

## Writing that irresistible book proposal (one hour)

Jo-Anne Berthelsen

### Introduction

- Presented from the perspective of someone who has written over twenty book proposals.
- Examples give on handouts or at end of notes are not perfect—they are there for discussion!

You have written the Great Australian Novel or the best children's book ever or the most moving biography or most helpful 'how to' book possible. You have also discovered via word of mouth or research which publishers/agents you would like to approach for publication. **So ... what next?**

*In theory, once you've pumped out tens of thousands of words for your story, a simple little proposal should be a piece of cake, right? Not necessarily. In reality, some authors find the process of proposal writing excruciating and more difficult, even than writing the novel itself. Creating a proposal needn't be intimidating or painful, however. It simply requires some careful thought, attention to detail, and an understanding of what it is that publishers are hoping to find when they open your packet and start reading.* Mindy Starns Clark in *A Novel Idea*, p 243

*Literary agents and editors are blasted with submissions. Some people estimate there are a million ideas in circulation at any given moment. You only get one chance—one—to make a good first impression. As a former acquisitions editor, I know how these people think. If you have stacks of submissions, you are looking for any reason to say no. You want to have crafted the absolute best and thorough presentation of your idea to bullet-proof your proposal from rejection. The opportunity for your success is well worth the six-month training to learn these necessary skills.* From W Terry Whalin's website *Write A Book Proposal* course.

### General comments

- Be prepared to put your best efforts into your book proposal. Why shoot yourself in the foot after spending months writing your book, only to spoil your chances of publication at this point?
- *It is all confusing and overwhelming—just eat that elephant one bite at a time.* (ACFW loop)
- Try to see your proposal as an editor with a stack of manuscripts on their desk might see it. An editor needs to wrap their mind around what kind of story you are offering them very quickly.
- No one right way to write a book proposal, but these general principles may help.
- Keep things as simple and easy as you can for whoever reads it.
- Be as professional as possible in what you write and in your whole approach to the task.
- Check out the many online resources and books available re writing a proposal – see list below.
- Always more difficult the first time—and then you'll have most parts ready for other attempts!
- Write with confidence.
- Pray throughout the whole process! Put it all in God's hands.

### First steps

- Check your potential publisher's or agent's website very carefully and find **exactly** what they require you to do to approach them. For example, some may simply want an enquiry email/letter first before sending any proposal. Also, many publishers will accept submissions only through a literary agent.

- Check how your potential publisher wants to receive your proposal. For example, some might accept only hard copy proposals while others accept only email ones. Some don't want any email attachments while others want the opposite. Some want you to fill out the forms they provide. Others simply want you to cover the points they ask you to cover—but some may want each of these as separate documents while others want it altogether in one large document.
- Don't even **think** of approaching them if they say they don't publish your genre or are currently not accepting your genre.
- Check if the publisher to whom you are submitting mentions anything about simultaneous submissions. Then you will have to decide whether to approach them only or to take the risk of telling them you are approaching others.

### The Cover Letter

- If possible, address it to a particular person.
- Needs to be given a lot of thought and be businesslike as this may be all a publisher/editor reads
- On the other hand, don't be too fazed! After all, it is your book the publisher is interested in publishing, not the cover letter. Besides, the letter also needs to sound like you ie it needs to convey your voice to the potential publisher.
- Keep it to one page.
- Begin with a simple, introductory sentence like: *I would like to submit my manuscript ... for possible publication.* **However**, US publishers in particular seem to like the 'one line hook' idea ie an enticing one line that hints at what is to come in the book and inspires a publisher to read on.

#### Note from Steve Laube website:

'Whatever you do, do *not* say your book is the next *Purpose Driven Life*, *Eat Pray Love*, *Left Behind*, or *The Shack*, or that it will sell better than *The Da Vinci Code*, *Twilight*, *Harry Potter*, or *The Chronicles of Narnia*. That shows an ignorance of the market that is best left alone. In addition, please do not claim "God gave me this book so you must represent or publish it." We are firm believers in the inspiration that comes from a faith-filled life, but making it part of your pitch is a big mistake.'

- Describe your book in one sentence of about 7-10 words, including its genre.
- Give a brief overview of your book in around 25-40 words (sometimes called a 'sound bite'). You are describing here what your book is *about*, so for fiction this could include the main protagonist, the central issue of the story, the adversary, the main action thread and the ending.
- Explain who will read your book ie target audience and why they will want to.
- State the length of your manuscript, whether it is complete or not.
- Say if this is a simultaneous submission or not—but only if they ask!
- Give some very brief biographical details and what other published works you have.
- If requested to attach or enclose various pieces of information ie completed submission forms, synopsis, first three chapters etc, write 'Please find enclosed/attached' and list these. This is a good check for you that you have included everything, apart from anything else.
- Include your full contact details.
- If submitting by mail, enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope, unless otherwise stated.

**Discussion:**     **Read Example 1** cover letter at end of notes and discuss its good and bad points.

### Information required about you (will vary from publisher to publisher)

- **CV**
  - Keep it brief, including only details that may be relevant for a potential publisher to gain some overview of your background and experience.
  - Start from current year and work back from there!
  - May be asked for 'brief, biographical sketch' instead ie author bio, perhaps with educational background as well.
- **Your qualifications for writing this particular book (may ask this)**
  - Applies more to non-fiction
  - Be prepared to write an honest but unassuming assessment here!  
**Discuss Example 2** at end of notes or on handout.
- **Previous publications**
  - Again, list in order from most recent.
  - Include articles published in magazines, workbooks, story collections etc. (Example of friend)

### Information required about your book

- **Why you wrote the book ie its aim or purpose**
  - Need to have thought through this carefully so you can write it succinctly
  - Think about how our book will benefit your readers ie what the 'take home' value of your book will be  
**See fiction and non-fiction Examples 3 and 4** at end of notes.
- **Target audience**
  - Be as specific as possible—narrow down your target audience, despite hoping those outside this range will read your book.
  - Think of age range, gender, educational background, spiritual maturity, reader preferences  
**See Example 5** at end of notes.
- **Question re editing**
  - Australian Christian publishers tend to ask this up front.  
**Acorn Press** asks the question 'Edited by ...' after author's name and before book title!  
**Even Before Publishing:** *We do accept unsolicited manuscripts, however for the best possibility of publication your manuscript should be refined and accompanied by supporting documentation. ... Also include any comments you have previously received on the manuscript that you have attended to if you think it is relevant.*  
**Ark House** states they expect manuscripts to be professionally edited.
  - Ask your editor to write a brief appraisal summary you can submit to a publisher.
- **One sentence/paragraph summary**

- Polish your one sentence/paragraph well, noting the number of words required.

Two versions of one sentence summaries for my novel *The Inheritance*:

**Short version:** *The Inheritance* is a stirring story of family secrets, forgiveness and faith.

**Long version:** *The Inheritance* is the story of one man's struggle to deal with the past, be reconciled with himself, others and ultimately God and one woman's struggle to overcome disappointment and hold onto her faith.

**One paragraph summary:** *The Inheritance* is a stirring story of family secrets, forgiveness and faith. It explores one man's struggle to come to grips with the past, be reconciled with himself, his family and ultimately God, and face the future with courage and integrity. At the same time, it also explores a woman's struggle to stay true to her faith in God and pursue God's purposes for her life. The basic aim of *The Inheritance* is to show how anger, bitterness, hypocrisy and pretence can adversely affect our lives and the lives of others and keep us from experiencing God's grace. In essence, this novel demonstrates the importance of the command in Hebrews 12:15 – *See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

- **'One sheet'**

- Also sometimes termed 'sell sheet' or even 'book proposal'.
- Will include all key information a publisher needs on one sheet about you and your book.  
**See Example 6** at end of notes.

- **Competing titles/how your book differs from these**

- To find competing titles already on the market:
  1. Take time to browse the shelves at your local bookstore.
  2. Ask friends via Facebook or other social media if they have read a book dealing with your particular issue or a book set in a particular place at a particular time.
  3. Visit the American Christian Fiction Writers Fiction Finder site, [www.fictionfinder.com](http://www.fictionfinder.com), and search by author, genre or social issue.
  4. Check out the advanced book search on Amazon.
  5. Go to a public library and see if they have the database 'Novelist Plus', which can search for books by similar theme, as well as 'read alike' books for authors etc. See [www.ebscohost.com/novelist/our-products/novelist-plus](http://www.ebscohost.com/novelist/our-products/novelist-plus).
- Remember to mention our unique Australian perspective and style and how this sets out books apart from many American books
- Fight for your book! If you believe God has called and gifted you to write it, go for it!

**See Example 7** at end of notes

- **Why your book will be able to compete well in the market**

- Mention the differences between your book and those competing titles which may cause people to choose your book above others eg written by an Australian author
- Point out the unique selling points or strengths of your book eg may have unique Australian setting, may have a fresh theme that is not touched on in competing titles

**Discuss example 8** at end of notes

- **Synopsis**
  - This is not the back cover blurb, neither is it a regurgitating of every detail of your storyline.
  - A synopsis needs to be compelling writing that will inspire a publisher to read your work.
  - Mostly one page in length.
  - Needs to include a summary of the plot of your novel (or content of your non-fiction) but should also include things like the overall theme or spiritual principle, as well as the character conflict and resultant change.
  - Answering the questions ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ might help in summarizing or selecting out the high points of the plot of your novel ie an introduction to your protagonist; what situation she finds herself in; where and when the story takes place; why your protagonist has become part of what is happening; and how her dilemma is resolved. See Nancy Mehl’s article ‘How to Write a Compelling Synopsis’ in the chapter ‘Breaking into Publishing in *A Novel Idea*, p 253.
  - Check you are being asked for a synopsis of the plot of your novel or the content of your non-fiction and not an overall synopsis of your book proposal as outlined by the authors of *A Decent Proposal* p 61. What they describe there is more like the ‘one sheet’ often asked for in US manuscript submissions.
  - Polish your synopsis and cut out any unnecessary information. Have others read it and perhaps read it out loud to assess its impact.

**Discussion: Examples 9 and 10 of fiction and non-fiction synopses** at end of notes.

- **Chapter Outline (non-fiction in particular)**
  - Again, needs to contain only main points of each chapter in a brief paragraph.
- **First three chapters of your book**
  - If non-fiction, can also be any three chapters or first chapter and two others
  - Check required formatting carefully. Is one and a half spaced okay or does your manuscript need to be double spaced? Are the margin widths specified? What font and what size?

### **Information required about promotional ideas/marketing opportunities**

- **Your overall marketing plan**
  - Be realistic and don’t overstate, but also be prepared to include approaches to marketing that might be new for you. As you move forward in faith and in prayer, God will enable.
  - Outline the things only you can do ie the ‘micro’ marketing compared to the ‘macro’ marketing that your potential publisher may undertake on your behalf. **See ideas below.**
  - Think carefully—and laterally—about networks you can access for speaking and general promotion. What about networks friends or family members are involved in as well such as work places, schools, churches, sporting groups, hobby groups, clubs etc?
  - Mention any promotional material you yourself plan to organise such as business cards, bookmarks, posters, short promotional video etc.
- **Speaking and selling ideas to list**

- Re speaking in Christian venues, think about ways you can approach the churches in your own denomination and in your local area, as well as churches that family and friends attend. In other words, check out your networks in this regard.
  - If you don't know anyone in a particular church, check out the church's website and look for the relevant person to email, introducing yourself and perhaps mentioning other places you have spoken. Also, speaking endorsements may help.
  - While some churches/ministry groups may be unable to have you speak, someone there may interview you briefly or allow you a few minutes to promote your book.
  - Be aware of the various Christian conferences at which you might be able to sell your books.
  - Re speaking at secular venues, think about the community groups/clubs in your area such as Probus, Legacy, Seniors' Clubs, mothers' groups etc and prepare talks that would be acceptable in these settings. Many of these are often looking for speakers.
  - Local libraries, selling at literary festivals, local fetes, markets etc.
- **Online presence**
    - Your website, which includes information about you, your books, a speaking engagements page (can include topics on which you are often asked to speak, speaking endorsements, as well as a list of your current speaking engagements) and a 'Buy' page for your book(s).
    - Your own blog.
    - A Facebook presence (personal/author/book page or a combination) and other social media sites such as Shoutlife and Goodreads.
    - Participation in group blogs such as Christian Writers' Downunder, International Christian Fiction Writers etc, not only as a contributor but with blog comments.
    - Comments on email loops such as the American Christian Fiction Writers' loop and the Christian Writers' Downunder loop.
    - An Amazon author page.
    - An email distribution list you can use to send out book launch invitations or regular updates.
- **News item/reviews**
    - Don't forget news items sections in writers' centre magazines, university alumni magazines etc, local newspapers (not only in your own area but in areas your book may mention) and also e-magazines or e-newsletters.
    - Mention any denominational magazine/newsletter or other Christian (or secular) publications where you would like to see your book advertised or reviewed.
    - Other authors may review your book on their blogs or via the Australian Christian Writers' Blog Alliance.
    - Some bookstores such as Koorong allow reviews on their website.
- **Radio/TV interviews**
    - Your publisher may deal with these, but you too can think about local FM radio stations and Christian radio stations/programs and TV programs for interviews and list these.
- **Book signings in local bookstores**

**Discussion:**      **Example 11 of Marketing Ideas/Promotional Opportunities** at end of notes.

## Resources

<http://www.christianwritersdownunder.com/coverletters.html> - Penny Reeve

<http://stevelaube.com/hints-for-a-great-cover-letter/> - Christian literary agent

<http://www.rachellegardner.com/how-to-write-a-book-proposal/> - Rachelle Garner (Christian)

[http://www.wherethemapends.com/writerstools/writers\\_tools\\_pages/publishing\\_biz\\_pages/profesional\\_proposals.htm](http://www.wherethemapends.com/writerstools/writers_tools_pages/publishing_biz_pages/profesional_proposals.htm) - Jeff Gerke

<http://michaelhyatt.com/writing-a-winning-book-proposal> - book for fiction and another for non-fiction

<http://www.right-writing.com/factors.html> - How to write a book proposal (Christian)

<http://www.hiwrite.com/index.html> - How to write a book proposal (secular)

[http://www.acfw.com/member\\_resources/workshop\\_archives](http://www.acfw.com/member_resources/workshop_archives) - 'Author-Editor Etiquette 101—Tracie Peterson 2002, Lesson One (American Christian Fiction Writers' website)

<http://www.alivecommunications.com/query-guidelines/> - Sample fiction and non-fiction book proposals to a literary agency

## Books

*A Decent Proposal: how to sell your book to an Australian publisher* – Rhonda Whitton and Sheila Hollingworth, Altona, Common Ground, 2001

*A Novel Idea: Best Advice on Writing Inspirational Fiction* – various authors, Tyndale (ChiLibris), 2009

*Book Proposals That Sell: 21 Secrets to Speed Your Success* – Terry Whalin, Donna Goodrich and Steve Laube

*Write a Powerful Fiction Proposal* – Mary DeMuth

### Examples for seminar discussions

#### Example 1: Cover letter (via email)

Mark Smith, Publishing Director  
Acme Christian Publishing

Dear Mark

I am a Christian fiction and non-fiction author living in Sydney, Australia, with five general fiction novels published by Ark House Press. I have recently completed a non-fiction work entitled *Soul Friend: a shared spiritual journey* and am seeking an overseas publisher for this book, particularly since it is in a different genre from my previous books.

*Soul Friend* is an honest and intimate account of a wonderful mentoring relationship I have enjoyed—and still do—with my spiritual mentor or ‘soul friend’ as I have journeyed through theological college, a paid role on a church ministry team and then on into my writing career. While there are many books available on the ‘how to’s’ of mentoring or spiritual direction, I believe my book fills a gap that exists in the market by providing such a close up look at how and why our particular relationship worked so well and how mentoring/spiritual direction can make all the difference in our lives. It was originally inspired by my reading of Mitch Albom’s best-selling title *Tuesdays with Morrie*—it seemed to me a somewhat similar work could be written that would showcase a meaningful, life-changing Christian mentoring relationship and thus inspire others to find or provide a similar relationship.

Please find attached, as requested:

- a completed submissions form
- a synopsis of *Soul Friend*, including a Chapter Outline
- the first three chapters of *Soul Friend*

Thank you for your consideration of my manuscript.

Yours faithfully

Jo-Anne Berthelsen

Website: [www.jo-anneberthelsen.com](http://www.jo-anneberthelsen.com)

Blog: [www.joanneberthelsen.wordpress.com](http://www.joanneberthelsen.wordpress.com)

[www.facebook.com/joanne.berthelsen](https://www.facebook.com/joanne.berthelsen)

**Example 2: Specific qualifications for writing *Soul Friend***

- *Soul Friend* is written from my own personal experience of a special, close mentoring relationship with my mentor of fifteen years, Joy Crawford.
- I myself have mentored over a dozen young women in recent years and currently mentor four younger women deeply involved in ministry, both here and overseas.
- I have taken part in a three year mentor training program with Les Scarborough, previously of John Mark Ministries, and also trained as a facilitator for this program over a three year period.
- I have written and conducted my own mentor training course and co-written another.
- I have a theological degree and served as part of a local church ministry team for five years from 1998 – 2002, during which time I saw the pressing need for raising up those who could mentor others and enable them to grow in their Christian faith.
- I have attended conferences on spiritual direction and mentoring and read widely in this area.

**Example 3: Aim/purpose of writing *The Inheritance* (fiction)**

The aim of *The Inheritance* is to show how anger, bitterness, hypocrisy and pretence can so adversely affect our lives and the lives of others and keep us from experiencing God's grace. In essence, this novel demonstrates the importance of Hebrews 12:15 – *See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many*. I believe it is vital for each of us to accept God's amazing grace and forgiveness, be released from any guilt and shame we might be holding onto and thus be enabled to forgive others.

**Example 4: Aim/purpose of writing *Soul Friend* (non-fiction)**

- To inspire others to seek out a mentor/spiritual companion who will encourage, challenge and impart wisdom to them as they journey through their Christian life.
- To make mature Christians more aware of the wealth of wisdom, experience and understanding God has entrusted to them and to encourage them to be willing to pass this onto others.
- To challenge Christians to be honest and real about their faith and the struggles they encounter and to keep pushing forward through these with God and the help of mature Christians.
- To encourage others going through similar challenges to those I faced by sharing my own experiences openly and honestly and showing how my mentor's input into my life helped me.

**Example 5: Potential readership/target audience for *Soul Friend***

- I believe *Soul Friend* will appeal primarily but not exclusively to women in the mid-twenties to sixty age range—younger women interested in being mentored and also older women who are able to mentor younger women, or women younger in the faith.
- I believe *Soul Friend* will particularly appeal to women who are creative, reflective, self-aware and open to new ideas and change. They will also most likely be mature Christians who want to grow further in their Christian faith and make wise decisions as they journey through life. And I believe too that Christian men with similar personality traits will also relate well to this book.
- *Soul Friend* may appeal more to those who come from a church background where women are encouraged to take on leadership roles and in particular to women who already are leaders.
- I am also targeting women (and men) who are already faithful readers of my five published novels. I have discovered they are curious to know what sort of non-fiction work I would publish and are keen to read more about my own personal journey as a result of enjoying my novels.

**Example 6: A 'one sheet'**

<b>Author:</b>	Jo-Anne Berthelsen
<b>Contact details:</b>	24 Crowgey St Rydalmere NSW 2116 AUSTRALIA Ph: (02) ... Email: <a href="mailto:jobert@tpg.com.au">jobert@tpg.com.au</a>
<b>Book title:</b>	<i>Heléna's Legacy</i>
<b>Subtitle:</b>	<i>A Time to Heal</i>
<b>Genre:</b>	Contemporary general fiction
<b>Length:</b>	99,000 words
<b>Target audience:</b>	Women between the ages of 25-70
<b>Book 'hook':</b>	Making a difference, bringing healing
<b>One sentence summary:</b>	A life lived in God's strength and peace enables Czech migrant Heléna Hajek to reach out to others, blessing them in tangible and intangible ways that will become lasting legacies.

**Back cover copy:**

Doctor Susan Curtis finds herself facing the birth of her first child alone, bitter at the rejection she has suffered from her fiancé and family. Eventually she begins her own reluctant journey towards God, but it is not until she accepts help from Heléna Hajek that she finds the strength even to consider forgiving those who have let her down. Heléna soon becomes an integral part of Susan's life and longs to bring God's healing to other family members as well. Is there a way she can help Susan's son Peter – or perhaps even Susan's mother? And what about Heléna's other friends? What legacy can she leave that will bring most blessing to those she loves?

**Brief author bio:**

Australian author **Jo-Anne Berthelsen** grew up in Brisbane and holds an Arts degree from the University of Queensland. She later studied both Education and Theology and has worked as a high school teacher and editor, as well as in local church ministry. Jo-Anne is passionate about touching hearts and lives through the written word. She is the author of four published novels, *Heléna*, *All the Days of My Life*, *Laura* and *Jenna*. She and her husband live in Sydney and have three grown-up children. For more information about Jo-Anne, please visit [www.jo-anneberthelsen.com](http://www.jo-anneberthelsen.com)

**Example 7: Competing titles in the market and how *Soul Friend* differs from these**

- Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie* (Hachette Australia, 2007) is a somewhat similar very successful work in the secular market, but *Soul Friend* has a much stronger Christian emphasis than Albom's book. Also, *Soul Friend* covers a time period of around fifteen years, whereas Albom's book covers discussions he and Morrie had during the last few months of Morrie's life.
- There is already another book on the market called *Soul Friend* by Kenneth Leech, published in 1977 but re-released in a revised format in 2001 by Morehouse Publishing. However, this book is a classic academic work about spiritual direction and deals with its history throughout the ages, the role of the spiritual director, prayer in spiritual direction etc. My book is entirely different, popular rather than academic and written in memoir style. It also has a different subtitle.
- The title of the international bestseller *Anam Cara: Spiritual Wisdom from the Celtic World* by John O'Donohue (Bantam, 1999) is also similar in that 'Anam Cara' is Gaelic for 'soul friend'. This book is written from a distinctly Celtic perspective, however, and deals with topics like the mystery and spirituality of friendship, solitude, ageing etc and is more philosophical in nature.
- I have been unable to find a title in evangelical Christian circles that would compete directly with *Soul Friend*. The book *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope* by Catholic nun Joan Chittister (Eerdmans, 2003) is similar in that it is written out of a place of personal struggle and disappointment but it is more didactic in tone and content and based on Jacob's experience of wrestling with God (Gen 32:22-31).
- There are many titles available about mentoring and spiritual direction per se eg *Mentoring Matters* by Rick Lewis (Monarch, 2009), *Mentoring to Develop Disciples and Leaders* by John Mallison (Scripture Union and Openbook, 1998), *Connecting* by Stanley and Clinton (Navpress, 1992), *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction* by Margaret Guenther (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1993), *Walking Together: Discovering the Catholic Tradition of Spiritual Friendship* by Mary de Turrís Poust (Ave Maria, 2010) etc. But while these contain many personal examples, they are much more academic in nature. However, I believe *Soul Friend* would be an ideal companion book to such works, since it describes an actual, successful, ongoing spiritual friendship.

**Example 8: Why *Soul Friend* will be able to compete well in the market**

- *Soul Friend* is an honest, sensitive account of a successful mentoring relationship and a glimpse 'up close and personal' into how mentoring or spiritual direction can work well. Good stories can inspire people, touching the heart as well as the head—even Jesus often chose to teach via stories. Therefore, while *Soul Friend* is not an intellectual explanation of or a 'how to' book about mentoring or spiritual direction, I believe it will complement such books already out there in the market well.
- *Soul Friend* shows the way forward with God through challenging circumstances and times of self-doubt and confusion. It is a positive, uplifting, encouraging book that should appeal to Christian leaders in particular. In *Soul Friend*, I show that leaders are real people who experience doubts and challenges the same as any other Christian seeking to live for God.
- *Soul Friend* was inspired by my reading of Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie*, a hugely popular book worldwide, published by Hachette Australia in 2007. Just as Albom shares how he was greatly helped and challenged through his times spent talking with his old college professor Morrie, so I felt I could write with about my own relationship with my mentor, but with more overtly Christian content.

**Example 9: Fiction Synopsis—*The Inheritance***

*The Inheritance* is a stirring story of family secrets, forgiveness and faith. It explores one man's struggle to come to grips with the past, be reconciled with himself, his family and ultimately God, and face the future with courage and integrity. Alongside this, it explores a woman's struggle to stay true to her faith in God and pursue God's purposes in her life.

Doctor Michael Trevelyan finds himself heir not only to Whitecross Manor, the family estate near Winchester in England, but also to the torment of unresolved trauma incurred by the previous generation of Trevelyans. He has stubbornly refused to reconcile with his ill mother because of issues surrounding the death of his sister Miriam years earlier and becomes even more bitter when he discovers his uncle, whom he believes abused Miriam, is his real father. He cannot see past his mother's judgmental attitude and hypocrisy, and believes she has never forgiven him for his part in Miriam's death. When he finally inherits Whitecross, he is determined to live there, despite his involvement in a busy London orthopaedic practice, and not let it pass to his brother Geoffrey, who plans to use it as a Christian rehabilitation centre. However, after meeting Alexandra Hope, his mother's doctor, who is filling in at her father's practice while he is on leave and who has a strong personal faith in God, and after interacting more with Geoffrey's family, Michael slowly and reluctantly begins to explore his own beliefs and way of life. Yet his inability to forgive his mother and his bitterness over their family history hold him back from any real belief in a loving God.

Michael works hard to set up a branch of his London orthopaedic practice in nearby Winchester, in order to fulfil his mother's requirement that he live at Whitecross for at least six months of each year or let the estate pass to his brother. Eventually, he asks Alexandra to marry him, but she refuses because of their differing values and his lack of real faith in God. Alexandra realises she does care for him, yet nevertheless leaves for Ethiopia to undertake a medical ministry to refugees.

After Michael becomes exhausted trying to run the two practices, he takes time off to travel overseas, arranging for someone to look after Whitecross. He visits his brother's rehabilitation centre in the NSW Blue Mountains and almost loses his life rescuing his little niece Zoe from a fire. With his hands burnt in the blaze, he returns to England to continue receiving treatment and begins to spend time with Alexandra's father, Doctor John Hope, who helps him come to terms with his past and understand more about God. Eventually, Michael is able to return to his orthopaedic work but also agrees to share the workload at Doctor John Hope's local general practice, thus enabling John to complete writing his book.

Alexandra returns from her refugee work, quite shattered and exhausted by what she has seen and questioning her own faith in God. Slowly both she and Michael heal and come to a deeper understanding of each other and of God. Together they marvel how God has now given them both a heavenly inheritance that is worth so much more than anything else. Eventually they marry and decide to develop the estate, along with Geoffrey and his wife, as a place of healing and rehabilitation. And when their first child, a daughter, is born, they name her Grace Miriam, in memory of the sister Michael loved so much.

**Example 10: Non-fiction synopsis for *Soul Friend: A Shared Spiritual Journey***

The concept of ‘soul friend’ arises out of the Celtic tradition of ‘anam cara’ (Gaelic for ‘soul friend’) and describes a special relationship which enables a deep sharing of one’s mind, heart and innermost self with another. My memoir *Soul Friend* is an honest and intimate portrayal of one such special, life-giving relationship that I myself have enjoyed—and still do—with my spiritual mentor, Joy Crawford, a wise and gifted older woman who lives in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney.

The book begins at the point where I was required to find a spiritual mentor during my second year of theological college around fifteen years ago. In the eighteen chapters the book contains (see Chapter Outline on next page), I describe how I first met Joy and also a little of her background. I then move on to show the enormous help and support Joy was for me as I struggled in my college years as a mature-aged student, then as a woman employed in local church ministry, and finally as an author and speaker. I show how Joy’s continued respect and belief in me empowered me to graduate from college and undertake five years as part of a ministry team with three men, one of whom was my husband. I risk baring my soul as I share some of the challenges I found in this role as well as the rewards and how Joy was an integral part of enabling me to believe in myself and use the gifts God had given me to the full in my ministry role. I then describe how Joy walked with me through the grief of leaving that ministry and of trying to find what God wanted me to do next, encouraging me to get rid of self-doubt and pursue my God-given dreams. In the process, I try to convey how vital Joy’s faith in me has been in enabling me to persevere and her delight as each of my five novels was released. I also share something of Joy’s own grief in recent years over her husband David’s illness and eventual death and describe how our relationship has now become more mutually beneficial.

In the process of portraying this spiritual journey of mine, I outline some of the ways Joy ministered to me through prayer, through listening, through godly insight, through sharing many books and other resources with me, and through her wonderful, warm hospitality. I have based the content of this book not only on my memory of our meetings over the years but also on the many journal entries I recorded from these times together, as well as various cards and emails from Joy. Joy herself also provided more information, particularly about her own journey, both firsthand and also through some DVDs she and her minister husband recorded a few years ago in which they share their own personal and ministry journeys.

**Example 11: Marketing ideas/promotional opportunities for my novel *The Inheritance***

- **Speaking engagements and/or interviews** at churches, Christian conference, retreats etc. The number of speaking engagements and interviews I have undertaken in the previous three years are as follows: 2011—26; 2010—30; 2009—31. These speaking engagements etc have included Christian women’s retreats; coffee mornings, supper nights etc at women’s groups from a variety of denominations; preaching in church services.
- **Speaking at secular meetings** such as Probus, Legacy, War Widows, Seniors’ Clubs (more in conjunction with my writing journey and my novels, but I will also mention my non-fiction book).
- **Book sales table** at Christian conferences, after church services, secular events such as writers’ festivals, fetes etc.
- **Organising promotional material** such as business cards, book marks, posters, video clip etc.
- **Online** in the following ways:
  - I have a website, [www.jo-anneberthelsen.com](http://www.jo-anneberthelsen.com), where my novels are available for purchase.
  - I write a weekly blog ([www.jo-anneberthelsen.wordpress.com](http://www.jo-anneberthelsen.wordpress.com)), usually containing something about writing, with my books featured on the site. I also post my blog on Facebook each week.
  - I have an **Amazon author page**.
  - I am part of **Christian Writers Downunder**, have an author page on their website and contribute to their blog ([christianwritersdownunder.blogspot.com.au](http://christianwritersdownunder.blogspot.com.au)) when rostered on.
  - I am a member of **International Christian Fiction Writers** and also contribute to their blog ([internationalchristianfictionwriters.blogspot.com.au/](http://internationalchristianfictionwriters.blogspot.com.au/)) when rostered on. My books are featured on the sidebar widget of their site.
  - I am a member of **American Christian Fiction Writers** and my novels are listed on their ‘Fiction Finder’ resource.
  - I will seek to have my book reviewed on other authors’ blogs through personal connection or through groups such as the **Australian Christian Writers’ Blog Alliance**.
  - I am on **Facebook** and **Shoutlife** social networking sites and also **Goodreads**.
- **Utilising news sections on websites and in magazines or e-newsletters of groups of which I am a member** such as the NSW Writers’ Centre, Christian Publishers’ newsletter, University of Queensland Alumni magazine, Churches of Christ Freshhope Women, Mentoring Network etc.
- **Radio/TV interviews.** In the past I have been interviewed by Kel Richards on Radio 2CH Sydney 1170 and by Jenny Baxter at Ultra 106.5 FM radio in Hobart. I plan to continue to seek out such interviews, particularly with Christian FM radio stations.
- **Bookstores.** My five published novels are currently stocked in Koorong Bookstores across Australia and New Zealand, in Word Bookstores and other independent Christian bookstores. I would offer to do book signings and visit bookstores which stock this book where possible.