



## A Writing Career That Began With a Challenge

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**Guest:** Nicole Adair

**Shelley Hunter:** You're listening to the *Faithful Career Moves podcast*. I'm your host, Shelley Hunter, and this is the place where we talk to people who have found the career they were born to do and recognize God's hand in the process.

Welcome to episode 36 of the *Faithful Career Moves podcast*. Today, I have a pretty amazing story to share, quite literally. I'm talking to Nicole Adair. She's an author, a mom, and according to her Instagram account, a believer and an over-thinker. She's written two books so far, both available on Amazon, and you can find a link to those in the show notes. Equally important to me is a full behind-the-scenes look she gives on her Instagram account called *writenicolewrite*, also in the show notes,

I reached out to Nicole after reading one of her Instagram posts that stopped my scrolling. She had written about discouragement and feeling wrung out and worn thin, particularly in regard to parenting and juggling a writing career. She goes on to say that while reading her scriptures, she was reminded that her struggles are not unique. She said the scripture pages are full of men and women who are asking how, why, when, and what of prophets and disciples who didn't know what they were doing but knew in whom they could trust.

That had never occurred to me that that is what our scriptures are about. They're about prophets and apostles, disciples, and regular people needing help in the same way that you and I do. I love that thought, and it has stayed with me ever since. I reached out to Nicole because I wanted to learn more about her journey, her writing career, and how she got started. You know how this goes. I asked Nicole to start us off by telling me about her career. This is Nicole.

**Nicole Adair:** I am an author, and I write primarily, so far, young adult novels. I think anyone can read young adult novels, but that usually means about age 12 and up type of books. I have two books out right now. My first novel is called *A Tangle of Dreams*, that's a young adult contemporary fantasy. Then my second book that came out just this past August is called *Voted Most Likely*, and that's a young adult contemporary. Those are my books that I have out. I'm currently in the middle of

revising the sequel to *A Tangle of Dreams*. I'll have three books out probably by next year.

**Shelley:** That's amazing. How did we get here? Have you always been a writer?

**Nicole:** I have not always been a writer. [laughs] I would say I've always been good at writing. I've always enjoyed writing, but up until this point, I've never tried to write a book. I've always, always loved to read. I think that's been my biggest connection to writing throughout my whole life has been reading. I graduated from BYU with a degree in political science. It's like young adult books and political science, how do you get there? That major did require a lot of writing from me, but it wasn't creative writing.

**Shelley:** What happens? You graduate in political science, how do we go from there to being an author?

**Nicole:** Really, this whole thing, this whole journey of writing books really started for me back in the fall in 2019. I had all three of my kids at that point. My youngest was little, she was only about 6 months old at that time. I was deep in the trenches of newborn baby life with two other kids. My stake did this Relief Society challenge to remove something from your life and replace it with something else.

I remember that I had this really strong feeling that I needed to give up TV, give up Netflix. Then I was like, "I can't do that." Because I had this new baby and I'm up in the middle of the night with her, all I did was just re-watch TV shows to stay awake, and be helping her. It was just the place I would zone out, and just have some quiet time or whatever. I kept having this feeling, and then I was disturbed by how much I didn't want to. I was like, "Okay, you really don't want to turn off the TV. You need to listen. Let's see where this is taking you."

So I did, I decided for 30 days to just not watch any TV. This is, I'm not saying that TV is bad or Netflix, I think that the Lord was really trying to communicate to me that I needed some quiet, I needed some space to hear Him because He had something to tell me, and that was really important. I think our world is so noisy and so full of chatter; it can be really hard to find quiet. For 30 days I gave up TV, and I decided to fill that time with reading.

It wasn't just reading of my scriptures, it was just like reconnecting with books, and because it's so hard to find time to read as a mom, as much as I loved reading, it just wasn't happening. It was easier to turn on the TV or do something else. Also probably because when I'm in the middle of a book and it's good, all I want to do is read. Anyway, I reconnected with that part of myself that loved reading. I cannot describe to you how immediate it was. It was like this instant, I think I could write a book.

It was so unexpected when the thought first came into my mind, but because I was wrapping myself in words, I was really getting involved in storytelling and just other people's stories that I just fell in love. As soon as I started having that thought of, "I think I want to try writing," my story idea started falling into place.

These characters strolled into my mind. I really didn't know much about the story, but I started writing out notes in my phone, on the Notes app. I remember being in the car one time and I was typing something on my phone, and my husband was like, "What are you doing?" I was like, "Nothing, nothing."

[laughter]

**Shelley:** You didn't want him to know.

**Nicole:** Yes. I hadn't told anybody. I felt really embarrassed about it because who am I? Who am I to write a book? I felt like the biggest imposter. I didn't study creative writing, I had no idea what I was doing. I just felt utterly ridiculous thinking about it, saying it out loud. But the fire was lit, I couldn't extinguish it. I was into the story, so I decided to start drafting the book, January. It was my New Year's resolution. I was like, "I'm going to write every day until I finished this." I did. That's how I wrote the first draft for my book, and I finished that in May of 2020.

**Shelley:** That's incredible. How much did you write each day?

**Nicole:** I didn't have a specific word count I was trying to hit, or I didn't say I was going to write an hour every day. I was just like, "I'm going to spend time with this every day." Some days that was 10 minutes. Some days it was a sentence because I was like, "I'm committed, so here I am, I'm showing up, I'm doing it." Then other days, it was for hours if I was getting caught up in the story and if I had the time. It really taught me so much about carving out space for myself and for my goal. I was specific about it. When I have the time, I'm doing it. It taught me so much, those first five months of writing. It was incredible.

**Shelley:** That seriously is fast. When I see people who are writers, they do this whole storyboard and post-it note type of thing. You were just writing.

**Nicole:** Yes, I am. In the writing world, that's known as being a pantsier, you write by the seat of your pants. That's what it's called. I think the nicer term for it is a discovery writer. That's what I am. I have ideas, I have scenes that I want to write, but I don't know where the story's going to go until I'm actually writing. That's when my characters really just tell me what they want to do, that's when different ideas come to me. I feel that act of sitting down at my computer just unlocks that part of my brain, that I need to write. I wish I could plot. I feel like that would make my life easier, but I just can't.

**Shelley:** I feel sometimes I could rename this podcast something like, who am I? Because everyone I talk to has that same moment that they're feeling inspired to do something and they're thinking, "You got to be kidding me."

**Nicole:** Yes, everybody. I feel like everyone goes through that crippling imposter syndrome. I keep thinking, I'm like, "If we all feel like imposters, who's not the imposters?"

[laughter]

**Shelley:** Yes. Who actually feels qualified to do what they're doing?

**Nicole:** Who feels like they belong here? [laughs]

**Shelley:** Yes. Did you self-publish? What did you do?

**Nicole:** I did self-publish. Getting to that point was, again, another really profound spiritual experience for me.

It's so funny because before I even finished drafting what would become *A Tangle of Dreams*, my first novel, I was like, "I'm going to publish this." I just knew. Looking back, that seems so absurd. This was my first draft and I was like, "I'm publishing this, I know it." It just seems crazy to me now thinking about it. For self-publishing, I was looking into my options. Do I pursue traditional publishing? I really didn't know about self-publishing until I started this writing process for myself.

As I looked back and forth as I weighed the pros and cons, they're both really hard for different reasons. I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I'll be honest, my first impression for self-publishing was, "Self-publishing is for people who can't get published." That was what I thought. That's for the writers who can't get a book deal. I was like, "That's not for me. I'm never doing that." As I looked into it and I saw the creativity that's involved in self-publishing and the ownership that's involved, that really spoke to me because I think I'm a bit more controlling than I want to admit. I wanted total ownership of my story and the whole creative process of it. But beyond that, I can remember the moment so specifically. I'd been nursing my youngest and getting her down for a nap, as I was rocking her to sleep, and I was just asking that question in my heart over and over again, which path should I take? It seemed like an important turning point. Do I start querying for an agent? Because if you're going to traditionally publish, you have to pretty much get an agent first, who then pitches your story, and it can be this really long, drawn out, really painful process of rejection over and over and over again. I was prepared for that. I believed in my story 100%. I knew, and I still know that it could be published traditionally.

As I thought about the process and what that looked like for me, I just really specifically felt the Lord telling me that I needed to self-publish. To be honest, it was like, "Really? That's what I need to do? That sounds so hard. I don't know anything about it." I remember it just so specifically came to my mind that I put my baby down in her bed and I ran and I got my planner, which was the closest notebook I had, and I wrote down the thoughts I was having because I was like, "I am going to need to turn back to this because this is going to be hard. I need to write this down so I can remember, and I can trust that this came from beyond me."

I just so specifically felt that I needed to self-publish because I needed to learn things about myself that traditional publishing couldn't teach me. I was like, "Oh boy. It sounds like a learning experience." My personality, I like to be told I'm doing a good job. I really like earning gold stars. I've always been an overachiever, perfectionist. I'm the oldest child in my family, if that tells you anything. That's just always been my personality.

I just have constantly sought validation from others. I felt like self-publishing was this really radical chance for me to validate myself. I had to say, "I think my book is good enough to be published," and I had to form a book deal with myself if that makes sense. Instead of someone saying, "Your book is so good, I want to buy it from you and pay you for it, and spend all this money to print all these copies so people will buy it."

I had to say, "Your book is so good. I'm going to pay to publish it and print all these copies so people will read it." I had to do that for myself, which was basically my nightmare [laughs] of being the one who was in charge of my validation, which has always been a struggle for me. I have learned so much since that quiet moment of rocking my daughter to sleep, and the spirit whispering to me that this was something I needed to learn.

It's just been such an incredible, beautiful, soul-stretching journey full of just so much self-doubt. I cannot describe to you how much I've doubted this whole process, but time and time again, I've proved myself that I can do it and the Lord has proved to me that He follows through and that His promises are kept. It's been surreal and it's been beautiful, and I would not do it any other way.

**Shelley:** This is amazing. Now, for people who are not familiar with book publishing deals, they care more about your audience than the content of your book to start. They want to know how hard you are going to work to sell your own book and if you have an existing audience in place who will already buy it. That matters more. That's why celebrities get book deals, influencers get book deals, they know that they're going to sell the book, and then I think they worry about the story that's inside of it. It's twofold for you. One is that the belief in the book, but two, like you said, you had to be your own validation. Isn't that what we're all supposed to be learning right now anyway, to know our true worth?

**Nicole:** Yes.

**Shelley:** Wow. Okay, so why teen novels?

**Nicole:** Why teen novels? Well, first of all, that's my favorite genre to read. [laughs]

**Shelley:** Already. Before you were writing, you read those books?

**Nicole:** Oh, yes. I've never grown out of the young adult genre. I think that's where it's at. I read other books. I read other genres, of course, but this is my favorite. I think I have such a soft spot for it because I grew up when the young adult genre was really solidified as a market. I think that books about characters who have big feelings are experiencing things for the first time. They're my favorite kind of stories, and those are the stories I love to write.

**Shelley:** You follow the prompting, you self-publish. What have you done to market the book? Did you just put it out there and move on to the next one?

**Nicole:** That's a great question. It's something I'm still trying to learn. When you do decide to self-publish, that means you're not just taking responsibility for your story and how you get it into a book form. It's what happens to it after, which is something I'm still trying to figure out. My focus is always on the writing. That's the most important part to me. I want the story to speak for itself, but I also have to have a place to talk about it. It's funny because before I started writing, I wasn't on social media. I had been before, but I had taken breaks from it, and I had been off of it for a couple of years. I wasn't using any at all.

After I wrote the first draft of my first book, I was like, "I probably need to get online somewhere. I'm going to need to be talking about this." I just was dreading it because I'm really sensitive, and social media just drains me. It can be really exhausting. It's just really loud. It's a lot. It's this comparison thing all the time. This was even before I was preparing to publish. I was just preparing to start revising and editing my book. I was like, "I think I need to do this. I think I need to start talking about my writing." I was so, so scared to do so.

I got on my personal account, I posted a picture of my printed-out manuscript, and I was like, "Hey, I wrote a book."

[laughter]

**Nicole:** I felt so ridiculous saying that, but I was like, "This was the first step of me trying to take myself seriously." What do they think? People are going to be like, "Oh, you can't do it, or how dare you write a book?"

**Shelley:** Who do you think you are?

**Nicole:** Yes, exactly. I've had so much positive feedback and everyone was cheering me on, and that's when I started my writing account. I set that up to show a behind the scenes of what it looks like to write and publish a book. In that account, it's one of my greatest joys. I still get tired by social media, but the connections I found in this online writing community have absolutely blown me away.

It was something I needed and I didn't know it. Writing can be really lonely because it's just you at a computer and it's just all inside your head. People who don't write don't really get it. It's like, "Why are you stressed out over these made-up problems that you're making for yourself?"

[laughter]

**Nicole:** Like, "Why are you staying up late to finish this chapter?" You're writing. It's like homework.

**Shelley:** When you say problems, I think what you mean is both in terms of your own goal to get this done, but also you're saying I'm trying to work out a problem in the story.

**Nicole:** Yes. All these plot holes, it's like, I've made this myself, but also it doesn't make sense, but I'm supposed to fix these imaginary problems for these imaginary people that it's all just like--

[laughter]

**Shelley:** Do you worry about them?

**Nicole:** Yes. It's so complicated, and I'm like, "I'm choosing to do this. I am just making this problem for myself, all of this. The goal setting, the writing, all of it." I'm like, "I could just not be doing this," but at the same time, I don't want to let it go.

I started my account and I just looked up hashtags of writing and writing challenges, writing community, and I was just talking to anybody who would talk to me. [laughs] I was like, "Are you writing? I'm writing too. What's your book about?" I felt like I walked into a cafeteria and you're trying to find a place to sit. You're tapping everyone on the shoulder, "Can I sit here?" [laughs] I was just welcomed in with so much support.

I joined these challenges. Different authors, different writers will host a 30-day challenge where you're talking about your work in progress, so whatever book you're writing. That was me dipping my toes into the writing community where I would share about my characters one day. Then the next day, it would be share a snippet of your writing. Another challenge might be like show us your Pinterest board of what things inspire you. Share a playlist from your characters. This is all stuff I love because writing a book isn't just writing, it's a whole mood. You have to immerse yourself in the story of it. I do that through music and through pictures.

You really have to spend time with this world that you're building so the ideas keep coming. This really pushed me outside myself to share when I was so uncomfortable even admitting that I was writing. I had to really embrace the kind of cringe that comes from promoting your own work.

**Shelley:** Right. Absolutely.

**Nicole:** Being like, "This is really good and I want to tell you about it." It totally exhausted me from the first year of doing this. It's just hard. I feel like it is easier for me now. I can openly say I'm an author. I'm very proud of my books, but still, there's that really sensitive vulnerability every time you share something that you've made. I don't think that ever goes away, and I don't think it should because that makes it art, that makes it special and meaningful, is that it comes from this tender place inside of you that is untouched in that way, and then sharing it to someone else is you never know what they're going to do with it, what's going to happen with it, and that's scary.

**Shelley:** Yes, and it really does get to the heart of what you talked about originally which is at some point you get to the part of saying this might not be for everybody but--

**Nicole:** Oh yes, I've gotten bad reviews on my books. I don't read reviews because I think reviews are for readers, reviews are for people if they're deciding whether or not they want to read the book. They're not for me, they're not for the author, but because I do self-publish, and I am monitoring the stats of these things and sometimes I have to pull reviews for promotional things, I'll see stuff and I'll be like, "Oh no." I've had to learn how to separate myself. Everyone can have their own opinion. It has nothing to do with me. It has to do with their opinions on books and what they like in a book and what they don't. That's hard, it's hard to process, but it's also worthwhile to learn.

**Shelley:** Yes, interesting. Okay, so you now have a second book?

**Nicole:** Yes. I wrote the first book. I had already started planning ahead as much as I can since I can't write an outline for the sequel for *A Tangle of Dreams*. I had parts of that story ready. I wrote the first draft for the sequel last year. I was just getting the story out and it was hard. I feel like there's so much more expectation. It takes the fun out of it. I was now writing with a little bit of heaviness to it. Like, "Okay, I have reader expectations, I have my own expectations, how was this going to measure up to the first book?"

That was difficult for me to work through mentally and emotionally while I was drafting the book, so I was kind of burnt out by the end of it. I finished it right before Christmas, and I was like, "I am done, I need a break. I will start editing this book the next year." I was like, "We're taking a break from words." And you have to watch what you say because two days later, I'm in the shower, which is where all my best ideas come, and I had this idea for another book. It just slammed into me like full force. I am not the kind of author that gets a lot of ideas.

I have friends who have so many ideas. They could be writing 12 books right now. Do you know what I mean? They're just like idea generators, and I am not. I was able to write, edit, and publish *A Tangle of Dreams* pretty quickly like within a year and a half because I was not distracted by any other ideas. I didn't start writing another book. None of that. I only had this idea. When this idea for *Voted Most Likely* hit me so hard, I was so excited. I was ecstatic because I was like, "Oh my gosh, I have another idea."

I'd been so afraid that I was a good writer but not a good storyteller if that makes sense. I was worried I didn't have more stories. These two characters came into my mind so loudly, and I immediately started writing notes on my phone, and those notes turned into dialogue, and that dialogue turned into chapters, and then I was like, "I need to get off my phone." I'm like tapping all this on my phone like writing full chapters. I was like, "This is real. This is another book."

I started writing *Voted Most Likely* and I wrote the whole thing in six weeks. It was bonkers. It was absolutely crazy. I was really like tunnel vision. I really let a lot of things go because I was just sucked into this story. I, unfortunately, was not sleeping, I was staying up too late writing, so I really wasn't taking care of myself. My house was a disaster and my kids watched a lot of TV, but that book was just pouring out of



me in this really rewarding, creative experience that I don't know if I'll ever have it like that again. Do you know what I mean?

**Shelley:** Yes.

**Nicole:** I know I'll write more books, but that intensity of the story was just there. It was like when you're watching a show and you're like, "Just one more episode and then I'll go to bed." It was like that, but it was like just one more chapter and then I'll go to bed. I had the best time writing it, and truly the whole thing felt like a gift, and so I just soaked up the process the whole time.

**Shelley:** That takes me to the question I was going to ask is, how do you balance family then with your writing?

**Nicole:** The eternal question of balance. I don't think I do balance, I think I go from one thing to the next and drop all the balls in the process. The thing that has been the most important for me to learn is what matters and what doesn't, and that's something I'm continually re-evaluating, and I think that that's something that's really fluid. It changes a lot depending on the week. Sometimes my kids need me more than my stories do, and other times I'm closer to a deadline and mom's got to work, and everyone's just going to have to be okay with that.

Learning how that fluctuates has been difficult for me. The crucial factor though is knowing and truly internalizing my worth as a mother. I have to recognize that I am a wonderful mother even if my floors are dirty, I am a good mom even if my kids are watching lots of TV. I can't attach my worth to these things that I used to prove I was a good mom. That's been a learning process for me that I'm still learning.

The thing that was so great about my family, and my husband has supported me this whole time, he didn't even blink when I told him I was going to write a book. He was like, "Oh, awesome, you've always been a good writer." My kids and my husband, they didn't separate the author from the mom. That was only me. I was doing that. I made it hard when I would try to distinguish the two, instead of just recognizing that was just me. I'm one person, that's Nicole. I write, and I'm a mom, and I make a mess, and I say sorry. Sometimes I yell too much and we all have to come back together and regroup. It's like I had to recognize that that was okay.

**Shelley:** It was a new experience I guess for everybody, but it was always inside you and it was time for you to develop it.

**Nicole:** Exactly, and no one else cared that we were eating the same thing for dinner three days in a row. No one else cared that the laundry wasn't folded. No one else cared that I hadn't cleaned the bathrooms. Like no one else cared, it was only me who would be fretting about it, who would be, "I'm doing such a terrible job." That thought would just replay on my mind over and over again.

When I would step back and look at what was going on at this beautiful thing I was doing, these two beautiful things I'm doing, raising a family and writing books, and that I could merge them together, I just had to recognize that so much stuff that we

think is important just does not matter. It doesn't matter, and as soon as I clean my house it's a disaster the next day, I've got little kids. It's so fleeting, and the happiness or the fulfillment that I think comes from me staying on top of things is just temporary and fleeting for me. I had to recognize I was in charge of how I felt and I could decide to feel like a success even when things around me felt like they were falling apart.

My kids and my husband have been so incredibly supportive in that, and they've just cheered me on the whole way. My girls are so proud of my books. My 9-year-old is always asking to read them, and I'm like, "You just need to be a little bit older."

[laughter]

**Nicole:** They're so cute. They help me with titles. They were so excited about the book covers. They know the stories, and they're just involved. I feel like when I sit down to write and every time they interrupt me and I have to get up and get another snack, or you have to help them, someone go to the bathroom, someone spilled something, and it can be so frustrating, but interruptions are where life happens. I can only be a good writer when I'm letting my life happen because that gives me experience and that gives me the emotions to write on. If I just trap myself in a box and all I'm doing is writing, then I'm not truly living and experiencing my own story. My children are the biggest part of my story.

**Shelley:** That's so sweet. Nicole, before I ask my final questions, what advice would you give somebody else who wants to write a book or do something similar?

**Nicole:** My advice, especially for writers, because I actually know there are a lot of people who want to write a book. I hear about it all the time, and my advice is to write. It seems like the most basic thing, but it is so hard to make yourself do it sometimes. My best advice is to write as much as you can, to write really bad drafts because those bad drafts turn into really good books. My best advice is to write.

My other advice is to find your community. Find writer's groups, find critique partners, find people who will swap chapters with you and you can read for each other because getting critiques helps strengthen your writing. It's scary, but it's worth it. I've become a stronger writer because of the friends I've met that are also writing.

One other piece of advice I have is to not compare your journey to anyone else's, because everyone's writing journey, everyone's creative journey looks really different, and that's why we have so many different books. That's why we have so many different forms of art, is that everyone is unique, and their story is unique, and their journey is unique, how they get there.

It can be really tempting to look and be like, "Oh, they already got their book out, or oh, they're so fast at editing. Or oh, they got an agent and I didn't, and they got a book deal." It's really easy to make these comparisons, but you have to stop, step back, look at your story, and stay true to what works for you.

**Shelley:** I love it. Can you tell me about a leap of faith you had to take to get where you are now?

**Nicole:** I feel like this entire process has been just leap after leap after leap of faith, but I think besides just taking the initial leap, the first time I sat down and started writing, I think the biggest leap was deciding to self-publish. I really wanted to form a partnership with the Lord, I really wanted Him to be my business partner. Like, "This is important to me, help me know what to do."

Sometimes those answers don't come as quickly as I want them to. Sometimes I have to do the wrong things to learn how to do the right things, but I have been shown time and time again that as I exercise my faith and as I follow through on promptings, I am rewarded with more faith and more promptings. It's just this beautiful cycle that continues on and on that has been so important to me as I've learned to write, as I've learned to become an author, and to put my books out into the world. It's this kind of surrender, you know? Like you have to say, "It's out of my hands, but it's still in my hands." This complicated mix of pushing, of letting go, and you just keep going.

**Shelley:** Yes. Nicole, what is an unexpected blessing? Something you just couldn't see for yourself in starting this career?

**Nicole:** I think that the most unexpected blessing for me is that I have started writing and sharing about my faith. I did not expect that when I started writing young adult books. Like I'm writing teenage love stories and I wasn't expecting to start writing about my faith in Jesus Christ at the same time, but that's what's happened. What I use my Instagram account primarily, besides showing the behind-the-scenes of what it looks like to write and publish a book, is I use every post almost like, it's like an essay, like a mini-essay for me.

I use it as an opportunity to share things that I'm going through or things about motherhood, things about faith. I've started writing about my faith and how that ties into my writing. I can remember one of the first posts I did about that was a post on prayer, a writing tip that I shared was that I pray before I write. I was so nervous to share it because that's really sensitive. It's really tender to me and it's something that's sacred that I don't share lightly, but I felt prompted to share it.

When I shared it, I was like, "This isn't about other people's responses. This is just about putting good out into the world and following through on a prompting that feels important." I shared it and it was incredible to see the response because through talking about my faith, I have met so many other Christian women, not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and we've connected over our love of the Savior.

I had people saying like, "Oh, I've never thought to pray before I write. I'm going to do that and I've been looking for ways to like bring God into my writing." Because you think it's like if you're not writing about God, then it feels separate, but to me, it's so connected. Christ, one of his names is "the word" and He's the author and the finisher of our faith. These names mean something to me in a different and profound

way now that I didn't see before I started writing. God is a storyteller, He's the ultimate creator and He wants us to learn through creation, like through making our own things. He wants us to find joy in that as He does.

That's been something that has been this huge unexpected blessing, is that I share about my scripture study, I share about my journaling, about what that looks like, how I connect with God in that way. I share about when I'm struggling when I feel like prayers aren't answered, and so these essays that I write have been ways for me to connect to God and the unexpected blessing was that it helped others to connect with God as well.

I just did not see that coming. I started that, I wasn't setting out to do it, but it's become one of the richest parts of my writing journey is to write about my faith. I feel like those essays, those captions I guess that I'm writing are always the easiest for me to write. The words always come so quickly, but they're always the hardest to share because they are special and sensitive and you want them to be treated with respect. That's just been a really sacred experience for me to be able to connect with other people of faith who are also seeking to find God in their life.

**Shelley:** Isn't it so interesting that writing the book is what gave you the platform to share your faith? Without the platform, your only option would've been to share on your personal account. I don't know, it just wouldn't have had the same impact.

**Nicole:** Yes. It would've just been family and friends and people I already know who I already communicate my faith with a lot, and this is a totally different audience that I wouldn't have had the chance to interact with. It's just been such a blessing. Oh, this is a cool story. At the beginning of my book, *A Tangle of Dreams*, there's a poem that sets the mood for the story. That's like the first thing that you read.

I met this incredible poet and writer on Instagram. Her name is Lindsay. She's a Christian woman, she's a mother, and she would just share some of these poems that she would write. I had this feeling that I should ask her to write a poem for my book because I couldn't find one and if we have copyright law again with self-publishing, I didn't want to break any laws or do anything. I wanted an original poem. I just gave her like, I don't know, five or six prompt words to go off of, and she wrote this incredibly gorgeous, lyrical poem that is like the story in a poem. I was blown away when I read it.

After she read the book, she was like, "I've got to tell you, I cannot believe I wrote that poem before reading the book. It's exactly the same thing." She was like, "I prayed about it and I was trying to follow the voice of God and I was trying to connect with it in that way." She was like, "I'm not trying to make this sound prideful." She's like, "God is so good." It was just this little gift between two writers. You see His hand in everything. It was just so cool to see something that it's so easily to dismiss. It's the poem at the beginning of the book, like who cares?

**Shelley:** Right.

**Nicole:** It mattered to me and it mattered to her, and it was just this beautiful thing. I couldn't get over it. I feel like gives me chills every time I think about it. [chuckles]

**Shelley:** Yes. It's undeniable. Which takes me to my final question of, how have you seen the hand of God in your career?

**Nicole:** To me, a different question is how do I not? [chuckles] Because I see him in everything. Every time I feel the nudge to share something on social media, I see His hand. Every time I sit down to write and I'm struggling, I see His hand. Every time I sit down to write and it's a joyful experience, I see His hand. His hand is there guiding me because I care about it, and I so firmly believe that the Lord cares about what we care about.

As I continue to put my heart into this, and as I continue to be prayerful about it, I know that he will continue to inspire me and to give me new ideas, and to help me find my voice. It's just been the biggest blessing. I have grown so much closer to the Lord. My scripture study has become something so meaningful to me. I'm constantly looking for His voice so that I can better know my voice. I just can't even separate the two, writing and spirituality. It's one and the same to me.

**Shelley:** I love that. Thank you so much for sharing your story. This has been fascinating.

**Nicole:** Oh, you're welcome. Thank you so much for chatting with me and for having me. It's been wonderful.

[music]

**Shelley:** This has been so good for me. I love the story, and I now fully understand that I am a pantsner. I cannot write an outline to save myself. I mean that honestly. I remember even clear back in high school: if we had to turn in an outline, I would write the entire essay, article, or story, and then I'd go back and make an outline just so I could turn it in. Even recently, as I too have struggled to write a book that's pressing on my heart, I thought, "Shelley, start with an outline. It'll be so much easier."

But gosh, darn it, I cannot do it. This whole time I thought this was a flaw, proving that I'm actually not a writer. Forget the fact that I write for a living, but it's that, who do you think you are? Who do I think I am? Well, I'll tell you what, I'm a discovery writer, it turns out. So thank you, Nicole, I needed that.

What a great story to remind us that not only do we have different talents and abilities, but the way we explore, grow, and share them may also be different for each of us.

There are two things that seem to be the same. One, God is in the details and if you have a story or an art that needs to get out, He'll help you make that happen if you partner with Him in the process, and it's Satan who says, "Who do you think you are? You're an imposter." Because he doesn't want us to shine our light, he doesn't

want us to share our talents, to help others, and to feel the joy that we feel from creation.

If you're listening to this, let God's voice prevail in your heart and mind and send the other one packing every chance you get. Whether you're developing your talent patiently and methodically, or you're doing it by the seat of your pants, just keep pressing forward and look for the hand of God in the process. I promise you'll find it.

Thank you, Nicole, for sharing your story, and thank you for listening.

Thank you for listening to the *Faithful Career Moves* podcast. If you want to know more about how to connect your natural talents and abilities to job opportunities and business ideas, then visit our website [@faithfulcareermoves.com](https://faithfulcareermoves.com).