

Pamela S. Thibodeaux

Inspirational with an Edge

by Jessica Ferguson

Louisiana author and freelance writer/editor Pamela S. Thibodeaux tells all new writers the same thing: “Take a deep breath, close your eyes, listen to your heart and just write. Forget the rules and everything else you’ve heard or read and write the book you want to read. This may not be the one to launch your career but if you don’t get it out, everything else you do will be clouded by the ‘what ifs’ around that project.”

Pamela began writing over thirty years ago. She doesn’t believe in giving up. She believes in chasing her dreams until she catches them and investing in herself and her talent.

“My foray into ebook publishing was what some would consider a fluke, but I call it divine intervention. I’d been pitching my book *Tempered Hearts* for years with the same responses: ‘Too much God/faith for the secular market and too much sensuality/grit for the Christian readership.’ So, when Sandy Cummins of Writers Exchange—with whom I had published several articles in her Ezine of the same name—said she was going to start publishing books, I felt compelled to send the manuscript to her. Imagine my surprise when she said she ‘loved’ the book! Since Sandy wasn’t doing POD at the time, I personally had the print copies of both *Tempered Hearts* and *Tempered Dreams* (books one and two in my series) published and proceeded to market/distribute through the Books-A-Million stores. That was when authors could still bring their titles into the stores. The *Tempered* series has undergone transformation since those two were initially published in 2000/2001.”

Pamela knows the importance of marketing and promotion, and of treating her writing as a business. When contracts expired, she wasted no time independently publishing them under her own imprint, Temperance Publishing.

“Writing is a business. Sales equal income. Like any other business, if an author is not actively marketing and publicizing his or her work, the sales will suffer; and if he or she is not consistently getting new or improved products out—that is, writing/publishing more books—the business won’t grow. ALL sales matter!”

As the marketing associate/ad sales representative for Pelican Ventures, which consists of Pelican Book Group, TWJ Magazine and Christian Book Videos, Pamela has to use her time wisely. Her day usually begins between 4 and 6 a.m. with a cup of coffee and quiet time.

In her own writing, writer’s block normally occurs when she tries too hard to make her story happen the way she thinks it should, “instead of letting the Holy Spirit and my characters guide me,” she says. To get inspired she’ll read or write something different. “And of course I pray. A lot. Which normally leads to surrender. After all, I write for God and for me that means submitting to His lead.”

The worst writing advice Pamela has ever received? “Conform! My writing has been tagged ‘Inspirational with an Edge!’ because, although I tried and tried to conform to the rules of Christian fiction, I just couldn’t do it. I edited, revised and rewrote my work trying to



make it fit until I didn't recognize my own story and characters. In the end, I decided to write in my own voice and style and trust God to put me in touch with the right publishers."

When *Tempered Hearts* was first published, one reviewer stated that Pamela Thibodeaux was "blazing a trail" for a new and different kind of Christian fiction. Pamela treasures that statement. "The fact that some publishers are opening up to edgier and more sensual work within the CBA market makes me glad and proud that I stuck it out and stayed true to myself and not pander to the market just to get published."

A dedicated nonfiction reader, Pamela selects books for personal, emotional and spiritual growth. She reads fiction for pleasure. However, she's a seat-of-the-pants writer and says she hasn't found a single book that has helped her career. "I did enjoy *On Writing* by Stephen King but most books on writing are geared to the rules and regulations of specific markets. If I had to pick the one thing that has helped my career more than anything, I'd say it was having the confidence to write what I do and the tenacity to find publishers, editors and critique partners who strive to help me improve my style. Not change it to fit their (or the market's) idea of what should or should not be in a Christian/inspirational novel."

Pamela made a decision to be true to her voice and to her own style of writing. And that's her best advice to all writers: "Whatever you do about your writing, stay true to yourself." ■