

“Hold Up --- Time Out!”

There were so many things I had to reconsider now. Did I want to get a Literary Agent? How could I find another publisher that would be fair, reasonable in cost, and still excellent in service? I still needed over half of my books illustrated; which was a constant expense, even though my illustrator was very reasonable in cost and considerate of a payment schedule. I also needed a website that had the capacity to keep my supporters updated on the project, all of my books (children storybooks as well as any others I’ve written or will write), and serve as a place that I could receive financial seeds of support. Lastly, I wanted to be able to give something of value away for free on my website if possible, but I had no idea how.



Now, what would I do about creating a website? I knew that there were several companies that provided free ‘Do It Yourself’ website setups. I wanted a website that was top notch, had a professional appearance and yet, simple to maneuver. So, knowing my limited skills with computers, I figured what I wanted would be best left in the hands of professionals. However, being newly retired and financially dependent on limited income, how would I handle all of these critical and potentially costly decisions? To add to all of that, I’m not getting any younger. I’m almost 64 years old and a lot of my family members were heading to the other side of glory in their sixties. Hold up! It was time for me to take a time out.



Being the kind of person who does better working from lists, I decided to write down everything that was really before me, and then prioritize that list in order of likelihood at that moment in time. In no particular order -- here goes!

- Find another way to get my storybooks published.
- Make sure I continued to finish and pay for storybook illustrations.
- Research the pros and cons of having a Literary Agent.
- Research the cost of setting up and personally maintaining a website.
- Research the cost of acquiring a book trailer video, highlighting my storybook collections that could be used on my website and other marketing venues.
- What do I possess of value that could be given away free on my website?
- How could I market my books with limited to potentially no funds?
- What could I do to make sure this project lived on beyond my earthly existence?
- What about networking and continued learning and training for me?

In my research of whether I should get a Literary Agent to find a publisher, I discovered that most agents would not take the time nor effort to give my book a chance. It may be a waste of time, not to mention a waste of additional funds, which I did not have. Literary Agents come along with their own set of fees. I decided not to pursue a literary agent.

Going directly to a publisher also had its own set of challenges. My goal was to become a '*Best Selling Author*,' not merely just a writer of books. I needed to not only find the right publisher for my books, but learn how to most effectively push my creations out into the world with a smart and inexpensive marketing campaign. My greatest challenge was not having the funds to secure the popular publishers. Several of them had already responded back to me and not only wanted one book, but had approved the entire Spirit of Truth Series. And even though they practically guaranteed I would sell over 5000 of each book using their extensive marketing plan, the cost to me was way more than I could afford up front.

I felt that I had no choice but to self-publish, which also meant I had to do my own marketing. I found a company that was willing to duplicate the pattern of the only storybook within the series that had already been published at that time, *'Kissing Kirkland.'* Over the next year, this company completed 11 more storybooks that were not only beautiful, but cost effective. Bookfuel and I negotiated a contract in which they billed me by the month at a very reasonable discount, which included the completion of the entire 26 storybook series, as well as setting up and maintaining a personal website that included a professionally designed book trailer. I have great communication with their production team and highly recommend them to anyone.

Now that I had an added monthly expense, I had to make sure that my personal illustrator could continue her work and that I'd be able to pay her. I could see that my illustrator's skills were improving with every story, however she never asked me for more money. I knew professional work like hers could have cost me hundreds of dollars per page. Some of my children's stories required more than 30 full-color illustrations.

I still had 15 more storybooks to go, and yet I needed a way to have my illustrator speed up her work because the self-publishing company was moving so fast. Until now, I had allowed the illustrator to work at her own pace. I had met her in high school as a 17 year old art student. Her school work had to come first, so I was receiving one or two completed storybook illustrations once every three or four months. Now, she is 20 years old and in college, and had agreed to continue working with me to completion, still at her own pace. I needed her to move faster, but there was no way I could keep up with paying her faster with the publishing company's monthly payments also on my limited income.

Jessica, my illustrator, agreed to allow me to pay her as much as I could each month until I had paid in full --- even partial payments. What a Godsend this young lady has been! Jessica did pick up the pace and sent me three completed storybook illustrations in just under two weeks, and kept them coming for as long as she could so I could get ahead of Bookfuel. It has been an awesome experience seeing how God has moved in dealing with this project when a lot of times, it seemed that there was no way through.

I shared my concern about finding something to offer to my website visitors as a give-away with a very wise family member that reminded me of the many years I trained in and taught early childhood education. She reminded me that I had multitudes of treasures I could share on my website. Bingo! That was it. I had dozens of boxes of early childhood activities I had used through the years that included, math, science, social skills development, music, cooking, language development, and more. This was amazing because I truly want others to be able to visit my website without feeling like they had to purchase something. I now had a way to give, which was my main motivation in the first place. I incorporated a resource area on my website where people can go to print off free activities for their younger children or grandchildren. My vision was coming together so well and I thanked God for every revelation and step on this journey thus far.

