

West Coast Christian Writers Conference 2017
Meet the Faculty: Jon Drury

Cheri:

... So much for taking some time with us here.

Jon:

You are welcome. You are welcome. Now do you interview and ask the questions? How does this go?

Cheri:

I'm just going to ask you, first of all, introduce yourself, and then you already had some things prepared, so we would love to hear a little bit about the background of what is now the WCCW. Of course, fill us in on the workshop that you're going to be leading, and then anything else that you'd like to share. The time really is yours. Go ahead and start by introducing yourself.

Jon:

Great, Cheri. My name is Jon Drury. I'm a pastor of 40 years. I pastored at Redwood Chapel Community Church, where we have the Christian Writers Seminar, which was the forerunner for West Coast Christian writers. Which was just a miracle, and really was the product of my getting into Christian writing, which was a dream that I had through the first 10 or 15 years of pastoring. I couldn't figure out how to get started. I sent a few things off to denominational publications. They were dually rejected. I couldn't figure out how to get started until a couple in the church enable me to go to Mount Hermon Christian Writers Conference.

First I took Ethel Herr, introduction to Christian writing. If you know, she wrote that great classic, Introduction to Christian Writing. From there I was on my way. They say that Mount Hermon is like watering a canary with a fire hose. I experienced that. I came back in a year with some devotionals that I had written. Cindy Maddox was looking for devotionals for church bulletins that people would receive on Sunday morning. She bought some of my things. Wanted some re-writes, but I was on my way, and it was one of the biggest changes that ever happened in my life.

I used to fly for the US Air Force, and I remember when with my instructor pilot, I flew supersonic for the first time, but getting into writing was bigger than flying supersonic. It was just a huge change, and eventually wanting to pass that miracle onto others, I started the Christian Writers Seminar. That's how that got started.

Cheri:

Why was it even bigger than going supersonic?

Jon:

It was a dream.

Cheri:

Okay.

Jon:

I just had the dream of writing for publication. It was such a small start, and that's where my workshop starts. Two hundred words, pieces for something like Upper Room, or Daily Bread. I began writing for God's Word for Today. It was just such a huge change, and it was such a dream that I had that it was very satisfying to see God offer this miracle to other people that had the dream of writing. In 1994, we started the Christian Writers Seminar, went for 21 years, I think our last keynoter was Susy Flory, who directs West Coast Writers, with a great team, and Cheri's part of that team. That's how we got started.

Cheri:

Alrighty. Then do, by all means, tell us about your workshop.

Jon:

Absolutely. We start there. We start small. I couldn't imagine writing anything longer than 200 words. I loved devotionals. I used to picture someone coming into church, dying, desperate, hungry, and they look at that bulletin devotional that I had written, even though it was small, and their life was changed. I could picture a person putting that bulletin in their bible, because now God had spoken to them, and things were different, and they're carrying that devotional away with them. Writing can be very satisfying because you make an impact on somebody's life, and change somebody's life. That's where we start. We'll talk about devotionals. Of course, it used to be that when you thought of daily devotionals, you thought of a booklet that you got or subscribed to.

Now so much is online, so you can't eliminate that. I just got in a website, and I've got a couple articles on the website, so look for online. Then from devotionals you can go to devotional articles. It can open up the whole realm of writing articles. When I began I switched from devotionals to articles. I took everybody that taught article writing, like David Copp, at Mount Hermon. For about five or seven years, I studied article writing,

and it's just an amazing opportunity. Wide open door. Now I write, for example, devotional articles. The first step is devotionals that I talk about. Second step is articles, we talk about article writing. Then the last step is, "Is it possible the Lord wants you to gather those articles together for a book?" That's what I did for, Lord, I Feel so Small, my first book.

The Lord said, "You can gather these articles together", so we'll talk about that third step of gathering together maybe articles that you've written, and writing a book that God can use. Those are three steps that we'll talk about.

Cheri:

Wonderful. I love the point you make with the devotionals. If that person comes into church and they are just in that desperate place, probably the most they can handle is 200 words. Anything longer than that would probably overwhelm them. I love that focus on the reader, not the focus on yourself, or your own words, but your focus on the reader.

Jon:

Yeah, and think how often that all of us are there. I remember, I probably spent about 50 years of my life battling depression.

Cheri:

Yeah.

Jon:

It was like being in a tunnel; a dark tunnel where there's no daylight. There's no trees, and birds, and sky. Another illustration I used was it was like being in a slimy pit. Look down in the bottom and you can't climb out. Many times we're hurting. We're the desperate person, and God meets us. Now you want to transfer that miracle to somebody else, and touch them. Devotion is an interesting term because it has to do with your relationship with God; your devotion to God, and that God can touch you and heal you. In many things that write, in a sense, I'm trying to pass onto others the healing that has been a miracle in my own life. I think that's the opportunity we have in writing.

Cheri:

I love it. All right, so advice that you might have or wisdom that you might have for those who are registered and looking forward to the West Coast Christian Writers Conference. How about split it between those who have some experience under their belts, and then

some advice for the first time; this is their very first writers conference, which is typically ... Not typically, but often this event is the first writers conference for many people.

Jon:

For someone that's new, I would say, "Drink it in. Get all of the writing instruction you can. Get the CD's. Listen to them." Of course, I was back in the cassette tape era, I used to listen to those time, and time, and time again. When you're sitting in a workshop, 80% of it goes over your head. When you listen to it time and time again, then you can inculcate those principals that you desperately need in your writing. Drink it in. Swim in it. Get everything you can. These conferences are like gold. Of course, if you go to Mount Hermon, you're going to spend a little gold of \$1,500. Now you have a chance to get some fabulous writing instructions, so drink it in.

For the veteran, I would say, "I think one of your journeys is, you're looking for, 'Where does God want to use me?' What's the next step? Where do I go from here?" I lead a writers group and our people are always asking that. Listen for those clues of how God is leading you. Then, it's hard work. My book took me over six years to put together. It's a long journey. My Vietnam book, I don't know, I'm at least three or four years into right now, I'm just finishing it off. It's a lot of work. You have to work harder at your craft. Get the best writing instruction, work hard at your craft, take the next obedient step in obeying God.