**SUBMISSION GUIDELINES FOR:**

**Mike Nappa, at Discovery House Publishers**

Hey – thanks for your interest in submitting book proposals to me at Discovery House Publishers (a division of Our Daily Bread Ministries). Book publishing is a very competitive, often disappointing business, so I applaud your willingness to risk pursuing something that most people will never even try.

**Here’s the first thing you should know**: These submission guidelines are designed to help you create a proposal that would interest me (Mike Nappa) only. Please don’t assume they are guidelines for Discovery House as a whole, or for any other editor on staff at Discovery House or Our Daily Bread Ministries.

Basically, these guidelines will tell you about *my* interests for my upcoming publishing line of books—so please don’t contact any of the other editors here and say something silly like, “Mike Nappa says YOU ALL are looking for….” That’s a good way to get my hands superglued to my desk, and you know, when that happens I tend to reject everything—even stuff with your name on it. (I’m just sayin’.)

Now, on to the good stuff…

**MISSION**

The mission for Discovery House—and thus for any book I publish—is as simple as it is powerful:

*Feed the soul with the Word of God*.

Please keep this mission in mind from start to finish as you write.

**VISION**

My personal vision is for you to create a book that has EARS, meaning it is:

**E**ternal.

*“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”—Matthew 24:35*

I’m looking for books that addresses the eternal aspect of life in legitimate, effective ways. That is, content centered on Scripture, enhanced by prayer, and dependent on Christ’s Holy Spirit for guidance in truth. Create a manuscript that’ll last beyond your lifetime—something that just might last into eternity.

**A**uthentic.

*“…Do not be like the hypocrites…”—Matthew 6:5*

Each book I publish needs an author who lives a lifestyle consistent with what he or she is writing about—but that’s not all. My readers need you to be a writer who deals honestly and openly with issues and questions and situations that ring true to real life, writing from a position of authority on the biblical topics you address.

**R**elevant.

*“…I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.”—1 Corinthians 9:22*

We live in America in the 21st century. Some writers and editors long for a return to days gone by...but not me. Your book must be relevant to modern culture, to our actual readers, and to the multitude of influences and concerns that define our current society.

**S**hareable.

*“…How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?”—Romans 10:14*

The best way to tell about Jesus is in community—friend to friend, family to family, coworker to coworker, neighborhood to neighborhood. For that reason, I desire your work to be something people want to share with others. Shareable content is imaginative and thoughtful. It offers a unique perspective that’s not preachy or condemning. It helps us to understand and better live out God’s truth found in Christ. No pressure, right?

**GENERALLY SPEAKING…**

The genre of book I’m looking for is nonfiction and it would fall into one of these two nonfiction categories: *Christian Living* and/or *Popular Bible Reference* (NOT academic publishing).

That means it does the following:

* Engages the reader by making discovery of the Bible interesting or fascinating or intriguing.
* Contains reliable scholarship and faithful handling of Scripture texts.
* Answers real-life questions people have about faith while building readers’ knowledge and understanding.
* Is easily accessible to the everyday Christian, written in a conversational, friend-to-friend style.
* Delivers a unique perspective and information in a way that produces fresh insights.
* Adheres to a nondenominational approach. (Let’s focus on things that bring Christians together, not things that drive us apart.)
* Creates a safe space for readers to explore ideas of faith and life.
* Helps a reader to develop a greater understanding of, and experience with, God, faith, and the Bible.
* Leads people toward greater intimacy with Jesus.

Now let’s talk a bit about who’s going buy and read your book…

**AUDIENCE**

Your typical Reader is *Jane*.

Jane is around 50 years old—though she’ll never tell you her actual age. She attends a non-denominational church where she volunteers whenever she’s able. She honestly loves Jesus…but sometimes the Christian life feels hard for her. Sometimes she secretly feels like a failure in that regard, which makes her feel guilty for feeling like a failure. She cares deeply about her family—especially about her children (and maybe a few precious grandchildren!). She wants nothing more than for the people she loves to love Jesus. She also loves and respects the Bible and wants to learn more about it, but is a little bit intimidated by it. She keeps a Facebook account, but only rarely bothers with all the other social media distractions. She works at least part-time outside the home, and enjoys getting coffee with her girlfriends on a regular basis. When they’re together, they talk about everything and anything that comes to mind. Sometimes they even pray together about stuff.

Jane buys Christian books because she wants hope—hope that she can know Jesus more intimately, share His love more fully, and find joy in following him each day of her life. She’s NOT looking for another sermon or lecture. She wants someone to have a conversation with her, to help her see that really *can* be intimate with God—and through that relationship she can actually the person she truly wants to be.

So…what will you say to Jane?

*Secondary audiences: Jane’s husband and adult children, the younger women (ages 35-49) who look up to Jane as a role model, the neighbors and friends to whom Jane will give your book as a gift.*

**CONTENT PRIORITIES**

My nonfiction books at Discovery House are NOT the kind of “Christian” books you grew up reading. Yes, they’re based in solid biblical insight and an authentic spiritual life, but no, they’re NOT sermons for pew-sitters nor lectures for academics or scholars or anybody else with a string of professional letters following their name.

Now, some of you just read that previous sentence and thought, “Got it. Have to dumb things down for this publishing house…” You may quit reading right now. Go ahead and toss these guidelines in the trash and move on to your next project.

For the rest, please understand: Mike Nappa books at Discovery House are not “simple” or “dumbed-down” nor any other insulting thing like that. Rather, I’m asking you to *write a conversation* about spiritual topics and biblical texts.

**Here’s the best way to describe it**: Imagine you’re sitting with a friend in a coffee house, looking at Scripture together, discussing faith in Christ as a real-life activity and not just a theological term paper or long-winded sermon. How will you chat with that person? How will you share interesting insight about spiritual issues? How will you answer legitimate questions about your faith—without acting like a pompous, out-of-touch “Bible Speaker” who knows a zillion tons more than your friend across the table?

*If you’re someone who knows how to talk naturally about the Bible and can share real spiritual insight in a comfortable, approachable way, you’re going to do well writing for me.*

*If not, there’s always Broadway.*

So as you write, please consider the equal importance of biblical accuracy AND relational priority. Be your friend’s mentor—not her seminary professor.

**HERE’S WHAT YOU MUST AVOID**

Look, I’m rooting for you to succeed. Honest. But if you send me any of the following stuff I’m not even going to feel bad when I send you a form-letter rejection. So take notice. Do NOT send me any of these:

Academic books

Bible Study Workbooks

Church Resources

Fiction

Memoirs

Poetry

Screenplays

Small Group Studies

Anything to do with cats

Within the nonfiction category, I’m really sick of seeing variations on these kinds of themes:

“You’re God’s Pretty Pink Princess”

“You’re God’s Pretty Pink Warrior-Girl”

“Everybody Else is Wrong”

“My Book Is Really Just an Excuse to Tell Dull, Narcissistic Stories about Myself”

“I Don’t Really Have Anything of Depth to Say, But If I Publish a Book It Will Validate Me”

“I’m a Professional Speaker, So Obviously I Know How to Write a Book, Right?”

“I Read a Lot of Books but Have Never Studied the Craft of Writing…No Biggie, Right?”

“God Told Me to Write This Book!”

“This My Latest Pet Peeve, So I’m Going to Over-Spiritualize It into a Book”

“Yep, I’ve Got the Same Old Axe to Grind as Everybody Else”

“I’m Super-Spiritual, So Why Aren’t You?”

“Your Low Self-Esteem Needs My Book”

“How to Make God Do What You Want Him to Do”

“Twice the Results with Half the Prayer”

“Simple Secrets to Success in Prayer” or “…in Faith” or “…in Life” or, well, you get the idea.

OK, I could keep going on for days, but I’m guessing you’re beginning to understand the things that annoy me. If you are completely self-absorbed, a simplistic thinker about faith, a perpetuator of tired, overextended metaphors, condescending, someone who hasn’t bothered to study the skills required to write surprisingly well, then … honestly, don’t bother. Save us both the time and heartache.

If you’re a normal person, with a perspective that can range outside of your own personal history, with great writing skill and unique insight to share with a reader, then hey! Send me something good!

**THE SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL PROCESS**

You can feel free to send me your book proposal at any time—no need to query first. I’m open to submissions from an agent, or from you directly. Whatever you prefer is fine with me.

Your proposal should include two sections:

*1. All the Stuff That’s Not Your Manuscript.*

This your bio/background, your summaries, your comparative market analysis, your compelling reasons for publishing, your platform opportunities, your endorser possibilities, and so on. If you don’t know what this stuff is, you need an agent. Don’t ask me to explain it all to you.

*2. Your Manuscript Samples*

For me this is what’s most important, so make sure it’s the best part of your submission. With manuscript samples I must see: An Annotated Table of Contents, an Introduction, and Chapter 1. If this stuff isn’t ready, and isn’t surprisingly *great*, don’t send it to me. (Hint: Read it aloud before you submit. You’ll be surprised what that reveals about your writing.)

Once you (or your agent) submit your materials to me, this is what must happen for your book to get approved for a publishing contract:

*1. I have to approve your book*. For me, that means I have to be willing to become an advocate for your vision, and a collaborative partner in your success. If you resist collaboration, I’m not your editor. I’m looking for both *Talent* and *Teachability*. One without the other is not enough.

*2. My Editorial Board has to approve your book*. Yep, every single soul in my editorial department has to want to publish your book. (Take a breath. It happens sometimes.)

*3. My Publishing Board has to approve your book*. Editorial, marketing, sales, and my publisher himself (my boss’s boss) have to say yes.

*4. My Finance Department has to tell me that your book passes our financial feasibility assessment*. If it does, this assessment will also dictate what I’m able to offer in terms of deal points for your book. Generally speaking, our royalty percentages are an escalating scale that starts at 12% and goes up to 14%, then 16%. Our advances usually fall somewhere between $2,500 to $7,500, depending on how the numbers roll out of the feasibility assessment. There are exceptions, and no guarantees, so don’t assume these numbers will definitely apply to you, but you can view them as a general guideline.

**YES, SOMETIMES I GIVE AUTHORS IDEAS**

I do keep a file of specific book ideas that I’d like to see. If an idea or concept I feel passionate about doesn’t come in after a while of waiting, I will occasionally search out an author and try to pair his or her talent with that book in an “on speculation” arrangement. (If you don’t know what “on speculation” means, you need an agent.)

No, this is not a guarantee of publication. Yes, any author who takes up the challenge to create a proposal for one of my ideas “on spec” may end up with nothing from Discovery House (see that list of necessary approvals in the previous section.) But at least that author knows that if he or she is able to create a viable proposal that fits my vision, then I will be a passionate advocate for that book. After that, we just have to wait and see what happens.

If I give an idea to an author, and the author decides to submit, he or she will need to prepare and submit: An annotated Table of Contents, an Introduction, and Chapter 1.

If you want to be on “the list” for specific ideas from my file, you have to let me know.

**YES, SOMETIMES I HIRE AUTHORS FOR A WORKS-FOR-HIRE PROJECT**

Books I publish in my line are a mix of royalty and works-for-hire projects. (If you don’t know what “works-for-hire” means, get an agent.) When I have a works-for-hire project that’s already been approved and funded, I will hire writers to work on that project under a flat-fee basis. For these books, I may hire one writer to write the whole book, or I may hire several writers to contribute sections to a book.

Works-for-hire projects are a good way for me to “test” newer authors, and a good way for veteran authors to earn writing income without having to go through the struggle of the proposal/approval process. I like to do works-for-hire projects because they allow me to work with more authors, to create a stable of talent I can turn to when I need writers of skill who are already familiar with my editorial style and vision.

If you want to be on “the list” for potential works-for-hire projects, you have to let me know.

**MANUSCRIPT FORMAT**

When creating writing samples, please organize your manuscript as follows:

Please use 12-point, Times New Roman font throughout, double-spaced, with “Normal” Microsoft Word margins (1-inch all around). Do not use excessive formatting with fonts—stick to the basics: Normal, Bold, Italic. Use ½ inch paragraph indentations. Do not add a line break between paragraphs, and do not double-space after a period.

Unless otherwise requested, the Bible translation you use is up to you. Whichever translation you choose, please quote it exactly, including punctuation, and note the Scripture reference for the verse(s) quoted. Names of the books of the Bible should be spelled out, even in references enclosed in parentheses. When using pronouns that refer to God, Capitalize only He, His, and Him. Lowercase himself, who, whose, whom, you, and your.

You *must* cite *any* source used in your manuscript. For information on how to properly cite sources, see the Chicago Manual of Style’s Quick Guide at:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\_citationguide.html.

There is no hard-and-fast rule for word count limit for your book, but be aware most nonfiction books run between 40,000 to 60,000 words. There are exceptions to that rule, but if you want your book to fall at a different word count then be ready to justify that.

**QUESTIONS?**

All right! If you’ve made it this far without giving up, then you’ll probably do just fine. If you want to do some extra background work, go to your local library and pick up a copy of my book, *77 Reasons Why Your Book Was Rejected (and how to be sure it won’t happen again)*. That’s pretty much my entire book acquisition philosophy captured between two covers, so you might find it helpful.

Meanwhile, feel free to send me your submission whenever you have it ready. If you have questions along the way, I’m generally happy to help you. (Unless it’s a book about cats…)

You can email me anytime at: mike.nappa@odb.org.

Godspeed! I’m cheering for you!