



[Student Lesson: Writing in 3 Steps]

We are going to learn about a dozen secrets today. They are going to be things that you are going to know that others may not. Actually, you can go out in the library and bookstores, talk to people, read a lot of literature, and you could find out that these things are sort of known. I'm putting some things together. There are a few things I'm not familiar that anybody has seen this; however, it's out there. "There is nothing new under the sun," as Solomon told us in the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible.

WRITING'S FIRST SECRET:

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF WRITING---

CORRECT WRITING and EFFECTIVE WRITING.

It's important to understand that there are two kinds because a lot of times we get caught up trying to make one or the other what writing is all about. There are some people on this planet who are very interested in making sure everything they write is

perfectly correct; the spelling, the punctuation, etc. It's technically just right. However, that doesn't make it necessarily effective. It could be actually very boring. There are other people who are not really interested in all of the correct parts; they just want to express their feelings. They want you to know what they're thinking about. They want to get their thoughts across to you in a way that is meaningful and exciting and wonderful. Some people just write because they enjoy it, which is really a nice way to go. You need to understand with this first secret that there are two kinds: correct and effective writing.

Here is correct writing. Correct writing means, "Others can read what you've written." If someone picks up what you've written and cannot read it, it's not correct. There's something amiss. Now if you give it to a person who can't read, all bets are off on that, OK? But other people who can read and they're working in the English language (that's what we're talking about here), then you're in a position to where you have written something and they can read and if they can read it, then I'm going to call that correct. Effective writing means, "Others are glad they've read what you've written." In other words, they read this paper and they enjoy it or they get something meaningful from it or they like the way the words are put together. That's the distinction.

"Can you write both ways—correct and effective?" I'm going to suggest that that's what you want to do. You've got to make it at least correct and then effective. That's the hope. If you write correctly, they understand you and then you write effectively, they are very glad that they've read what you've written. This is true of teachers, publishers, and editors alike.

WRITING'S SECOND SECRET:

THE BEST WRITING HAPPENS IN THREE STEPS. We call these:

1) OK

2) HELP

3) GREAT

What does this mean? Writing is a process. When you learn this skill, you figure out—or if you'll apply what I'm trying to teach you today—that you actually start out writing something that is OK. Then you get some help and then you can make it great. What do most people try to do with writing? They try to start great, don't you? So, you

are caught looking at a paper and you have what they call "writer's block." Writer's block is pretty simple. It's either that you are really bored with yourself and you don't have anything to write (which happens) or you are caught having to write something great to begin with. The problem is that you can only write as well as you can. So, if you can write great to begin with, more power to you. There's almost nobody in the world who can do that. The rest of us write something that is OK, we get some help, and then we can make it great. When you break it down into those three steps or those three stages, guess what happens? Guess what in your life goes away that you are used to struggling with in your writing? Fear and stress.

Do you think that you could probably write something that is OK? That's where you start; you start with OK. Then you get some help (and we're going to show you today different ways you can get help, either from others or ways you can actually help yourself), and then you get it to great. So, I'm sorry to do this to you, but this is really important. I want you to say it with me. We're going to say these three words in order. Our writing, we want it to be "OK, Help, and Great." Get the idea? OK, help, and great. It can be great, but it starts at OK. Then you get help and then you make it great. You've got enough now to actually change your life with writing. There is a lot more here, but if you will begin writing this way—start out with writing something that is just OK and then make it great—you are going to see a whole new game.

The best writing happens in these three steps. The way we describe "OK" actually works out the way some people describe it as writing practice. What writing practice does for you is it frees you. If you're just practicing, if you're just playing around, if you're just trying to write something that is OK, then you are pretty much freed up because it doesn't count. People take a lot of shots I've noticed in basketball, in particular at practice, that they don't seem to take during the regular game. There are a few guys who do; they think the game is practice. But most guys don't, because in practice you're practicing. You are trying to learn and you're playing around and you're trying different things—can you dunk it? Can you do a lay-up off the top right corner of the backboard? If you just have that kind of practice; you're playing around. Nothing is riding on it. But in the game you are caught with the shot needing to be great. That's one of the things that can fry people or interfere with their ability to play in a game. It's the

same with writing. This OK stage is practice and that tends to free you. When you get help—that's what we call these days "feedback"—that helps you. When it is great, you have gone through a revision and that process improves you. This OK—Help—Great process frees you, helps you, and improves you.

You ought to feel better.

This is the way it goes. You really go from fear to joy. When you can sit down and write something that is OK, get help, and then make it great...guess what? You actually will find that you enjoy what you have written. You might eventually like it or you might not like it (but chances are you will). However, when people read it, since it will not only be correct but effective, they'll enjoy reading it. This little process of going from OK to getting help to making it great is a movement from fear to joy. If you master this process, you will have mastered enough to write well.