

Devotion Guidelines for the Ozarks Chapter of American Christian Writers
Contest open: May 1 to July 15, 2009

Contest Basics

1. Devotions should be **about 250-350 words long (fits on a single-page, double-spaced)**.
2. **Put your contact information at the bottom** (as in footer) of each devotional you submit, Specify your: name, mailing address, email address, 10-digit phone number.
3. Winning devotions will receive publication on our web site plus a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd place certificate. **Specify whether you prefer electronic publication for 1 year, 2 years, or unlimited.**
4. **Electronic submission is preferred** but not required, submit to OzarksACW@yahoo.com .
5. **Devotion format includes** a title, suggested Bible reading or quoted scripture verse, personal witness or reflection on scripture. It may also include: a “thought for the day” (a pithy, summarizing statement), and end with a “prayer focus” (suggested subject for further prayer).
6. **Avoid preaching** (“you should ...,” “you need to ...,” “we must ...,” etc.); **and write concisely**.
7. **Give references** for any scripture passages mentioned and indicate any Bible version quoted.

Preparation

Begin in your own relationship with God. Good devotional writing is authentic. It connects real events of daily life with the truth of God. Share your insights or struggles and how faith or Bible truth helped or was proven true to you.

Good Devotional Writing

1. It uses sensory details – color, smell, and etcetera. The seemingly mundane events of life may provide rich sensory details. When we connect God's activity to common things, each encounter with them can serve as a reminder of God's work.
2. It is exploratory; it considers, asks, and often answers questions. It examines faith and is open to God's continuing self-revelation through scripture, people, and events. Good writing chronicles growth and change, seeing God behind both.

Devotion Writing Ideas

Ideas come from reading and meditating on scripture, looking for connections between it and your daily life. When you see a helpful connection:

- Retell the Bible teaching or summarize the passage briefly.
- Describe the situation that you link to the Bible passage, using a specific incident. Write down as many details of the real-life situation as you can. For example, if you write about an incident when people were talking, write down what each person said.
- Tell how you can apply this spiritual truth in days to come.
- After a few days, review your devotion. Decide which details best convey your message, and delete the others. Ask yourself whether this insight will be helpful to believers.

Devotion Writing Tips

- Begin with studying and meditating on the Bible so its power supports your words.
- Connect scripture with your own life. Your experience is unique.
- Use language and examples that appeal to the five senses. Tell what you heard, saw, touched, smelled, tasted. If appropriate, use dialogue to tell your story.
- Make only one point. Think snapshot, not movie.
- Focus on deepening the Christian commitment or nurturing the spiritual growth of readers.
- Seek always to encourage readers to deeper engagement with the Bible or living in faith.
- Always give the original source of any materials you quote. Devotions containing quotes or other secondary material that cannot be verified will not be used.