

Tips for Successful Contest Entries

By Jeanette Littleton

- Don't talk about everything you know about this subject in one article. Instead, focus on one experience. Tell a bit of the background—maybe share briefly what was going on in your life or why this happened. Then tell how God resolved the problem or what you learned through it.
- Make sure you have a good lead (beginning of the piece) to pull the reader into your story. Often, good writers bring some drama to the front of the story to grab the reader's attention.
- Make your reading come to life by using storytelling techniques, such as dialogue and description. Don't just tell us what's happening, show us! This engages the reader more!
- To help the reader engage, use your senses. Help the reader see, hear, smell, touch, and maybe even taste what's going on.
- Sometimes it's hard to communicate spiritual truths. Feel free to use concrete pictures and examples to help your reader understand.
- Don't "preach." While we do want to communicate God's truth to people, don't just list Bible verses. Tie them into the text.
- Don't just teach or tell us your testimony. Follow an article/story format with a beginning, middle, and end.
- Take your story beyond the "a-ha" moment. While it's good to talk about a problem and to tell how you discovered God's solution, it's even better to show us how that solution was worked out in your life or how the same principle or truth can help the reader.
- As you write, think, "How will my reader be able to apply this to his or her life?" This doesn't apply to poetry so much, but most articles should have application thoughts for the reader, even if subtle.
- Write not just to write but write to an audience. Who is the person you're trying to help with your words? One author and editor we know puts a picture of someone from that audience on her computer screen, so it helps her to write to the audience. You are not just writing to be published—you are writing to minister to people's needs.

Remember: You can't win if you don't submit! We look forward to receiving your submissions.