

A WRITE ON PURPOSE INVENTORY

5 Questions Every Writer
Needs to Ask & Answer

BY W. BRADFORD SWIFT

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W Bradford Swift
1160 W. Blue Ridge Road
Flat Rock, NC 28731
www.wbradfordswift.com

Dedicated to everyone who has ever dreamed of making a difference through the power of their words. Let's get to it.

PROLOGUE

I've enjoyed a "combo career" as a personal development coach and writer/author for over thirty years. More recently, I've combined these two into Write On Purpose Coaching. (You can read more about my Reese's Cup moment that brought this about at <https://wbradfordswift.com/coach/>)

I love being a writer (and a coach for that matter, but let me stay focused on being a writer for the moment). Oh sure, like any profession, it has its ups and downs, and yet through it all, I continue to have a deep love for it, and I want to share that love with you. You see, I believe writing is one of the most remarkable ways we can express our purpose and passion in life and for life. Oh sure, it's also great to make a living from it, but believe me, there are a lot of easier ways to make money, but very few that are as much fun.

I believe delving into the following five questions will provide you with a solid foundation for building your writing career and/or vocation. So, take out your notebook, and let's get started.

QUESTION #1: WHY DO I WRITE? WHAT IS MY PURPOSE AS A WRITER?

A significant part of my thirty-plus years of coaching has been as the co-founder of Life On Purpose Institute with my wife, Ann. Needless to say, I believe knowing one's life purpose with crystal clarity is paramount to living a satisfying and fulfilling life, but going into depth on how to bring such clarity of purpose to your life is beyond the scope of this book. (You can check out the resource section at the end of this report for information on the Life On Purpose Process.)

Still, even if you aren't sure of your overarching purpose in life, the question, why do I write, is a vitally important one to ponder. If you're not sure why, I recommend watching Simon Sinek's YouTube video, Start with Why. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4ZoJKE_VuA&t=11s)

Go ahead, and watch it now. I'll wait.

Welcome back. Did you watch it? Pretty awesome, wasn't it? Now, take a minute to write down in your notebook what you gleaned from it.

As Sinek points out in the video, making money isn't a purpose; it's a result. Think of your purpose in writing as more of an empowering context that will assist you in tapping into a wellspring of passion that will inspire you out of bed in the morning.

So, you may have an overarching purpose for your life and a more focused purpose or mission as a writer. For example, my life purpose is to live a courageously creative life of purposeful, passionate, and playful service, simply and serenely. My more targeted purpose as an author of children and young adult fantasy and science fiction is to inspire young people to become joyful lifelong readers by introducing them to the thrill of reading for the pure pleasure it provides. On the other hand, my purpose as a Write On Purpose Coach is to inspire aspiring authors to move from one day wanting to write, to being in action joyfully and with full self-expression. Can you see how both of these targeted purposes fit nicely under the umbrella of my life purpose? All three purposes are why I do what I do, which then shapes the what and how, as Sinek points out.

Several years ago, there was a book entitled, *Do What You Love and the Money Will Follow*. I'd like to paraphrase it to "*Do What is Consistent with Your Why, and It Won't Matter Whether the Money Follows or Not.*"

For most people, answering this first question can take a while. That's okay. Take a few minutes now to write down your first cut at it before proceeding to question #2.

QUESTION #2: FOR WHOM DO I WRITE?

WHO AM I HERE TO SERVE AS A WRITER?

I suggest there's one answer to this question that should be the same for every writer, and that answer is "I write to make a difference with me." And that is a legitimate answer for sure. Writing is a great way to explore our own lives' inner depths, and you may find this is really a primary reason for writing. Many people keep a journal for this very reason with no intention ever to share it with others.

Many aspiring authors also want to make a difference with others and may not have yet become clear who those others are. A natural first response is often, I want everyone to read what I write, but alas, that's unlikely to happen especially if you make that your target. Remember the wise words of John Lydgate:

"You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time."

So, who do you most want to impact and contribute to with your writing?

Let's delve into this more with another quote. To paraphrase Frederick Buechner:

"Your vocation in life is the place where your **deep gladness and the world's **deep** hunger meet."**

Frederick Buechner

Buechner goes on to explain: "The word, vocation, comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and means the work a man is called to by God. There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Super-ego, or Self-Interest."

For me, writing is more than a job, career, or profession. It's my vocation. It's writing on purpose with a purpose and with a clear picture to whom you are writing.

Let's see how we can bring both of these reasons for writing together with an example. Several years ago, I decided I wanted to write a series of fantasy books for young people focusing on animals and the environment, with a touch of magic. Why?

Because I loved reading similar books growing up. The Tom Swift Jr. series was one of my favorite series. But I wanted to take that a step further. Tom was all into mind-boggling inventions, while my true love is biology and animals. I also felt like there were many other kids in the world who would enjoy such a series. So, I set out to write stories that are highly entertaining

and educational and would satisfy both the kids and their parents. The series is also consistent with my purpose of inspiring kids to become joyful, lifelong readers.

So, who do you want to serve with your writing? If you're lucky, you may even know someone who is a perfect example of your ideal reader. For me, it's Millie. I met Millie and her mom through one of our Zak Bates Eco-adventure Readups. These Zoom-based book readings are one way that my team and I are inspiring young people to become joyful lifelong readers. At the time, Millie was only seven, a bit younger than I thought most of my readers would be, but she fell in love with one of my characters, Ra-Kit, the last living magic cat. I now write for Millie and all the other kids like her who love to read for the pure pleasure it provides.

Take a few minutes or even a few days to ponder these questions, then write down your thoughts. It will be time well invested.

QUESTION #3: HOW WILL I SERVE THEM? WHAT FORM WILL MY WRITING TAKE?

The good news is that writing can take on many different forms. The not-so-good news is that writing can take on so many different forms that it can be hard to choose which form to focus on. I know I experienced that very issue early in my writing career. I caught the writing bug while still in my veterinary practice and had enough early success that I knew once I sold my practice, I wanted to write for a living along with coaching. However, I learned early that writing for a living is quite different from slipping upstairs to my writer's garret for a few hours before going to my real paying job as a veterinarian. So, that first year out was a real eye-opener. Not having any focus on what I wanted to write, I was all over the place. If someone wanted me to write an annual report, I was their man, but not really since I'd never written one. You need a press release. No problem. I can write it for you. Just let me look up what a press release is. You get the idea.

Later, I decided that what I wanted to write was magazine articles, starting with articles that were related to my original career as a veterinarian. That later

evolved into writing profiles about people living a purposeful life. (You can see several examples of these at www.wbradfordswift.com/purposeproject.)

Now, don't get me wrong. You can focus on more than one form; just keep the list as short as is practical. The first two questions will help you there. Knowing your purpose and who you are here to serve as you express that purpose will help you stay focused. So, the last question for this section is: **What other form or forms will your writing take that will allow you to express your purpose while making a difference with the people you've come here to serve.**

QUESTION #4: WHAT AM I MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT? WHAT TOPICS WILL I WRITE ABOUT?

By this time, you can probably see how these questions mesh together to provide you with additional focus and direction with your writing aspirations. I find purpose and passion closely related, and the more clarity of purpose you bring to your life, the easier it is to identify those “breadcrumbs of passion” along your life path. As I wrote in *Life On Purpose: Six Passages to an Inspired Life*, “while you may not always know where the breadcrumbs of your passion are leading, you will never be disappointed in where you end up.

That was the case with my writing and coaching combo career for sure. One of the pivotal times in my life path was while much of my time was spent as a freelancer writing for regional and national magazines and becoming a bit bored with writing just about pets and their health. During this time, my coaching was bending more towards helping people clarify their purpose in life, so I started following those breadcrumbs.

One of the articles I wrote during that time was Bill Irwin’s profile and his seeing-eye dog, Orient. Bill was

the first blind man to walk the entire Appalachian Trail along with a lot of help from his canine companion, and lucky for me, the two of them lived just a town over from where I lived. (You can read the article, Orient Express at <https://wbradfordswift.com/the-orient-express/>). So, as I continue to follow that trail of breadcrumbs, I thought, “Wouldn’t it be great if I could write more articles about people living on purpose.

So I created Project Purpose: **To write and publish articles about people and institutions whose lives and missions are dedicated to a bold and inspired purpose or vision.**

I then turned on my ‘writer’s radar’ to start finding such people and organizations, then submitting query letters to magazines looking for such profiles in which I described my ‘pet writing project.’ And it worked. Before long, I started getting assignments about all sorts of purposeful people, and suddenly I was no longer bored with my writing.

What I didn’t expect was what happened next. Out of following these breadcrumbs of passion emerged the idea of starting my own purposeful organization. After all, so many of the people I profiled expressed their life purpose in some organized way, either as a nonprofit or for-profit enterprise. Thus, Life On Purpose Institute was born--a spiritually-based internet support enterprise dedicated to assisting people in clarifying their life purpose and living true to it.

Suddenly I had a whole new way of expressing my life purpose by writing the weekly *Purposeful Pondering*

Newsletter. What can I say? Following those breadcrumbs of your passion works.

Now it's your turn. Take a few minutes or even a few days to ponder what you are most passionate about that other people would also find interesting and valuable. Here is an exercise from my book, *From Spark to Flame: Fanning Your Passion & Ideas Into Money-making Magazine Articles that Make a Difference*, that will help.

The Passion Police Are Knocking at Your Door

Take out your notebook and find a nice quiet place to go through this exercise. Find a place where you can be sure you won't be disturbed during the short time the exercise will take. Here's the set up:

The Passion Police are on the way to your home. In just a few minutes, they'll knock on your door. Their mission is to take away everything you're passionate about. Your only hope is to write down those things in life that are really important to you. If it's not written down, the Passion Police will take it away, never to be in your world again.

You must be as precise as possible about what you write. For instance, if relationships are important to you, write down which relationships are meaningful. If you're passionate about nature, write down the specific aspects of nature that matter the most to you. If you love animals, which ones do you love most? Describe the specific details of your passion. What do you want to have in your world after the Passion Police leave? It

must be written down, or, after they've left, it won't exist in your world.

They're almost at your door. You now have five minutes to record in your notebook everything that you're passionate about. Check your watch and start writing. Remember—five minutes of writing as much and as fast, and as precisely as you can. BEGIN!

How did you do?

It's likely that as you look over your list, you'll realize you missed some essential things that you want in your world. Okay, take one minute and add those to your list. The passion police were a little slow today. Once you've made those additions, look over the list again. While you may not have listed everything you're passionate about, it's a great place to start getting ideas you could write about.

QUESTION #5: WHEN WILL I WRITE & WHAT OTHER STRUCTURES & ROUTINES DO I NEED IN PLACE?

Now we're getting into the nitty and gritty of writing, which is what it takes to write regularly, whether this is something you do for the pure joy of expressing yourself in this way or if you want to move into a part-time or full-time career as a writer.

Determining when you will write is a good starting point to address the things you need to put in place to support your writing aspirations. I know some of you reading this report might buck the whole idea of creating structures and routines. After all, you're a creative person, right? You don't want to be fenced in by such mundane matters. The creative spirit needs to soar unfettered by deadlines and the like, right?

Well, no, not really. I encourage you to try on a different perspective, one that will ultimately support you far more over the long haul. Consider that structures and routines are actually a creative person's friends and allies. I know, I know. That might be hard to get, so let me repeat it:

Structures and routines are your friends and allies as a writer on purpose.

If you find this to be radical thinking, don't worry. We'll start small. Just like Rome wasn't built in a day, and the best way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time, we'll start with that one small next step to bring the allies of structure and routines to your creative life.

Start by determining when you will write and begin treating that writing time as sacred.

Now, you know your life and schedule far better than I do, and I know it varies tremendously from writer to writer. Perhaps you are retired, and you have blocks of time each day that you can devote to writing. If so, congratulations!

Or you may be a working person with a full-time job or career and maybe with a family for which to care. If so, congratulations!

Or you may be a student still in the process of completing your education. In which case...well, you know what comes next. Congratulations! And I mean that. Congratulations on taking on this next part of your life as a writer—a writer on purpose who is out to make a difference with your words.

Finding the ideal time to write is where a little experimentation will be helpful. See if you can find the sweet spot of when you'll be most alert while at the same time less likely to be interrupted or have the rest

of your life interfere with this most sacred of time. For some people, that's getting up a little earlier and writing before the rest of the family arises. For others, it might be blocking out time in the evening after everyone else has gone to bed. No one time will work for everyone, so your task is to find the best time that works for you.

Here are a few other coaching tips that will increase your chances for success:

- Let those around you know what you're doing and ask for their assistance. There's no need to sneak around or think you have to be a 'closet writer.' You will find it far easier to write on a regular basis if you enroll the people around you into your plans.
- If at all possible, pick one place where you will write most of the time. This could be the spare bedroom, even if it means you have to first clean out all the clutter that has accumulated there, or it could be the dining room table.
- Once you've chosen the time and location, commit as to how often and for how long you'll spend writing, not for the rest of your life but for the next thirty days. Share this commitment with at least one other person who will support you to fulfill your goal.

Conclusion: Call to Action Assignment

If you've taken the time as you've read through these five questions to also journal about them, then you're ahead of the game. Now, go back and read over what you wrote and see what new insights you may glean since reading the full report.

If you've simply read through the report first, now is the perfect time to take one question a day for the next five days and journal about each one. Or you may find mind mapping works better for you or writing on your laptop or another device. The point is to give yourself the gift of delving into these five questions. The result is that you will have a solid foundation upon which to build your writing career or vocation.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W. Bradford Swift is a former veterinarian turned author. He became an avid reader of fantasy and science fiction as an eleven-year-old boy when his next-door neighbor, a children's librarian, took pity on his single-parent mom. Bored out of his gourd with no one to play with but good 'ol mom, he drove her crazy. Then Mrs. Crabtree brought home a stack of books she knew would hook a young boy's imagination and give his mother some relief. It worked. Swift has been hooked ever since.

Swift lives in the “Paradise Found” of the North Carolina mountains with his wife, daughter, and a menagerie of four-legged family members.