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# CRITIQUE OF [BOOK TITLE]

Presented to  
**CLIENT NAME**

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

After years of hard work, [AUTHOR] and her husband are on their way to an enjoyable retirement when [AUTHOR'S] cancer diagnosis stops them in their tracks. In *[BOOK TITLE]*, [AUTHOR] relates her story of learning to trust God as He shows up time and time again throughout conflicting answers from doctors, difficult treatments, and humbling side effects. [AUTHOR'S] honest, down-to-earth writing style is refreshing and makes readers feel as if she's sitting next to them, telling them her story. Short reflection sections at the end of each chapter provide readers with the opportunity to think about how they can allow their circumstances to strengthen their relationship with God.

## STRENGTHS & CONCERNS

A few years ago, I helped another author with a collection of stories of cancer patients. As I was reading your story, I kept thinking about how different—in a good way!—yours is from the ones I read in that collection. Although I do not at all doubt the sincerity of the writers of each of those stories, their writing styles tended to be a little flowery and emotional (which makes total sense for an inspirational collection of cancer survivor stories). In your story, on the other hand, you're real and plainspoken and even wryly funny at times. I found your honest, matter-of-fact voice refreshing and unique.

Additionally, because of your reflection sections at the end of each chapter, you could reach more readers besides those whose lives have been touched by cancer, whether personally or through the experience of someone they love. Those sections, plus your writing style, will help your manuscript stand out and take its own place among other similar memoirs.

At several moments in the story, I wanted to know more about you—which, if you choose to elaborate on those details, could widen your audience even further. I was intrigued by the little glimpses of your childhood, your relationship with your husband and son, and what your relationship with God was like before your cancer diagnosis. If your primary audience is friends and family, then they will know about those details. But if you want to reach more readers, then expanding those details will help them feel more invested in your story and connected to you.

Although everything is told in chronological order, I was confused by the timeline in some places. For example, I wasn't sure how much time had passed in between procedures. I mention a few specific places and offer suggestions for how to clarify the timeline in "Observations and Revision Guides" below.

## STRENGTHS & CONCERNS

The next step I recommend for your manuscript is coaching. Your coach will take a look at your manuscript and converse with you to help you figure out your audience as well as how (and if) you want to develop your book. If you share your critique with your coach, they can also help you implement my suggestions or come up with other ideas—whichever you choose!—to flesh out the story and finish the study guides.

After you implement the changes I'll explain in the critique, or even if you need help doing so, I recommend a comprehensive edit. The three editors involved in a comprehensive edit can help you implement everything I describe in this critique. Your content editor will help you make sure everything flows to tell a well-organized and compelling story and give further help with the study guides. After that, your line editor will polish any new material as well as go over the original material to make any needed corrections to spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure. The proofreader will provide a second set of eyes to make sure your manuscript is as clean and correct as possible.

# OBSERVATIONS & REVISION GUIDES

**1.** In Chapter 1, you mention that the CT scan cost \$1,000, but then there's nothing in the rest of the book about treatment costs or insurance coverage or anything like that. Either the sentences about the cost should be cut, or you should develop that theme by mentioning costs throughout the book. If you want to develop it further, consider questions like these: was finances another area in which you learned to trust God? How did He show himself faithful in this area? Were there conversations with your insurance company? Did the cost of treatment affect your retirement funds/plans?

**2.** How do you want to include Bible verses in your reflection sections? Do you want to simply list suggested Bible verses like you do in Chapter 1, or do you want to say "Read X, Y, and Z" like you do in Chapter 2? Whatever you decide, just make it consistent throughout the manuscript.

**3.** Continuing with the study guides, I would suggest reviewing each point in the list of reflections to make sure they require a more open-ended response rather than a simple yes or no answer. That way, readers will have to reflect more on their relationship with God and engage more with the story. For example, in Chapter 1, instead of asking readers, "Are you tired?" you could change this question to "In what areas of your life are you worn out?" or something like that.

**4.** The inclusion of set dates in the first chapter is so powerful because it demonstrates vividly that you will never forget those days. I would suggest doing that whenever possible throughout the manuscript. For example, in chapter 2, you say "On Tuesday." Can you give the date of that Tuesday? That way, the dates will really stick out in the readers' minds. Maybe they will think back and remember what they were doing on those dates too, enhancing their connection to your story.

# OBSERVATIONS & REVISION GUIDES

5. In chapter 3, you say, **I looked at my husband and said, “I told you. God said I had a long, hard road ahead of me, but in the end, everything was going to be ok.”** Had you told your husband about hearing this from God before? If so, what was his reaction when you told him? That would belong in the first paragraph of that chapter. If not, what was his reaction hearing this from you for the first time?

6. In chapter 6, some clarification is needed: when did your surgeon tell you that he didn't want you to have a PET scan? And why did you decide to get one anyway? When was the test itself?

7. Also in chapter 6, I really want to know how you reacted to those CA-19-9 test results. Did you get those results before the oncologist called to tell you the results of your PET scan? If so, did they make you hopeful, and then did that hope come crashing down when you got the results of the PET scan? Or did you not get those results until afterward?

8. Continuing with chapter 6, you don't need the lines **I'll be honest, I originally wrote this chapter in great detail of my experience with chemo. I have since erased it.** You can simply begin that paragraph with the acknowledgement that **Everyone's experience with chemo is different.**

9. For the reflection section in chapter 6, I think fear could be a good subject since you talk about how much you struggled with it after getting your PET scan results.

10. Chapter 7 could use some expansion and rearranging. Consider starting the chapter with the description of how you found your identity in your physical

# OBSERVATIONS & REVISION GUIDES

appearance; that will give readers a hint of what's to come. (That will also help break up that long paragraph into shorter, more reader-friendly sections.) In terms of expansion, I'm very intrigued by the years you spent **clinging to the beautification and restoration of [your] flesh**. If you choose to add them, those details would fit at the beginning of the chapter too.

11. For the reflection section in chapter 7, identity would be a great subject.

12. At the beginning of chapter 8, remind readers of the date of D-Day.

13. The reflection section in chapter 8 could be about moments when your faith is sealed, as you beautifully put it.

14. For chapter 9, the reflection section could encourage readers to think about how their own story might encourage others.

# SIMPLE CHANGES

1. I noticed that all of your sentences have two spaces after them. This is no longer the rule; you just need one space afterward. 😊 In the Trade Helps section, I'll tell you how to fix this issue! It's really easy.

2. Instead of just referring to him as "my husband," can you use your husband's name? That will help readers connect to him. If you choose to add more about your son, including his name would be helpful too.

3. The word "Scripture" should be capitalized. Also, capitalize "Bible" as well as "Word" when it's referring to the Bible. Under Trade Helps, I'll tell you how to quickly find and revise these issues.

4. I noticed a few incorrect uses or spellings of words (check Trade Helps for how to fix this easily) -

- "irregardless" should be "regardless"
- "dept" should be "debt"
- "tuff" should be "tough"
- "heroine" (referring to the drug) should be "heroin"
- "prospective" should be "perspective"
- "hinderance" should be "hindrance"
- "withdraw" should be "withdrawal" when it's referring to your symptoms (or lack of symptoms!) of stopping smoking
- "reigns" should be "reins" when it's referring to what you use to steer a metaphorical horse

## SIMPLE CHANGES

5. For dates, you can just say, for example, “May 14, 2020” rather than “May 14th, 2020.” You don’t need “th” or “nd” or “st” after the number even though that’s how we sometimes say dates.

6. Numbers have weird rules when it comes to spelling them out or leaving them as digits. According to the manual we use, the *Christian Writer’s Manual of Style*, you should leave the scientific numbers (for example, the results of your test) as digits. Otherwise, “Spell out numbers of one hundred or less . . . and round numbers in hundreds . . . , thousands . . . , millions . . . , billions, and so on.”<sup>1</sup> So the number of years, people’s ages, and so on should be spelled out.

7. To help your readers out, I’d advise defining these terms: “diverticulitis” and “resectable.”

8. Capitalize the first word in a line of dialogue. For example, “**there appears to be a lesion on your pancreas.**” should be “**There appears to be a lesion on your pancreas.**”

9. Also for dialogue, you need to start a new paragraph every time someone new starts talking. So for example, “**You’re done as of right now.**” **He stared at me. I weakly responded, “ok?”** should be written like this:

**“You’re done as of right now.” He stared at me.**

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Robert Hudson, ed., *The Christian Writer’s Manual of Style*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 253.

# SIMPLE CHANGES

**I weakly responded, “Ok?”**

**10.** Also, most writing manuals advise spelling out “Ok” as “okay.” (Trade Helps will give further help with this!)

**11.** Going back to dialogue: you just need a comma before dialogue, not an ellipsis. So **He asked....“Do you trust me?”** can just be **He asked, “Do you trust me?”**

**12.** For pronouns referring to God, capitalize them consistently. For example, in **He asked, “Do you trust me?”** the “me” should be capitalized since you’ve capitalized pronouns referring to God throughout the manuscript.

**13.** In chapter 5, when you’re talking about what was going through your head in the exam room, it would be helpful if you italicized the sentences that are your thoughts. That would set apart those sentences better for readers so that they can immediately know which ones are your thoughts and which ones are narrations of the scene.

**14.** For Bible verses, you need to use an en dash, not a hyphen, between verses. So Philippians 4:6-7 should be Philippians 4:6–7. I’ll explain how to make this change in the Trade Helps section!

**15.** Speaking of Philippians 4:6–7, it should look like this on the page, all in one paragraph, indented over from everything else, and a font size smaller than everything else too:

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving

# SIMPLE CHANGES

let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

# TRADE HELPS

**1.** In order to quickly find a word in your manuscript, press CTRL + F. That will open the Navigation tab. Type the word you're looking for in the search bar, and hit Enter. That should show you every instance of a word in the manuscript!

This will be helpful as you're searching for lowercase "scripture" and "word" and deciding whether "word" should be capitalized based on the rule in #3 under Simple Changes above.

**2.** In order to quickly replace words in your manuscript, again press CTRL + F to open the Navigation tab. Then click on the little downward-facing triangle next to the magnifying glass. In the menu that pops up, click "Replace." In the box that says "Find What," type whatever you're looking for. In the box that says "Replace With," type whatever you want to replace it with.

So, to fix the two spaces after every period, follow the steps above. In the box that says "Find What," press the space bar twice. Then in the box that says "Replace With," press the space bar once. Then hit "Replace All." That should do it!

This will also be helpful as you search for lowercase "bible" and replace it with capitalized "Bible" as in #3 under Simple Changes!

It will also help with finding and replacing incorrectly used words in #4 and finding and replacing "Ok" with "okay" in #10. Of course, you'll need to review whether they should be capitalized.

**3.** To change the hyphens between Bible verses into en dashes, you can do a CTRL + F to find all the hyphens in the text. Then, when you find one that's

# TRADE HELPS

between Bible verses, click on the Insert tab at the top of the page. All the way to the right is the Symbols tab. Click “Symbol,” and in the pop-up menu, select “More Symbols.” In the menu that comes up, click “Special Characters.” The en dash should be the second one on the list! To avoid having to do this every single time you need to replace a hyphen, simply copy the first en dash and then paste it wherever you need to.

# CONCLUSION

[AUTHOR],

I absolutely think it's worth pursuing further editing for your book, and I promise I'm not simply saying that because I work for an editing company. Whether you decide to simply print copies of your story yourself and give them to your friends or you choose to partner with us through coaching and comprehensive editing, the suggestions I've made here will help your manuscript be the best it can be.

Your story is worth telling! Your writing style is distinctive among the stories of cancer survivors I've encountered, and the wisdom you share in the reflection sections will appeal to a wide audience. Additionally, if you choose to share even more of your life story, you could reach even more readers.

Thank you so much for trusting CED to read your story and give you this feedback. I hope we can work together in the future.

Take care,  
Bethany Clark