



# THE MINISTRY OF CREATIVE WRITING

(CRASH COURSE!)

MARLENA GRAVES NON-FICTION

CHRISTOPHER HOPPER – FICTION

# AM I A WRITER?

- Preaching, informing, exploring, provoking, creating with the pen.
- Me? I paint a picture with words. Words create worlds. I write to know what I think. I write as a spiritual practice. I write to cast light on injustice. I write to encourage. I write to inform. I write to explore questions. Writing forces me to engage whatever I am writing about.
- Pay attention
- What makes you cry?
- What makes you angry?
- What makes you laugh?
- What brings you joy?
- What do you find beautiful?
- What do you find intolerable?
- What occupies your thoughts?
- What do you read?

# STORIES

## Marlena

- Eugene Peterson – why does bad writing get published?
- Ann Voskamp – forcing a puzzle piece that doesn't fit
- Burying my talents – there are so many writers



## DEFINING AUDIENCE: BE CLEAR

- Remember: “everyone” is not an answer
- Christian vs. Non-Christian
- Women vs. men, both, or those who do not hold to those binaries
- Conservative, progressive, moderate
- Fiction?
- Age?
- White, people of color?
- Global, North American, American?
- Evangelical, Mainline, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Nones?

# WHY DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE?

- Book publishers will ask you to
- You know right off of the bat where to pitch your work
- Genre and rules for it will guide your writing (Christian living, Spiritual Formation)
- Structure
- Political engagement
- Cultural engagement

# PLATFORM STORIES

- “You need a bigger platform,” they said. Yeah. How big is big, exactly?
- Marlena – “Organic” No can do elevator pitches.
- You need to get your writing out there.

# THINKING ABOUT PLATFORM:

**“A healthier relationship with the idea of ‘platform’ might be the notion of responsible stewarding of your influence (Michelle Van Loon).”**

Influence begins right where you are:

1. Your church and community
2. Your denomination and other associations (ministries, organizations)
3. Website (Necessary – or Youtube channel. Where can people find you?)
  - Blogs, e-newsletters
  - Social media accounts: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
  - Speaking opportunities
  - What if I don't have any of these?

# REJECTION

- You *will* experience rejection.
- There are all kinds of reasons for rejection: timing, you might be the 100<sup>th</sup> person to send a similar pitch, your idea might not be focused enough – or it might be too specific.
- It will sting. You will mourn. Give yourself space to absorb the loss and process it. This is an essential part of the writing process.
- Processing faithfully *will* grow your resilience and focus your voice.
- People will bad mouth you, disagree, or be cruel.
- Friends won't buy your books or read your articles
- You will also have a lot of affirmation



**Persistence: “A word after a word  
after a word is power”**

**- Margaret Atwood**

**“Maintaining a student’s posture:  
Writing to learn, learning to write.”**

**-- Michelle Van Loon**

The background is a blue gradient with faint technical diagrams and circular patterns. On the right side, there is a large circular diagram with concentric circles and radial lines, resembling a gauge or a scale. The numbers 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, and 200 are visible along the outer edge of this diagram. There are also smaller circular diagrams and dashed lines scattered across the background.

Thank you!