

Decisions, Decisions

By Anna J. Meadows

All the guests have said their goodbyes. The punch bowl is dry and the graduation money is burning a hole in my pocket. I did it. After 13 years of home education, I have graduated from high school. The next chapter in my life is beginning. I'm becoming an adult with dreams, responsibilities, jobs, and even my own checking account! I'm staring my future in the face and I'm . . . I'm . . . I'm scared out of my mind!

What will I do when I wake up on Monday morning? Should I get a job? Start college? Where can I go to learn how to use my gifts for the Lord's glory? How will I know if I'm living my purpose?

After graduating from high school, I was plagued with thoughts of inadequacy, as if my mind's goals were not big enough for my heart's passions. I knew God wanted me to use the gift of writing He had placed in me, and I desperately wanted to find a way to use it as well. But I didn't know how to get started, and to be honest I was a little scared to take any kind of risk.

Maybe you are facing the same situation. Or perhaps you are preparing for the day when you won't be in school anymore.

I found my direction in an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship is a company or organization that teaches an apprentice the skills of his or her desired trade. The apprenticeship I found for writing is Jerry B. Jenkins's Christian Writers Guild. Jerry B. Jenkins, the famous co-author of the Left Behind series, has taken the Christian Writers Guild (CWG) into the twenty-first century. The Guild is devoted to training up godly writers of all ages, offering members and students an array of opportunities to strengthen their God-given talents.

Along with critique services, a writers' online forum, and yearly conferences, CWG offers its students a two-year, 50- lesson correspondence writing curriculum, which teaches the mysterious workings of the writing world.

Once students decide to join, they are each assigned a mentor, a master craftsman, who has had success in the business of writing. These individuals are authors, editors, magazine columnists, and journalists, each possessing an accomplished writing career. The student is then sent his very own syllabus containing the 50- lesson "What's Your Story?" curriculum.

The curriculum is divided into four 12-lesson sections touching on every area of writing and the workings of the industry, training participants to become well-rounded writers. After each lesson is completed, the student sends in his work to his mentor for constructive criticism and encouraging feedback.

The Guild has a diverse family of writers. Sixteen hundred individuals around the nation and the world make up the Guild's list of students, each one answering the call to hone his skills and to be used to his greatest success.

Erica, an 18-year-old homeschooled senior from Montana, is an apprentice in the course. She is implementing the lessons along with her daily schoolwork. "I joined the 'What's Your Story'

course when I was a sophomore in high school. I have enjoyed the course immensely; it has helped me sharpen my skills and focus my purpose in writing.”

At 20, Jessica from Colorado is using her college years for the Guild’s focused teaching, shaping her passion for novel writing. “It’s very challenging but also very enjoyable,” she says. “The best thing has to be the mentors. To have a published author or editor right there when you need them is invaluable. What better way to learn the trade?”

Darcie, 33, says, “Not only am I learning [how] to write, but the course teaches you the industry which, in and of itself, is a monster to figure out!”

As an apprentice in the Guild, Randy, 37, from Florida says, “My writing career has taken off.” His first book, a children’s storybook, was published in late 2005. Students of CWG can also apply for college credit through Taylor University, an accredited Christian university in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Guild’s Academic Advisor, Vicki Hesterman, says, “It would be great for homeschooled students who want to get a head start on college credit from a respected program like Taylor.” Apprentices can currently earn up to four semester units for the first half of the course through Taylor University’s online program. After completion, students can request a free transcript and apply for the course hours to be transferred to another college. (CWG recommends that students clarify if they will be accepted as electives or required courses with the college of choice.)

Perhaps your students aren’t to the point of applying for college credit, but you know the focused teaching would benefit the younger students in your home. The Christian Writers Guild has curriculum for all ages. In August 2005, CWG began their Page (ages 9-12) and Squire (ages 13-17) writing programs. Today, more than 50 young students are studying the focused curriculum.

“I am passionate about challenging, equipping, and mentoring young people in writing,” says Jerry B. Jenkins. Both programs offer two-year, 20-lesson courses for young students, and, like the apprentices, the students are partnered with a mentor. “We’ll mentor each young person through the curriculum,” says Jerry, “as if he or she were one of our own.”

At 14 and a current Squire, Maddee of Austin, Texas, says, “I’m correcting things in my writing that I never would have noticed before.” Her parents homeschool both Maddee and her sister and say the Squire program has been extremely beneficial and easy to incorporate in their daily schoolwork.

I agree with them. The Christian Writers Guild has taught me more about the craft of writing than I’ve ever imagined. But maybe you don’t have a writer in your home. Maybe you have a singer, dancer, doctor, or architect. Whatever your children are passionate about, help them find a way to learn the skills they need to be the best they can be. That may mean finding an apprenticeship, attending college, or stepping out and taking a risk they’ve been too afraid to take until now. To the homeschooled student, I want to encourage you to turn a deaf ear to the doubts the enemy will try to throw at you. If God has given you a gift, He will equip you with the skills, resources, and strength you need to see that gift used for Him.

Biographical Information

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Anna Meadows is a 19-year-old homeschool graduate studying as an apprentice in the Christian Writers Guild. As the fourth of seven homeschooled siblings, Anna has a passion for using words to encourage and inspire God's people to better living. She lives with her family in Edmond, Oklahoma, and enjoys being a full-time aunt to her six nieces and nephews.