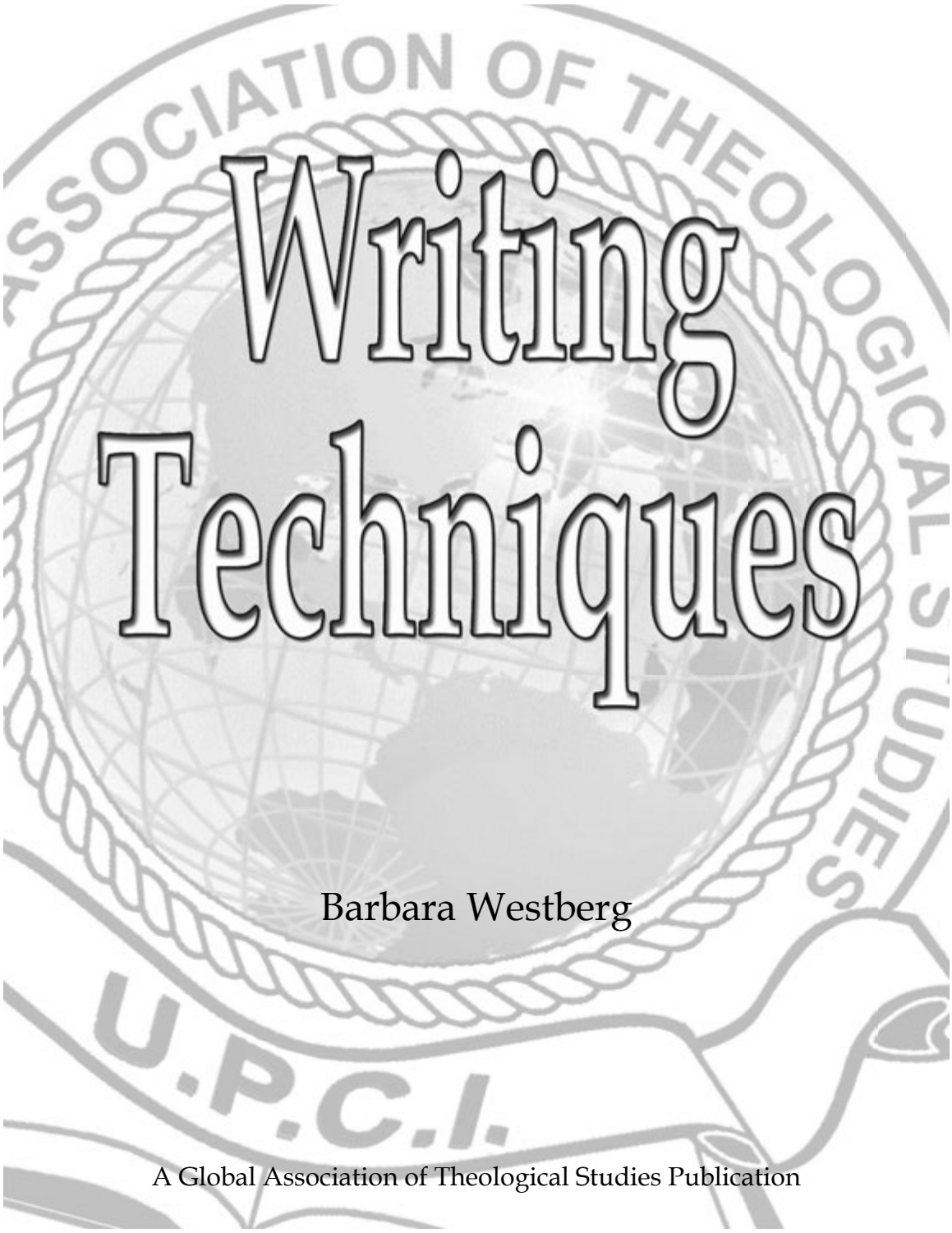


Global Association of Theological Studies

Writing Techniques

Barbara Westberg



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A Global Association of Theological Studies Publication

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LESSON 1

God Said, “Write”

“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever” (Isaiah 30:8).

Focus

The written word is important.

Aim

Realize that the written word has power. Feel a passion to write. Record a personal experience.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

And God Wrote

God is the original writer. The first record we have of writing is when God put a mark on Cain. Marks (signs, pictures, letters) came to be used to record ideas. These symbols were later called *hieroglyphics*.

Moses was the first to mention God’s record book.

“Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (Exodus 32:32).

With His finger God wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone (Deuteronomy 5:22). What a finger to engrave words on stone! Was it the finger of God that wrote on the wall pronouncing judgment on Belshazzar? Remember when Jesus wrote on the ground? (See John 8:8.) Is this the same finger that writes God's laws on the tables of our hearts? (See Jeremiah 31:33; II Corinthians 3:3.)

Always when God assigns a task, He gives the person an example. So before God commanded humanity to write, He wrote—not with pen and paper, but with His finger on stone.

And God Said, “Write”

Moses was the first man in biblical record to write. He did so at God's command.

“Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Exodus 34:27).

Scholars believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch (books of the Law—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), a monumental task undertaken while leading several million people on a forty-year journey.

Halley's Bible Handbook's chapter on “Archeological Discoveries” states:

- In the ruins of Ur, libraries with thousands of books have been unearthed, revealing a period of great literary activity, even before Abram's day.
- Archeological discoveries prove that recording important events was common from the dawn of history. The events of Genesis could have been recorded from the beginning.
- Hebrew and Christian tradition says that Moses, guided by God, composed Genesis out of ancient documents existent in his day.

According to *Halley's Bible Handbook*, the literary profession was important in Egypt as much as a thousand years before Moses. Everything of importance was recorded on stone, leather, and/or papyrus. Every Pharaoh had the history of his reign carved on his palace walls and monuments. Egypt had vast libraries of state documents. Growing up in Pharaoh's palace, Moses had access to all the

wisdom and learning of Egypt. He was handpicked by God and trained to be one of the world's greatest leaders and writers.

God is still handpicking men and women to lead and to write. That is why you are in this class. Never belittle the God who has called you by discrediting yourself. The God who has called you will prepare you.

Exercise 1

Your instructor will lead the class in a game of Gossip. After the game, write both the original message and the final one in the "What Have You Learned?" section.

Talk about It

What happens when the spoken word passes from person to person, from generation to generation? What happens when the written word passes from person to person, generation to generation? Why did God tell Moses to write His covenant with Israel?

"And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. . . . And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient" (Exodus 24:4, 7).

The Lord spoke the Law to Moses. Moses wrote it, and then he read the written words to the people. Only after the people heard the Law could they obey it. How important was it for Moses to write the words of the Lord?

"And he [Moses] said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Deuteronomy 32:46-47).

Moses was a busy man, but he made writing a priority. God did not say, "Moses, when you get time, jot down a few notes about these rules I'm giving you." God said, "Write."

In the last book of the Bible, God commanded John, an apostle in exile, to write.

“What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia” (Revelation 1:11).

Over a period of fifteen hundred years, God instructed some forty men, “Write.” They took pen in hand and wrote “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (See II Peter 1:20-21.) From Genesis to Revelation, we read words written by men who were moved by passion, stopped their daily routine, and took pen in hand. Because these men wrote, we have the Bible.

“Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever” (Isaiah 30:8).

The Purpose of the Written Word

Although the written Word of God is complete, the command to “write” still goes out to the church.

Exercise 2

Read Deuteronomy 32:3; Psalm 26:7; Jeremiah 50:2; and Mark 1:45. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* the root of *publish* means “to proclaim, to read, to tell, to cause to hear, to herald, to preach.” Look again at these verses and note what was to be published. Write the answers on the table in the “What Have You Learned?” section.

Talk about It

What picture does *publish* paint on your mind? How do we publish the Word?

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The Great Commission does not mention writing, but this command is carried out around the world when teachers use curriculum developed by God-anointed writers. The printed page speeds the spread of the gospel to all nations.

“Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark

sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (Psalm 78:1-7).

The psalmist wrote of a parable, dark sayings of old, a testimony, and a law. These were to pass to their children, "to the generation to come," the children yet to be born. How was this done? By relying on the spoken word? No. By the written word—the psalms that were composed, the laws that were recorded, the testimonies that were written. Writers preserved Israel's heritage for their children.

Scripture records numerous reasons why God's Word was written:

- To preserve history (Exodus 17:14).
- For future generations (Psalm 102:18; Proverbs 22:20-21; Isaiah 30:8).
- For instruction (Exodus 24:12; Deuteronomy 6:9; 17:18-20).
- For recording the Law (Deuteronomy 27:1-4, 8).
- For keeping records (Joshua 24:26-27; Ezra 5:9-10).
- For inspiration (Deuteronomy 31:19).

Exercise 3

Use a concordance to find Scripture verses giving other reasons why the Word of God was written. Key words to look up are *written*, *wrote*, *write*, *book(s)*, *letter(s)*. Make a note of these references and reasons on a sheet of paper and be prepared to share these with your class.

Compare the findings listed in exercise 2 to the findings in exercise 3. Although we are not writing the infallible Word of God, we are writing for the same reasons that men of old wrote.

Church history is made every day, but is it written? Unless it is written, it will be lost. The command continues to resound, "Write."

The Power of the Written Word

“The pen is mightier than the sword.” – Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton

The written word can start wars or bring peace. It can bless or curse. It can bring hope or pronounce judgment. It can incite violence or win victory. It can exalt God and put down evil.

“When a man puts in circulation a good, religious book,” said Dr. Stonebridge, “he sets in motion an influence the extent and duration of which he cannot estimate. It is a teacher that requires no outfit, no money for traveling expenses, no salary, is not affected by the climate, is never sick, and consequently has no druggist’s or doctor’s bills to pay, and experiences no diminution of physical or mental activity because of age. Always ready for work; no blue Mondays; always as bright as the morning stars.

Books can go and stay where it is not practical for missionaries to live. Our merchant ships carry books and leave them on the islands of the sea, as well as on the shores of continents, years in advance of the arrival of missionaries.”¹

The printed page never flinches, never shows cowardice; it is never tempted to compromise; it never tires, never grows disheartened; it travels cheaply, and requires no hired hall; it works while we sleep; it never loses its temper; and works long after we are dead. The printed page is a visitor which gets inside the home, and stays there; it always catches a man in the right mood, for it speaks to him only when he is reading it; it always sticks to what it has said, and never answers back; and it is a bait left permanently in the pool.²

Pilate summed it up when he told the chief priests who confronted him about the inscription on Jesus’ cross, “What I have written I have written” (John 19:22). Written words, even those of men, endure when spoken words have faded into time and been forgotten.

No wonder God chose the written Word to communicate His message to us. The spoken word gets twisted and revised and even forgotten. However, the written Word does not change.

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:8).

The Influence of the Written Word

For fifty-five years Manasseh, the most wicked of the wicked kings of Judah, caused the people to “sin with his idols.” He was followed by his son, Amon, who “walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them.” Add Amon’s two-year reign to his father’s fifty-five year reign. For fifty-seven years, Judah forsook the law of the Lord. (See II Kings 21.)

Then eight-year-old Josiah came to the throne.

“He did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left” (II Kings 22:2).

In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah started a building project, repairing the Temple. During the restoration, the high priest Hilkiyah found the book of the Law in the house of the Lord. He gave it to the scribe, who read it to the king.

How long had it been since anyone had heard the Law? How long since anyone had even inquired about the law of the Lord? For close to seventy years, Judah had lived without the written word. The Law had been scorned, neglected, and then forgotten.

Grandfather may have said, “Son, the Law says we are to do so and so.”

The son may have told his son, “Well, your granddad said that the Law says that, but I’m not so sure. I’ve never read the Law or even heard it read.”

Did the grandson say to his children, “The Law? What Law? There is no Law.”

But there was a law. God has always had a law. Even in those long years when the law of the Lord was lost in the house of the Lord (of all places), the Law was in effect.

When Josiah heard the words of the Law, he rent his clothes. "Woe to us! We are in trouble. We have not been obeying the words of this book."

So Josiah sent a delegation to inquire of the prophetess. She responded with a message of judgment and mercy. (See II Kings 22:15-20.)

The king gathered the people to hear the reading of "all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD" (II Kings 23:2). The king and the people made a covenant to perform the words written in the book.

The written word turned a nation around and brought revival to the land. Josiah, following the Law, turned the hearts of the people back to the one true God. They held a Passover like Judah had not seen in all the days of the judges and the kings. (Read II Kings 23.)

The written word has power to change individuals, families, and nations.

Exercise 4

Can you recall a time when a written message changed your life? It might have been the Word of God, or it could have been a letter, an article, or a lesson. Take a few minutes and write from your heart about that experience. Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, or sentence structure; that will be covered in future lessons. Just write. (*No more than 100 words.*)

It Is Written

Three of the most powerful words on earth and in Heaven are, "It is written." Eighty times God's Word, states, "It is written." With those words, Jesus overcame the devil in the wilderness. What if nothing had been written?

CONCLUSION

God wrote; then He commanded men to write. He chose the written word to communicate His will to humankind, because the written word is unchanging. Spoken words can be twisted, misunderstood, and forgotten. The written word stands firm.

Because men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we have the Bible. Even though God's Word is complete, the command to "write" is still in effect. May a passion grip you to write so that individuals, families, and nations may be changed.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

Exercise 1

What was the original message? _____

What was the revised message? _____

Exercise 2

In the table, list the message to be published.

<i>References</i>	<i>Message to be Published</i>
<i>Deuteronomy 32:3</i>	
<i>Psalms 26:7</i>	
<i>Jeremiah 50:2</i>	
<i>Mark 1:45</i>	

Exercise 3

List on this table references and reasons why the Word of God was written.

<i>References</i>	<i>Reasons</i>

1. Name some things that God wrote. _____

2. Who was the first man recorded in the Bible to write? _____

3. How did God prepare this man to be a writer, as well as a leader? _____

4. How is "the pen mightier than the sword"? _____

5. What can your writings do that you cannot do? _____

6. How did the written law bring revival to Judah during the reign of King Josiah?

7. What are three of the most powerful words on earth and in Heaven? _____

8. Do you feel God has a writing ministry for you? If so, how can you prepare for it? _____

HOMEWORK

- Rewrite the account you wrote in class (Exercise 4). Strive for emotion, clarity, and impact. Read it aloud to yourself, revising as needed.
- Read the revised article aloud to someone and ask for his input. Does he understand what you are saying? Is he moved by your words? How can you improve your writing?
- Rewrite again. Turn this in at the beginning of your next class for evaluation by the teacher.

Personal Study Notes