

# Words and What to Do with Them

## A Nine-Week Course for Aspiring Writers

By Lauren Dunn

### Lesson 1: Why Do You Want to Write?

Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a few years before the Civil War, and her story of fictional people in real circumstances changed the minds and hearts of a generation of Americans. William Shakespeare's plays have lasted for centuries, and thousands upon thousands of new books are published every year.

Words drive us.

This is even more deeply true for those who live by the Gospel. God created everything through words, giving us a book—full of words—to tell us about Him, and John's Gospel begins by referring to Jesus as “the Word.” We all know that writing can honor God, but going even deeper, our creativity mirrors Him as our Creator. Through essays, stories, articles, books, and messages, we can share the Gospel and the truth God has called us to spread.

Ever since my sixth-grade homeschool co-op teacher told me I could write, I've wanted to share words with others. It's not as easy as we think, but it is possible.

Why do you want to write? What do you want people to know?

Over the next few weeks, I will be sharing with you some things I've learned in the years since sixth grade. I will show you some foundational things about purpose and rejection and hard work, but then the ball will be in your court. This course will be what you make of it.

I will not be grading anything you write. Your parents will not be grading anything you write. Your “graders” will be the target audiences of your writing and public opinion. This course is about assisting wanna-be-writers to start out by doing exactly that: writing. You are expected to already know the fundamentals of spelling and grammar, or at least be able to resolve any grammatical problems on your own. Each lesson will end with an “Own It” section for you to complete so you can apply what you've learned and further develop your writing self.

The Disney play *Newsies* is about a group of newspaper-selling boys in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New York City who decide to be their own voice in a world that ignores them. A young journalist, trying to find her own place in the world of words, joins their cause and sings about how they will change the world together:

“Not only that, there’s a story behind the story:  
Thousands of children, exploited, invisible.  
Speak up, take a stand, and there’s someone to write about it.  
That’s how things get better!”

With your parents’ permission (this is optional and not necessary to complete the lesson), listen to the song here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ub8hHA96FVY>. (Parents: Note that the video has one curse word.)

Writing is more than stringing words together to form sentences, and placing sentence after sentence to make a paragraph, and placing paragraphs in the right order to make an article or a chapter or an essay. Writing involves all of that, but what pulls us to do the work of writing is the opportunity to communicate truth to a world that is reading our work, to change the way things are or the way people think, to make things better. We share the words of life (see Acts 5:20) to some who have never known it and challenge believers around us to keep the Gospel first in their lives and in everything they do. In doing that, we usually challenge ourselves too.

Some of us will share our stories to encourage others in similar places. Or we might help people tell *their* stories. Some of us will carefully word articles about doctrine or heavy world concerns. Some of us will write stories that only ever happened in our minds but still bring so much truth to our real-life situations.

In the words of Martin Luther, “If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write.”

**Own It:** Set a timer for five minutes and think about why you want to write. Then time yourself and write 500 words—without stopping—about your reasons. How long did it take you? Write down your time.