



Freedom for the
God-designed Writer In You

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To the frustrated and discouraged writers who question their path every time they fail. I've been there. Know that God sees you. God understands you. And the way He designed you is not a mistake, even if it feels that way sometimes.

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INTRODUCTION



My Writing Life is Over Before It Begins

My writing dreams couldn't end like this.

I sat in yet another writer's conference as published authors, the authorities on writing well, touted a need to plot out every detail of my stories to make them stronger. The message was consistent with what I'd heard at my previous conference and the one before that.

According to what everyone taught, good writing required intense pre-planning. Every detail from plot points to a character's backstory should be accounted for before writing the first word of the first paragraph. The system was very structured, very detailed, and so very *not* like me.

I desired to be a strong writer—more than anything. God placed in my heart a passion for story. Every imagination and emotion-capturing story I'd ever read confirmed in me the need to create my own. I'd prayed about my path and moved forward, convinced in my heart that writing faith-based fiction was God's plan, prepared for me before I was even born.

I tried incorporating the lessons learned at the feet of these writing masters. They instructed me on the steps leading to author

success. Harnessing their ways would allow me to craft stories readers would return to again and again. It had to be true. These were known authors in the Christian publishing industry. If I diligently followed their path, I would enjoy the same success.

I tried.

I failed.

Again and again, I tried.

Each time I failed.

Character development sheets sat on my desk only partially filled in. Major plot points escaped my synopsis. Every time I tried following those step-by-step instructions, my stories stalled. I struggled to get my words on the page. The story that once flowed with a rhythm worthy of dance, now crept along at an impossibly slow pace.

With discouragement weighing me down, I attended one more conference. This one was different. It was small, intimate. Registrations were limited to a handful. I wasn't sure what to expect, except for more of the same message I'd heard so many times before.

Even with the certainty of more discouragement waiting for me, I looked forward to the gathering for one reason. My favorite author was presenting. Her participation prompted my husband to register me for the conference as an anniversary gift. Meeting my favorite author gave me something to look forward to, a bright spot to ease the weight of my discouragement. Whether I ever wrote another word or not, missing the opportunity to meet her was not an option.

My assumptions about the presentations were correct. The message remained true to what I'd heard before: Plot. Plot. And plot some more. I gleaned nuggets of wisdom from each speaker. As authors who excelled in their craft, there was much to learn from them. And maybe, hopefully, this time, the plotting lessons would stick.

Then, she rose to speak.

"I'm going to say something different from what you've already heard. I'm not a plotter, and that's okay."

I can't confirm these as her exact words, but it was her message. Hope flamed inside me. My favorite author, the one whose stories fed my imagination and encouraged my soul with their messages of faith, didn't subscribe to the plotter's school of writing. Well-developed characters and strong plotlines filled her pages, and she accomplished it without planning out each step ahead of time. In fact, she admitted to being as surprised as her readers by the things her characters did and said.

Hope nudged open the door to my writer's heart. If she could succeed as an author without sacrificing her writing style, could I accomplish the same? Was this ability unique to her due to some innate talent others did not possess?

Armed with this new encouragement, I moved forward with reserved confidence in my writing. I'd know soon enough if she was an anomaly in the writing world.

But before committing myself to this renewed direction, my dream needed to return to the Dream Giver. I'd been in a serious place of doubt, and I didn't own the dream. It was on loan to me from God, and I couldn't go forward without His blessing even if I was re-energized by the workshop. I prayed. I waited. He confirmed it in me once again.

Time to move forward, though I lacked assurance of what I believed constituted success. God's idea of success for my writing could be different from my own.

Later, God opened my heart to additional truth He'd sown at that conference and cultivated through the years. Though I didn't understand it at the time, there was a scriptural basis for the freedom I felt in hearing I could write well without the confines of the plotter's system. Understanding two key truths, I've embraced who I am as an author and gained confidence in my ability to write stories that will keep readers coming back for more.

I pray these truths will help you too.