

Writing: The Power of Words to Change Your World

Words have never been more important. And they have never been more misunderstood by audiences that are increasingly post-literate in a digital universe. Your ideas, your vision for change are trapped within your mind and your soul unless you can find ways of turning them into narratives that reach hungry readers. Writers are not born; they are made. And the making of a writer is the journey of a lifetime. This session will guide you into understanding yourself as a person of words, of narratives, and of audiences. Just as you navigate a complex world with your feet, so should you navigate it through your words — crafted and shaped by the time and space, the moments in history that are unfolding all around you.

Michael Longinow is a senior faculty member in Biola University's Department of Media, Journalism and Public Relations. He earned a BA in political science at Wheaton College (IL), an MS in news-editorial journalism at the University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), and a PhD in educational policy studies at the University of Kentucky. He has contributed chapters to numerous anthologies on the history of evangelical Christianity and the intersection of media, faith and culture. Longinow is active in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) and was a founding adviser member of the Advisers of Christian Collegiate Media (ACCM). He is a frequent workshop presenter and panelist at national conventions of the Evangelical Press Association, Associated Collegiate Press, and College Media Advisers (CMA/ACP). Longinow has three grown children and two grandchildren. He and his wife Robin are active in Chino Valley Community Church in Chino Hills, CA. They live in Yorba Linda.

I. Writing Is Language

Like language, it must have purpose, context and audience. Anyone who has grasped spoken language can become a crafter of narrative. For Christians, the written word can be language of the soul. What we sense in our spirit can bubble up into narratives that have supernatural power as we let Christ in us speak through the words we use.

II. Face the Fear

- A. Fear of writing is often the fear of failure at use of language.
- B. Donald Murray, prominent U.S. writing coach says write to learn (not reverse)
- C. The most powerful writing comes out of turmoil, pain in our lives (must dredge)

III. Writers Need Editors

- A. Your writing is only as good as your willingness to tear it apart and re-work it
- B. Editors who question your premise, your approach, your facts are often best kind
- C. No writer can operate independently as an established writer (initially)

IV. Writers Need an Audience

- A. Just as conversation without another is monologue, writers must reach someone
 - B. Your reader is easily confused; clarity helps that person
 - C. Your reader needs entertainment; be creative, quirky, unpredictable.
 - D. Your idea is not new; your audience will forgive this if you take a fresh approach.
- V. God Loves Words, Follow His Pattern
- A. Henri Nouwen says God spoke out of silence. Begin there. Your page is silence.
 - B. The words you use can be God-breathed if you yield the writing moment to Him.
 - C. Let God lead you into ideas, approaches, concepts by the revision process.
 - D. Prayer must precede writing when aiming it at gospel preaching or teaching.
 - E. Scripture's pattern is showing, not just telling. Explain and paint word pictures.

Suggested Readings: