "Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word fitly spoken." The simple words form a beautiful picture that appeals to the senses while conveying insightful thoughts.

The following checklists may help you evaluate devotions. These are tools to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses. Each devotion will not have every item checked. For example, some may contain humor, while others may evoke tears, or a thoughtful reflection.

Developing the devotion

To prepare an apple, a seed is planted and cultivated. The tree grows, and the beautiful ripe apple is chosen and picked. When a devotional idea comes to mind, plant it in your heart. Cultivate it with prayer then carefully choose the best words to use. Reflect on the one point you want readers to remember and build your devotion around that basic theme or the apple.

Editing

The apple shines when someone polishes it. Polish the focus sentence with editing. Don't rush to serve the words before taking time to make them shine. Use active verbs but avoid commanding readers with words that sound peachy such as *must* or *do*.

The setting of silver is the serving plate that conveys love and care for the other person. An apple on a paper plate would provide the same nourishment but not the same message of love. The backdrop that holds the apple should show off the apple to its best advantage.

Audiences

Young children	Young readers
Tweens	Teens
Women	Men
Hobby-ests	Military
Families	

Devotion's Strengths

- Title matches focus
- Title grabs attention
- Fresh, creative approach with strong lead
- Presents an eternal truth
- Universal theme for reader identification
- Evokes an emotion
- Contains humor
- Insightful application/ take-away
- Focuses on a single idea
- Creates a word-image
- Appeals to one or more senses
 - sight hearing taste touch smell
- Good read-aloud-ability
- Appropriate for specific audience
- Bible verse, or quote, matches the message
- Closes with a bang/ah-hah moment

Short-comings

- Title vague or plain
- Overused or trite theme (or urban legends)
- Not well-focused
- No sensory appeal
- Poor transitions
- Lacks flow
- Passive, inactive verbs
- Too wordy, needs tightening
- Clichés
- No specific reader benefit/ take-away
- First person that makes you and not God the star
- Christian jargon (sounds preachy and many new Christians don't understand)