



## Engaging Today's Prodigal

Clear Thinking, New Approaches, and Reasons for Home

By Author Carol Barnier

I'll soon be guesting on the "Information in a Nutshell Radio Show" sharing a bit about writing my latest book. But I'm such a believer in the idea that those who write books should also be frequent writers of magazine articles, that I thought

I'd explore that concept a bit in today's guest blog post.

My first break into a national magazine almost didn't happen. It had taken a serious stretch of my confidence to even approach this publication. *This* was one of those slick paged magazines. *This* sat on the shelf in Borders. This, for me, was the big leagues.

I put my best foot forward and wrote a query letter to the owner/Sr. Editor. It was okay, but in retrospect, nothing spectacular. There were even a few typos I didn't catch until glancing back over it years later. <insert disgusted-with-self shudder> The editors response was a single sentence: *Please send a resume and past writing/publishing vitae.* Oh dear. At that time, I only had about three published pieces, and these were mostly in tiny regional publications. There was not enough experience to scoop together for a paragraph, let alone the lofty vitae. However, I did write a response that got a "yes" from this publisher, and I've since gone on to write nine pieces for them, as well as having my face at the front of their magazine in their roster of "contributing writers."

So what did I write? What could I possibly have said, me with so little a publishing history, that could win a chance from a national magazine?

At first I was honest about my meager writing history, but I didn't belabor the point. Then I went on to say this:

*So why should you have me write for you? Well, even though I've so happily self-deprecated, let me add, perhaps even boldly, that I do bring some worthwhile things to the table.*

- *For all my lack of magazine experience, I can actually write. And while I don't have a long list of previous articles to evaluate, I do have enough available to judge merit.*
- *I'm always on time (or early) with deadlines. It's just a value that permeates all my life.*
- *I'm usually passably funny (as long as I've had enough sleep).*
- *Best of all, I'm not married to my words. I'm FULLY open to following direction to accommodate changes that will better meet the needs and preferences of your readers. I don't even whine.*

I think she may have liked what she read, but I suspect I closed the deal with "I don't even whine." I knew this was a sensitive spot with editors. I'd heard from various blogs, books and conference speakers

that editors and agents in the Christian publishing market hear some of the same tired old phrases over and over again. Things like, “God gave these words to me.” Some even go on to say, “If you don’t publish it, woe be upon your head.” (or various other forms of eternal damnation). No kidding. They hear this stuff all the time.

In the end she sent a note saying simply, “I like you. My editor will be in touch.”

I know that so many people long to write a book. I understand that. I truly do. My fourth book is coming out April 1<sup>st</sup>, so I appreciate the satisfaction that comes with completing a book and finding a publisher for a book. But for most of us, a book that sells well may sell between 5,000 and 25,000 copies (Yeah. Yeah. I said *most* of us. Runaway bestsellers don’t count in this equation. Those are the literary equivalent of winning the lottery.) There’s nothing wrong with these smaller numbers. But a well-placed magazine article can touch 100,000 people or more. (A piece with AARP will put you in front of 47 million readers!) So I encourage writers to reach for both books and articles. With articles you can gain entrance by way of smaller publications, build your voice, strengthen your writing chops and grow your audience. Then, when you want to publish a book, lo and behold, you’ll have those now-required “platform numbers” that publishers seek.

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About: Carol Barnier is a fresh, fun and popular Christian conference speaker unlike any you’ve heard before. Her objective is to have the wit of Erma Bombeck crossed with the depth of C.S. Lewis, but admits that on most days, she only achieves a solid Lucy Ricardo with a bit of Bob the Tomato.

While her humor will have you leaning sideways, her faith is solid stuff. She may speak about her first born son’s 13 surgeries, her own family’s many ADHD challenges, or her personal faith walk from being a God-denying atheist to the most grateful recipient of God’s amazing grace. But whatever the topic, this woman speaks from the heart. She knows why she knows what she knows.