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The Making of a Christian Bestseller: An Insider's Guide to Christian Publishing
Ann Byle
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For close to a decade now, Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" series has stayed atop the bestseller lists. Just a couple of years ago now, Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life* rocketed to mega-bestseller status and has already been translated into forty languages.

Fifteen years ago, the idea of a Christian bestseller would have seemed rather preposterous. Marketing and sales efforts for Christian books were directed at Christian bookstores; writers couched their plots and arguments in language familiar only to Christian readers; and editors seldom looked for an author who could cross over from a Christian audience to a more general audience interested in the details of the Christian faith. Jenkins, LaHaye, Warren, and a handful of other writers changed all of that.

This author, a freelance journalist and a regular contributor to *The Grand Rapids Press*, reveals many of the secrets that lie behind the creation of a Christian bestseller. Her book is a collection of forty interviews with authors, editors, marketing and publicity managers, and book reviewers. She talks to well-known Christian writers such as Jenkins, Angela Elwell Hunt, Davis Bunn, Lauren Winner, and Terri Blackstock about Christian publishing, covering topics as diverse as Christianity and sex, following God in Christian fiction, and how to revise writing. Novelist Karen Kingsbury's advice to writers is to "have a great heart for readers, and find a place that is most genuine to act that out." Kingsbury's "heart for readers" allows her not only to target her readers' interests but also to stay in touch with her readers through marketing efforts for her books.

Byle also talks with those who work behind the scenes to help the writers and their work succeed. For example, Jeanette Thomason, editorial director at WaterBrook Press, discusses the ways she searches for the best writers. She attends writers' conferences, slogs through the slush pile in search of fresh voices, and reads literary magazines such as *The Atlantic* in her quest to

find writers. “I’m always trying to think of connections,” she says. “I like to match up unlikely people with unlikely situations, and have them say something surprising.”

Byle’s book is filled with how-to advice from the experts on subjects as varied as finding an agent, working with an editor, and promoting a book. It’s a one-stop compendium offering ideas that will help readers take the first steps on the path to writing and selling a Christian bestseller.

Henry L. Carrigan