



FOR NEW & PROSPECTIVE AUTHORS

Author FAQ

Straight answers to the questions authors ask most

Publishing a book raises a lot of questions — about rights, ISBNs, formats, and the words on the legal pages. Here are plain-language answers to the ones we hear most. If yours is not here, ask us; there is no such thing as a question too small.

AUTHOR FAQ • 2026

SECTION 1

Working with Smith For Christ Publishing

Do I need a finished manuscript to start?

No. Authors come to us at every stage — some with a finished, edited manuscript, some with a rough draft, some with little more than a conviction and an outline. Wherever your book is, that is a place we can begin. We meet it there and build the engagement around what it actually needs.

Do you take any rights to my book?

No. You keep all rights to your manuscript and to the finished book — the text, the title, and the cover as applied to your book. Smith For Christ Publishing is paid for services, not for a share of your work. Your name and the SFC imprint stand on the result, but the book is yours.

How long does it take?

It depends on where the book starts and how quickly drafts, edits, and approvals come back — that last part is the single biggest factor. A finished manuscript moving into design and production is a matter of weeks; a book that begins as an idea is a longer road. We set a realistic timeline together at the start and keep it honest as we go.

How is pricing determined?

Pricing is set per project, because no two books need exactly the same work. After our first conversation we send a written quote with the scope and the investment laid out clearly. You can engage us for the whole journey or for a single stage — and nothing begins without your sign-off.

What do you need from me?

Your manuscript and materials in a standard editable format; written permission for any third-party content; timely, clear feedback at each review point; and honest goals so the plan serves what you actually want. The work is genuinely shared — we carry the technical weight, and you carry the message and the decisions about your own book.

Can you help if I only have an idea?

Yes. That is our Ideation & Vision stage — we help you clarify the message, the reader, and the promise of the book, build the structure, and set a writing plan you can keep. Many strong books begin exactly there.

SECTION 2

ISBNs & identifiers

Should I use KDP's free ISBN or buy my own?

Both are valid, and the choice has real consequences, so we lay it out and let you decide. A free KDP ISBN costs nothing and is issued instantly — but it records Amazon as the ISBN's registrant, shows your imprint as “Independently published” rather than Smith For Christ Publishing, and ties that ISBN to KDP, so it cannot be used with any other printer or distributor. An ISBN you own keeps Smith For Christ Publishing as the publisher of record and stays portable across printers and channels. For an author building a catalog or planning wide distribution, owning your ISBNs is usually worth it.

What are the downsides of a free ISBN?

Three main ones. Your imprint shows as “Independently published,” not your publishing name. The ISBN is locked to KDP — if you later move the book to another printer or distributor, you would need a brand-new ISBN, which fragments the book's identity. And Amazon, not you, is the registrant of record. None of this changes the book's content or its sales directly, but it does affect how professional and how portable your book is.

Do paperback, hardcover, and ebook each need their own ISBN?

Each print format does — a paperback and a hardcover of the same book are two separate ISBNs. The ebook does not strictly require one; retailers like Amazon assign their own identifier. An owned ebook ISBN is still useful if you plan to distribute beyond Amazon.

Who is listed as the publisher of my book?

That depends on the ISBN. With an ISBN owned by Smith For Christ Publishing — or by you — SFC, or you, is the publisher of record. With a retailer's free ISBN, that retailer's “Independently published” label applies instead. This is one of the practical reasons the ISBN choice matters.

What is the difference between an ISBN and an ASIN?

An ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is the universal book identifier used across the entire book trade — every print format gets one. An ASIN (Amazon Standard Identification Number) is Amazon's own internal identifier, assigned automatically to Kindle ebooks. An ASIN only works within Amazon; an ISBN works everywhere.

SECTION 3

Rights, legal & content

What is DRM, and do I need it?

DRM stands for Digital Rights Management — a setting on Kindle ebooks meant to make it harder for someone to copy or share the file. It is a choice you make once when the ebook is published, and it cannot be changed afterward. DRM does not stop determined piracy, and it can mildly inconvenience legitimate readers by limiting lending and moving the file between devices. Many independent authors leave it off for that reason; others prefer the modest deterrent. We explain the trade-off and you decide — just know the decision is permanent for that edition.

What goes on the copyright page?

The copyright page is the standard set of legal and identifying details near the front of the book: the copyright notice (the © symbol, year, and copyright holder), the ISBN or ISBNs, the edition, a rights-reserved statement, the publisher and imprint line, any required permissions or Scripture-version acknowledgments, and usually “Printed in the United States of America” and a contact or website line. You give us the facts; we assemble the page in the correct, professional format.

What is plagiarism, and do I need to cite my sources?

Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s words, ideas, or work as your own. **Yes — you need to cite your sources.** Any time you quote another author, draw on someone’s specific ideas or research, or use Scripture, that needs proper attribution. And beyond citation, substantial quotations, song lyrics, and images usually need written *permission* from the rights holder, not just a citation. We flag anything in your manuscript that needs a permission or a citation — but the responsibility for the content being properly sourced is yours, and it is part of the author warranties in our agreement.

Do I need permission to quote Scripture?

Usually, beyond a small limit. Most modern Bible translations are copyrighted and allow only a limited number of verses to be quoted before written permission is required, and nearly all require a specific acknowledgment line on the copyright page. The exact limits and wording vary by translation. We help you stay within fair-use limits or secure permission, and we place the correct acknowledgment.

Can I use images I found online?

No — not unless you own them, have licensed them, or have written permission. An image being easy to find or download does not make it free to use, and using copyrighted images without rights exposes you and the book to a claim. For cover art, we can generate original artwork; for interior images, you will need to supply images you hold the rights to.

Do I need to register my copyright?

Your copyright exists automatically the moment you write the book — you do not have to register it for the work to be protected. Registering it with the U.S. Copyright Office is optional, but it adds legal benefits if you ever need to enforce your rights. It is a personal decision, and we can point you to where it is done.

SECTION 4

Formats & production

Paperback, hardcover, or ebook — which should I do?

Many authors do all three, and they serve different readers: the ebook is the lowest-cost, instant format; the paperback is the everyday print edition; the hardcover is the premium, gift-worthy edition. There is no wrong answer — we talk through your audience and your goals. Each print format is its own product, its own setup, and its own ISBN, which is worth knowing before you decide.

What are bleed, trim, and spine?

These are print terms. Trim is the final size of the page after it is cut. Bleed is the small extra margin of artwork that extends past the trim so there is no white edge after cutting. The spine is the bound edge — and its width depends entirely on your final page count and paper. They matter because covers and interiors are built to exact specifications; we handle the geometry so you do not have to.

Why does my page count matter so much?

Because the spine width of a print book is calculated from it. The cover wrap — front, spine, and back — cannot be finalized until the interior is locked and the exact page count is known. A late change to the interior ripples straight into the cover. It is the main reason we settle the interior before building print files.

What is a proof copy?

A proof is a single physical copy of your book, printed exactly as it would be sold, that you review before approving the book for sale. It is the last and best check — colors, trim, spine, interior, the feel of the paper. We always recommend reviewing a printed proof before a book goes live.

Can I make changes after the book is published?

Yes, within limits. Text and cover files can be updated, and the new version replaces the old. But changes have ripple effects — a different page count changes the spine, for instance — and a major revision is really a new edition with its own ISBN. Small corrections are routine; plan larger changes deliberately.

SECTION 5

Cover & interior

Do I need to provide cover art, or can you create it?

Either works. If you have art or a clear direction, we use it. If you do not, we can generate original cover art for your book — we craft a tailored art prompt, you review the results, and we build the cover from there. The title, subtitle, and your name are always placed by us as crisp type, never baked into the raw art.

What is the difference between the ebook cover and the print cover?

The ebook cover is just the front — a single image at the resolution retailers want. The print cover is a full wrap: the back cover and the spine as well as the front, all built as one piece to the printer's exact geometry. We produce both from the same design so they match.

What are front matter and back matter?

Front matter is the pages before chapter one — the title page, copyright page, dedication, table of contents, and any foreword or preface. Back matter is the pages after the last chapter — about the author, other titles, a call to action, acknowledgments, and contact details. We help you assemble and word both, and our questionnaire walks you through every piece.

SECTION 6

Selling & after launch

Where will my book be sold?

At minimum, on Amazon in the formats you choose. Depending on your ISBN choices and your goals, the book can also reach wider distribution — other retailers and channels. We set the distribution plan with you as part of the publishing stage.

How do royalties work?

The retailer pays you a royalty on each sale — the rate depends on the format, the list price, and the channel. Smith For Christ Publishing is paid for the services that produce your book; we do not take a cut of your royalties. The sales income is yours.

Will Smith For Christ Publishing market my book?

We help you plan and execute a sensible launch — early readers, reviews, the announcement — and set you up for the weeks after release. Ongoing, long-term marketing is mostly the author's work, but we give you a practical plan rather than leaving you to guess.

Can I sell copies of my book myself?

Yes. Many authors order copies at author cost and sell them directly — at events, at church, in person. That is entirely yours to do, and we can advise on ordering author copies as part of the launch plan.



Walk well.

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