

# REJOICE!

## Rejoice! Guidelines for Writers

### Our Purpose

*Rejoice!* is a quarterly magazine designed for daily devotional reading. Above all, its purpose is to direct the reader to God. Through Scripture readings and personal reflections, the reader is encouraged to seek and serve God more deeply and faithfully.

### Our Readers

Most *Rejoice!* readers affiliate with Mennonite or Mennonite Brethren churches. Your writing should reflect Anabaptist emphases on commitment and community, reconciliation and renewal. *Rejoice!* readers are adults and families from a variety of cultural settings and life situations. They live in Canada and the United States, in urban and rural areas, in North America and overseas. They may be female or male, younger or older, single, married, or widowed.

Most readers pick up *Rejoice!* first thing in the morning or at dinnertime in the evening. Think what might lie ahead or behind on a particular day. How can you help readers in their walk of faith? What insights can they take into everyday life? How can they deepen their devotion to God? What will encourage them?

### Our Terms of Assignment

All *Rejoice!* devotionals are written on assignment. (But several additional, unsolicited stories and poems are also accepted; see separate “Divine Touch” guidelines.) The editor looks for interesting writing, solid structure, and sound theology. If any portion of your material needs significant rewriting, it may be returned to you for revision prior to final editing.

We purchase first North American rights as well as all electronic rights (for our website or other electronic formats) for original devotionals, and for the testimonials and poetry we carry.

Payment for a week of devotionals is \$100.00, plus a \$25.00 bonus for on-time manuscripts that meet the writer guidelines—or \$125 for acceptable, on-time work. (These are U.S. dollars; for Canadian writers, payment is converted into Canadian dollars at current rates.) Writer payments and complimentary copies are sent out at time of publication.

## Our Style

Devotional writing is different from other types of writing. An effective devotional piece emphasizes reflection and meditation over teaching and sermonizing. It helps bring Scripture alive in everyday life. Devotional writing begins in your own devotional life. As one with a vital, growing relationship with God, how can you help your readers realize fresh spiritual insights of their own? This is best accomplished with writing that is lively, engaging, and personal. Examples from your own experience, literature, or history, can be very effective in bringing out the truth of your given Scripture. Your writing should share with readers, “This is what I am learning” rather than “This is what *you* should learn.”

Though there is much room for variety and creativity in your writing, each of your meditations must meet five important objectives.

1. It must **grab the reader’s attention**. Does your lead absorb readers and hook their interest? This can happen with a personal experience or story, an illustration or anecdote, or a striking feature of the day’s Scripture.
2. It needs to **connect strongly with the Scripture reading and key verse for the day**. How does your lead relate to the passage? What new light can you shed on the day’s Scripture? Avoid going off on tangents or using your key verse as a springboard into an entirely different subject.
3. Your meditation must **be focused**. You cannot exegete the whole passage here. Pick one nugget of truth and develop it with punch.
4. It needs to **come to an applicable conclusion**. What key thought can readers take with them? Aim for something specific and concrete, something readers will find helpful, encouraging, challenging. Something that can make a difference in daily life.
5. Your writing must be **fresh and accessible**. Steer clear of hackneyed illustrations, heavy or academic terminology, and negativity. Think of the newcomer or churchgoer who has little or no Mennonite background or context. Will your writing connect? Will it be uplifting?

## Two cautions

1. If you use true, personal stories about others, obtain their approval first (unless the story is already broadly accessible in the media), or cloak their identity. When the story involves the struggle or failures of someone you know, consider avoiding the story even if the person would give permission.
2. When you use someone else’s writing (even paraphrasing), interviews, or quotes—name the source.

## **Our Content**

*Rejoice!* writers are typically assigned one week of meditations, with each day consisting of the following:

- A **heading** that indicates the overall theme or idea for the day. You are encouraged to write your own heading or modify the “stock” heading from your list of assigned Scriptures. The heading should concisely convey the crux of the day’s reading and reflection.
- A **Scripture reading** from the Uniform Series of Daily Bible Readings or Lectionary Readings as listed on the week of readings assigned by the editor. Though we recommend working as closely as possible with assigned Scriptures, occasionally a passage may not lend itself to devotional writing. In that case you are free to pick a new passage in keeping with themes for the week. Do so judiciously, however, no more than once or twice in a week.
- A **key verse** or phrase selected from the reading by the writer, on which the day’s meditation will be based. Again, we recommend working as much as possible from assigned Scriptures, but occasionally it is acceptable to choose a verse from some other passage you feel resonates with the day’s reading.
- A **reflection** that connects with and illuminates the Scripture reading. Keep in mind calendar events that might fall within your assigned week, particularly Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas, New Years, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost. Even when passages don’t deal directly with these observances, you may find it possible to allude to them.
- A **response** that captures the essence of the reflection in a prayer, inspiring the reader to think about and act upon the insight gained from your meditation. The prayer you write should convey a specific faith or life step that readers can take into their day.

## **Our Bible Translation**

*Rejoice!* uses the New Revised Standard Version for the key verse and other quoted material. For copyright reasons we ask that you quote from other translations selectively, referencing the translations you use.

## **Our Format and Submission Requirements**

See the Manuscript Guide for a model of our recommended format, noting especially the target word and line counts indicated in brackets. *Electronic submission:* We no longer require hard copy or disk to be sent by regular mail when you submit your manuscript electronically. Simply attach your file—and we do prefer them to be in one file—to an e-mail message (our preference), or paste your devotionals into the e-mail message. If you use neither Word nor WordPerfect software, “save as” in a Rich Text Format. Be sure to keep your manuscript backed up on hard copy and on disk until publication. *Paper submission:* If you send hard copy (with a 3.5” disk if possible), please make sure it is on standard 8.5” X 11” paper with 1” margins and in a sharp, black type.

Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, social security/insurance number (for payment records), and brief biographical sketch at the beginning of your manuscript. Your biographical sketch should include occupation, local church affiliation (MB, MC, other), and writing, ministry, or service experience.

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