

## Walking the Tightrope Between Faith and Fiction

### Question #1: Are you a Christian (Buddhist, Muslim, etc...) fiction writer, or are you a Christian (Buddhist, Muslim, etc...) who writes fiction?

1. How do you know? According to Francine Rivers, Christian Fiction has at its heart Biblical themes couched in scripture. If you remove the “Christian” stuff from the story, the book crumbles.

Ex: C.S. Lewis's Screw Tape Letters

2. If you're a Christian writing fiction, your worldview will influence your story, may even have scriptural themes, but the story can stand without the “Christian” stuff.

Ex: Tolkien's Lord of the Rings

3. This decision will influence not just what you write, but who you pitch it to when it's done. If you're writing Christian fiction, you'll need to find a Christian Publisher. Those publishers generally have strict guidelines that will inform the way you write your stories.

### Question #2: What is Your Mission Statement?

1. What makes your genre perspective unique?
  - What themes do you find yourself continually returning to?
  - What kind of characters are you drawn to?
  - Where/when are your stories set?

Examples:

Kristy Tate – Stories that ask the question: Is there life after death?

Evanovich – Ethnic characters with hilarious perspectives on life.

Martin – Dark fantasy version of Europe in the Middle Ages.

***Part 1 of your Mission Statement: Fill in the blanks.***

I write (setting description, genre) with (or about) (theme description.)

Examples:

I write sweet Western romance about second chances.

I write dark fantasy adventures with kick-butt heroines.

***Greta's answers:***

Themes: The B.S. (besetting sins) we all struggle with.

Characters: I write middle-class characters whose life story explains, but doesn't justify, their behavior.

Setting: The stories are set in present day Southern California.

***Greta's Mission Statement, part 1:*** I write suburban suspense and mystery with a redemptive twist.

2. Why do you write what you write? Answer two questions.

Who is your ideal reader?

- Age
- Gender
- Education level
- Economic status
- Worldview
- Interests

What impact do you want your stories to have on that reader?

- Entertainment – Larger than life characters, fast moving plots, and big settings. (Clive Cussler, Preston and Childs, Dan Brown)
- Education – Unusual or quirky characters, stories with strong social or scientific themes set in historical, cultural, or fictional world settings. (Linda Castillo's Amish Murder Mysteries, James Michner, Michael Crichton.)
- Inspiration – Relatable characters thrown into dire circumstances in settings that feel familiar. (C.S.Lewis – Chronicles of Narnia, John Grisham, The Walking Dead)

***Part 2 of your Mission Statement: Fill in the blanks.***

My stories are populated by (type of characters) who (plot description) and/to/for (desired outcome.)

Examples:

Dan Brown - My stories are populated by larger than life characters who race around the globe to find historic clues in order to defeat powerful conspiracies.

Micheal Crichton - My stories are populated by characters with unique skill sets who must find scientific solutions in order to save the world.

C.S. Lewis - My stories are populated by average people who are thrust into fantastic adventures that make them better and stronger.

***Greta's answers:***

Ideal Reader: College educated, career minded female, between the ages of 35 and 65 who places a high priority on marriage and family.

Motivation: I write primarily to inspire.

***Greta's Mission Statement:*** I write suburban suspense and mystery with a redemptive twist. My stories are populated by familiar characters who are thrown into life and death circumstances and emerge as changed individuals.

**Question #3: How do you stay true to your mission?**

1. Where do you draw your lines?

Regardless of the broad genre, whether it's romance, mystery, or fantasy, there are books in every segment of the morality spectrum. It's best to think about where you are going to draw your lines before you begin your publishing journey.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How will I write about sex?
- How will I write about violence?
- How will I write about religion?
- How will I write about immoral characters?

- Will I write about politics?
- Will I write profanity?
- Are there topics I won't ever write about?

## 2. What do you tell the world?

- Website/logline & bio
- Social Media
- In person events

*Website:* Your login and bio are great places to let your potential readers know who you are and what you write. Use your Mission Statement to help yourself craft a logline.

*Bio/About page:* let your readers know more about your themes, your personality and your intentions. Think about what you can say about your background that might help draw in your “ideal reader.” Think about your voice. Don't write your bio like it's a resume. You're giving people a sample of your writing.

### ***Greta's examples:***

“I write to inspire and entertain, and so I can afford nice wine.”

“I like to describe my work (and my life) as an O.C. housewife meets Dante's Inferno.”

*Social Media:* Branding should be consistent. If you write political thrillers, go ahead and talk politics. If you write sweet romance, I wouldn't go on vitriolic political rants on Facebook. Be sweet. If you love to inspire people, post inspiring stories and videos. Be yourself, but be your best self.

*In person events:* Be presentable, be nice. Remember Who you represent.