



===== HOW TO WEAVE CHRISTIAN =====

**THEMES INTO YOUR STORY**



# How to Weave Christian Themes into Your Story

Stories have heart-moving power.

The fact that made-up people and events can change the way we live in the real world is astonishing. Yet they do.

Stories offer us a tremendous opportunity to impact readers for Christ. But packing biblical truths into a manuscript (without either being too subtle or too blatant) can be difficult.

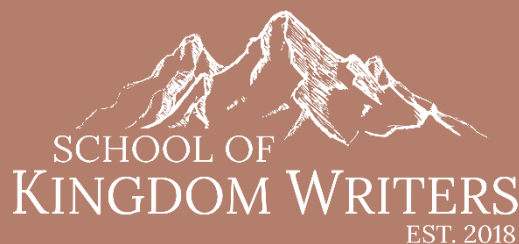
That's what this worksheet is designed to help you with. The next six pages will lay out a foundational framework you can use to *naturally* and *effectively* incorporate a Christian theme into your story. Make sure to read to the end so you can study the examples!

Let's get started.

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## Step One: Choose a Thematic Question

Every great theme begins not with a message but with a **question**.

Questions ensure that readers care about your story's moral dilemma.

The best thematic questions are ones that readers already wrestle with and can't easily answer themselves. They'll eagerly flip pages because they *understand* the problem and are *desperate* to see how the characters will solve it.

Beginning with a question also prevents your story from feeling like a diatribe!

### 2 Important Rules for the Thematic Question

1. Good thematic questions are open-ended: How? Why? When? **Not:** Did...? Or Is...? The latter tends to oversimplify the situation, as any given problem will have at least two answers (even if only one is right).
2. Good thematic questions are also applicational. You generally want to avoid theoretical and philosophical questions unless you're trying to write literary fiction. Instead, focus on the actions people ought to take to pursue a specific value, trait, or worldview.

### Your Story's Thematic Question

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## Step Two: Brainstorm 5 Possible Answers

Once you've pinpointed your story's thematic question, you need to pair it with a variety of answers that are both right and wrong. At least **five** is ideal. The goal is to cover the theme *broadly* so that you don't dilute the problem's complexity or miss any choices your characters might make.

You'll assign the answers you come up with to different characters in your story so they can authentically live out those beliefs.

### 2 Methods for Discovering Answers

1. Think about how people attempt to handle the problem in real life.
2. Think about how your characters would instinctively deal with the problem according to their backgrounds, personalities, and worldviews.

**Answer 1**

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**Answer 2**

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**Answer 3**

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**Answer 4**

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**Answer 5**

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## Step Three: Add Natural Consequences

When human beings adopt certain lifestyles and habits, they experience repercussions (or rewards).

Proverbs is full of these reminders: “He who covers his sins will not prosper” and “whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will repay him for his deed.”

Portraying the consequences that result from your characters’ beliefs will demonstrate which decisions are prudent (and which are not) *without* sermonizing.

### 2 Tips for Triggering Consequences

1. Think about the ensuing effects that make the most sense within the context of your story world. The fallout in a fantasy novel will differ starkly from the fallout in a romance novel.
2. Think about the people who behave that way in real life and the troubles or blessings they face. Let God’s world be your guide as you develop your own.

### Natural Consequences for Answer 1

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### Natural Consequences for Answer 2

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### Natural Consequences for Answer 3

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### Natural Consequences for Answer 4

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### Natural Consequences for Answer 5

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## Step Four: Assign Both to Your Characters

If you haven't yet, analyze what your characters believe and how they'll act in regards to the thematic question. Then match them with the answers that best fit who they are and the consequences they'll encounter over the course of their journeys.

After you follow these steps, you'll have learned how to *show* your story's theme instead of *telling* it.

### 2 Guidelines to Keep in Mind

1. You may need to rearrange your previous plans for your story so you can apply this chart and convey a more compelling theme. Don't be afraid to do so.
2. If any of your characters will be going through a full arc, they'll probably need to experience more than one consequence to be truly motivated to change.

#### Character 1's Answer & Consequences

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#### Character 2's Answer & Consequences

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#### Character 3's Answer & Consequences

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#### Character 4's Answer & Consequences

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#### Character 5's Answer & Consequences

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## Example: Pride & Prejudice

### Thematic Question

What are the most important qualities to value when considering someone as a potential spouse?

### Lydia & Mr. Wickham

- Answer: You just need to be attracted to each other. Nothing else matters.
- Natural Consequences: They end up in a dull, loveless marriage.

### Charlotte & Mr. Collins

- Answer: Your attraction to the other person is inconsequential. Pretty much anyone will do.
- Natural Consequences: They get along but mostly avoid each other.

### Mr. and Mrs. Bennett

- Mr. Bennet's Answer: You should marry someone if she is young and beautiful.
- Mrs. Bennet's Answer: You should marry someone if he is charming and wealthy.
- Natural Consequences: They don't share much love and frequently frustrate each other.

### Jane & Mr. Bingley

- Answer: You should admire each other's characters and love each other.
- Natural Consequences: They end up in a happy marriage.

### Elizabeth & Mr. Darcy

- Answer: You should admire each other's characters, love each other, *and* be able to push each other toward growth so that you overcome your respective weaknesses.
- Natural Consequences: They end up in a happy marriage that also helps them become better people.



## Example: Up (Pixar)

### Thematic Question

What are the best adventures people can experience in life?

### Carl Fredricksen (at the beginning of the film)

- Answer: Exploring and settling the unknown.
- Natural Consequences: Carl ends up alone with his house at the edge of the falls.

### Russell

- Answer: Having fun.
- Natural Consequences: He has an entertaining romp through South America.

### Charles Muntz

- Answer: Achieving fame and recognition.
- Natural Consequences: He plummets to his death, a failure at all of his goals.

### Ellie & Carl Fredrickson (at the end of the film)

- Answer: The everyday adventures we have with family and friends.
- Natural Consequences: Carl and Ellie find contentment in the lives they led.



You know the basic framework for crafting meaningful themes.

But do you understand the other techniques leading Christian authors use to actually impact readers' lives?

## INTRODUCING THE RESONANT THEMES SUMMIT

Let us teach you how to move readers' hearts.



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