THE

SEVEN QUESTIONS WORKBOOK

A companion to Seven Questions You Must Answer Before Publishing Your Book

How to Define Success, Choose a Publisher, and Reach Your Audience

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How To Use This Workbook

This workbook follows the same seven questions as the book, in the same order, for the same reason: each one builds on the one before it. Work through them in sequence, even if you're tempted to skip ahead to the publishing options at the end.

Each section gives you a quick recap of the idea, a set of reflection prompts with room to write, and a simple template to fill in — something concrete you'll still be able to use after you close this workbook.

Write in pencil, write in pen, write badly if you have to. Nobody grades this but you. The goal isn't a perfect answer — it's an honest one you can build on.

SEVEN QUESTIONS WORKBOOK

QUESTION 1

Why Am I Writing This Book?

QUICK RECAP

Every book starts with a why — the reason underneath the reason. It might be “I need to tell my story,” “I need to reach more people,” or simply “I need to get this out of my head, or I'll go crazy.” Whatever yours is, it's the foundation everything else in this workbook is built on.

Your why isn't just a nice detail — it's a filter. It will direct what you write, and as you write, your why will often come into sharper focus. That's normal. Don't be surprised if the process teaches you something about your own reason for writing that you didn't fully know when you started.

Before you go further in this workbook, get your why down to one sentence, and keep it in front of you — on a sticky note, a screen saver, wherever you'll actually see it. Everything from here forward should serve it.

REFLECT

1. What first went through your mind when you began writing — a moment, a person, a frustration, a calling? Describe it.

2. Do you have a special story to tell or message to share? Describe it in a few sentences before you try to compress it.

3. If you have more than one “why,” list them all here. Then circle the one that matters most.

4. As you've written — or as you write — has your why changed or come into sharper focus? What have you learned about it?

YOUR TEMPLATE: THE ONE-SENTENCE WHY

Use the space below to write your why as a single sentence — the kind you could say out loud in one breath.

MY WHY FOR WRITING THIS BOOK IS:

TEST IT

- ☐ I can say this in one breath.
- ☐ Every chapter I've written so far serves this why.
- ☐ I'd still write this book even if it never sold a single copy.

If you checked all three, you're ready to move to Question 2: What Does Success Look Like? If not, sit with your why a little longer before moving forward — everything downstream in this workbook, and in your book, depends on getting this right.

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QUESTION 2

What Does Success Look Like?

QUICK RECAP

“Success” for your book isn't a fixed thing — it's whatever you decide it is, and you need to decide before you publish, not after. A bestseller list or a pile of money are outcomes, not goals. They're fickle, and they're not why most people actually write.

Your definition of success should grow out of your why from Question 1. If your why is to leave a legacy for your family, success might mean giving books to fifty relatives, not selling fifty thousand copies. If your why is to grow a ministry or a business, success might be measured in changed lives or new clients, not royalties.

Write your definition down. Share it with your publisher, or with a trusted friend if you're self-publishing. Revisit it as your manuscript nears completion — it's allowed to change, but it shouldn't be a surprise to you on release day.

REFLECT

1. Look back at your why from Question 1. What would it look like for this book to fully succeed at that why?

2. Write your definition of success in a sentence or two — not “sell X copies,” but what the book should actually accomplish.

3. Are you tempted to define success as a bestseller list or a dollar amount? If so, what's the deeper goal underneath that number?

4. Have you shared this definition with your publisher or a trusted advisor? What was their reaction?

YOUR TEMPLATE: MY DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Fill this in now, and revisit it again once your manuscript is finished — is it still true?

THIS BOOK WILL BE A SUCCESS IF:

TEST IT

- ☐ This is written down somewhere I'll actually see again.
- ☐ It isn't just “bestseller list” or “make money.”
- ☐ I've shared it with my publisher or a trusted advisor.

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QUESTION 3

Who Is My Audience?

QUICK RECAP

Nobody wakes up looking for a book to buy. They wake up carrying a problem, a question, or a need — and if your book promises to solve it, answer it, or fill it, they'll notice. Your audience isn't "everyone" — it's the specific people already carrying the exact problem your book addresses.

Start with the problem, not the demographic. Once you can state clearly what your book solves, answers, or fills, the audience is no longer a guess — it's the people who already have that problem, wherever they happen to gather.

Remember, too, that "audience" is singular, not plural. It's an aggregate of individuals, each with a name and a face. Write for Mary, Bob, or Judy — not for "readers" in the abstract.

REFLECT

1. What problem, question, or need does your book solve? Write it in one sentence: "This book helped me _____."

2. Test your manuscript (or your outline) against that sentence. Does every chapter serve it? Where might it wander?

3. Name at least three real individuals — not a demographic — who are carrying this problem right now.

4. Where do people like them already gather — a church, a support group, a Facebook group, a hashtag, a conference?

YOUR TEMPLATE: THE PROBLEM-TO-AUDIENCE MAP

This is the map you'll use again in Questions 4 and 5 to decide where to show up and what to say.

THE PROBLEM, QUESTION, OR NEED MY BOOK SOLVES:

WHO CARRIES THIS PROBLEM (NAME THREE PEOPLE):

WHERE THEY ALREADY GATHER (NAME TWO PLACES):

TEST IT

- ☐ I can state the problem in one sentence.
- ☐ I named at least three real people, not a demographic.
- ☐ I know at least two real places they gather.

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QUESTION 4

What Am I Doing Now To Build My Audience?

QUICK RECAP

The best time to start building your audience was when you started writing. The second-best time is today. Waiting until your book is published to start marketing is one of the most common — and most costly — mistakes new authors make.

Marketing and selling are different things. Marketing is making people aware of you and your message before there's anything to sell. It can start with nothing more than a Facebook post, a conversation after church, or an offer to teach a class on the subject of your book.

You don't need a platform to start. Pam, one of the authors in the book, had no email, no website, and no money — but she knew her problem and her audience, and she started showing up for them immediately. That's the whole game.

REFLECT

1. Do I have an audience right now for this book? List every name, group, or platform you can think of.

2. What are the two best times to build an audience? (Hint: it's in the recap above.) Which one applies to you today?

3. What am I doing right now — this week — to build my audience?

4. Where does the audience carrying this problem already gather, from Question 3 — and have I shown up there yet?

YOUR TEMPLATE: START TODAY, NOT SOMEDAY

Small, regular action beats a big plan you never start. Fill in three things you'll do this week — not someday.

THIS WEEK, I WILL:

1.

2.

3.

TEST IT

- ☐ Each action is something I can do this week, with what I have now.
- ☐ At least one action puts me in front of people from my Question 3 map.
- ☐ I've scheduled a specific day and time to do each one.

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QUESTION 5

What Is My Marketing Plan?

QUICK RECAP

A marketing plan turns “know, like, trust” into an actual system. It starts with the people who already know you, expands through the live and digital places your audience gathers, and moves them — like a funnel — toward a clear call to action: buying your book.

Your message should always follow the same formula: name the problem first, then offer your book as the answer. A good thirty-second elevator speech does exactly this, and so should your social posts, your talks, and your conversations.

Don't try to occupy every platform. Choose the ones where your specific audience — the people from your Question 3 map — already spends time, live and digital, and show up there consistently.

REFLECT

1. List the people who already know, like, and trust you, and who may be interested in this book.

2. What live networks (church, clubs, organizations) and digital networks (website, social platforms, mailing list) can you use to reach your audience?

3. Draft a first attempt at your thirty-second elevator speech: name the problem, then the promise.

4. What is your call to action — the specific next step you want someone to take after hearing about your book?

YOUR TEMPLATE: MY ELEVATOR SPEECH & FUNNEL

MY 30-SECOND ELEVATOR SPEECH:

MY MARKETING FUNNEL

TOP — where people first discover me:

MIDDLE — how I build the relationship:

BOTTOM — my call to action:

TEST IT

- ☐ My elevator speech names the problem before the book.
- ☐ I have at least one live and one digital network identified.
- ☐ My funnel ends in one clear, specific call to action.

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QUESTION 6

What Is My Publishing Budget?

QUICK RECAP

Publishing is never actually free — even "free" self-publishing costs your time, and usually costs quality. A professional book needs content editing, interior design, cover design, printing, and distribution — and each of those has a real dollar cost, whether you pay it yourself or a publisher does.

Self-publishing companies sell services, not books — their incentive is to add more line items, not to help your book sell. Traditional publishers cover the cost, but only for authors with a large, proven existing audience. Hybrid publishers share the investment and the risk, which is why they ask new authors to help cover the upfront cost.

Whatever path you choose, budget for marketing separately from publishing. A beautifully published book with no marketing budget behind it is still an unread book.

REFLECT

1. What would it cost to professionally edit, design, and print your book if you paid for each piece separately?

2. Which publishing path — true self-publishing, a self-publishing company, a traditional publisher, or a hybrid publisher — fits your budget and goals right now?

3. Beyond publishing, what should you budget for marketing and audience-building?

4. Do you have a plan for how this investment gets recouped — through sales, through ministry impact, through business growth?

YOUR TEMPLATE: MY PUBLISHING BUDGET WORKSHEET

Use real numbers where you have them, and honest estimates where you don't. This is a working draft, not a contract.

Line Item	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost
Content editing		
Interior design		
Cover design		
Printing (per unit / print run)		
eBook formatting		
Marketing & launch		
Website / audience-building tools		
TOTAL		

TEST IT

- ☐ I've gotten at least one real quote, not just an estimate, for editing.
- ☐ I understand exactly what my chosen path includes and doesn't.
- ☐ I have a separate line for marketing, not just publishing.

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QUESTION 7

What Are My Publishing Options?

QUICK RECAP

Every publisher — including you, if you self-publish — is responsible for five things: content editing, interior design, cover design, printing, and distribution/marketing. Before you choose a path, know who is actually going to handle each of these five, and how well.

True self-publishing gives you full control and full profit, but you carry all five responsibilities yourself. Self-publishing companies sell you services, often piecemeal, with little stake in whether your book actually sells. Traditional publishers cover the cost but only for authors with a large existing audience, and they set the schedule and often keep the rights. Hybrid publishers share the investment and the responsibility, and their incentive — if they're doing it right — is the same as yours: selling books.

The right question isn't “which option is cheapest?” It's “which option is actually going to help this book reach the people from my Question 3 map, and who is genuinely invested in that outcome?”

REFLECT

1. Of the five publishing responsibilities, which are you prepared to handle yourself, and which do you need a partner for?

2. Which path — self-published, self-publishing company, traditional, or hybrid — fits you best right now, and why?

3. If you're considering a publisher, what are your top three choices?

4. Of those three, which seems most genuinely invested in your success after the book is published — not just before?

YOUR TEMPLATE: MY PUBLISHER COMPARISON

Fill this in as you research. A publisher who won't answer these questions plainly is telling you something.

Publisher	Sells books or sells services?	Includes editing?	Includes marketing?	Fit (1–5)

TEST IT

- ☐ I've checked whether each option makes most of its revenue selling books or selling authors.
- ☐ I understand exactly what's included, and what costs extra.
- ☐ I've compared at least two real options before deciding.

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PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Go back now through everything you've written in this workbook, in order. Read it as a whole and you'll have something more valuable than a stack of worksheets — the outline of your actual publishing plan.

Use the lines below to compress each answer into a single sentence. If a line is hard to fill in, that's not a failure — it's a signal for where to go back and do a little more work before you publish.

Q1 — My why:

Q2 — My definition of success:

Q3 — The problem I solve, and who carries it:

Q4 — What I'm doing today to build my audience:

Q5 — My elevator speech / marketing plan in one line:

Q6 — My publishing budget, roughly:

Q7 — My publishing path, and why:

Successfully publishing your book is too important to leave to chance. If you've made it through all seven questions honestly, you're ahead of almost every author who starts this process. Good luck, and Godspeed.