

[Book Journeys](#) Author Interview - Sep. 19, 2014

**Dr. Angela Lauria with Mike Parker, author of *Shameless Self-Promotion (And Networking for Christian Creatives)***

*"Tell your story. And if it's a good story, it'll get out there. It will find its own." ~Mike Parker*

Angela:

Well, hey everybody. Welcome back to Book Journeys Radio. It's so good to have you hear as always. We are talking about how to write a book that makes a difference. We have a great guest with us today. Mike Parker is the author of *Shameless Self-Promotion (And Networking for Christian Creatives)*. But my guess here is gonna be that even if you are not a Christian creative, we're gonna have a lot of great shameless self-promotion ideas for you from Mike. Mike, thanks for being on the show.

Mike:

Thanks so very much for having me. I am just thrilled to death to be here.

Angela:

Awesome! So I guess we'll start off by talking about the book. Tell me about *Shameless Self-Promotion* - what's it about, who are you trying to help.

Mike:

Well, *Shameless Self-Promotion* is exactly what it says. It's all about learning how to promote yourself without shame. Most of the time when you hear the term shameless self-promotion, it's used in conjunction with someone who is not afraid to put themselves out there, and most of the time, it's not in the most humble means, if you get my drift. Most of the time, you think about someone who is a little bit rude, who uses any opportunity that they can to climb onto someone else's coat tails to get the word out about themselves. Our idea for shameless self-promotion is more the idea of how to toot your own horn without coming off sounding like you're being braggadocious. It's a necessary part of the industry. If you're going to be an author, or an actor, or a speaker, or whatever you do in the public eye, you have to get yourself out there. You have to make yourself known so that people will buy your book, or go see your movie, or come see you when you speak. But there's a way to do that, that is...

Angela:

But I've heard people say all the time, "I don't wanna sound like a used car salesman, like I don't wanna sound like I'm... out myself.

Mike:

Absolutely. Absolutely, and that's what the book is all about. It's about how to get the word out there without sounding like you're that used car salesman. It's a way to do it shamelessly, if that makes sense.

Angela:

Alright, give us one of your tips. What's one of the ways we can do it shamelessly?

Mike:

Well, one of the ways that you shamelessly self-promote yourself is by helping others achieve their goals. One of the things that we have found is that ... an empire to build. But if we build our own empire by going to war with our neighbors, everybody loses. If we help our neighbors build their empire, everybody wins because they in turn will build ours up as well. So our idea basically is to help other people create their networks, create their empires to build themselves up and as we do that, we rise along with them.

Angela:

That is so awesome. I love that. So often I hear authors saying to me, "I really want to get advanced praise for my book from this person or that person and I'd emailed them and they haven't gotten back to me or their publicist hasn't gotten back to me." And when I ask them, "Did you review their book on the Amazon? Like have you posted anything on their Facebook page? And they like, well no, I want them to do it for me. Hmmm... interesting.

Mike:

Yeah, it's unfortunate. So many people in our industry have a sense that by helping someone else you're diminishing yourself. It can be very self-contained. And that's what we're trying to do, is encourage people to break out of those kind of shells and help other people. That's really how you build yourself up.

Angela:

And so, and the subtitle or the rest of the book is *Networking for Christian Creatives*. So it looks like you're targeting maybe a little bit of a subgroup here? How would you describe Christian Creative? I'm guessing they're your ideal reader.

Mike:

Well, they probably are our ideal reader. The reason that we targeted this particular niche is because both myself, my wife as my co-author, and Torry Martin who is our other co-author, all cut our teeth in the Christian marketplace. We all really generated a lot of our background from that industry. For myself, I was heavily involved in the Christian music video industry for many, many years, and then moved into writing creatively for the Christian music industry, writing promotional material for Christian artists, such as their bios and press releases and that kind of thing. And then my wife cut her teeth writing plays for the uh, church plays, sketches, that kind of thing, and then full-length plays, again primarily for a Christian audience. Torry was the creator of the character Wooton Bassett on *Adventures in Odyssey* and has spoken for years and years in the Christian marketplace. So because we really cut our teeth in that particular marketplace and have a lot of experience dealing with creative people in the Christian industry, we felt like that really was where our expertise lies. Now the principles that are involved apply to anyone, but for this particular book when we came out, we really wanted the kind of niche market that so that we could focus, primarily because Torry teaches at a number of Christian conferences, Christian

writers conferences, Christian actors conferences, that kind of thing, and we were initially doing the book as a kind of a textbook for him to be able to use in those situations.

Angela:

So there are so many lessons here that I wanna stop and focus on this because so many authors have an idea, like shameless self-promotion, that could apply to anyone - anyone of any age, who lives anywhere, anytime. And one of the things that I really like to encourage them to do is to think about what's the market you can get into that you can make an impact in, that you have connections in already. And I love how you leveraged this community, and I'm sure these lessons are absolutely relevant to Christian creatives, but you can expand that, you can market out to more people. If somebody reads it and they're not a Christian creative, they're not gonna feel left out. But you set yourself up really to be successful within a smaller niche, which I think is the key to publishing success with so many books on the market these days.

Mike:

I agree a hundred percent. I think so many times people, particularly authors, I don't know how many authors I talked to who, "I'm gonna write the great American novel and it's gonna be a success, and I'm gonna be the next J.K. Rowling, or I'm gonna be the next Stephen King, or pick your... who's a gajillionaire." Most authors aren't. Most authors have to scrap and fight and spit and carry on just to sell a hundred books. So if you target your niche, if there's a place which you're very, very good at and very connected at, it makes so much more sense to drill into that particular niche and then expand from there rather than scatter shooting broad and then trying to go small, in my opinion.

Angela:

Mhm. No absolutely, and I think it's scary for people because they're thinking, "Well if I make it apply to more people, then more people will buy it." But actually more people just won't find it, is what will happen, or they won't feel like it's for them so they won't notice it if they do find it.

Mike:

I think the key is discoverability, You're absolutely right.

Angela:

So let's talk about before you wrote this book. Well, actually let's go back to here. Why did you guys, why a book? Coz obviously you have lots of other successes, and you got... in the fire, I know you're an actor, you obviously have experience in music videos, you got a lot of things going on. So why write a book in the first place?

Mike:

Well, writing is my first love. Books are my first love. When I was a kid, I fell in love with reading. The Hardy Boys were my friends. You know, I've read all of them. I was a huge fan of Mark Twain. I love Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. I got into Jules Verne and Edgar Allan Poe and

all of those guys just opened up my world. So when I was a very young person, and I'm talking elementary school, junior high school, my goal was to be an author, I wanted to be a...

Angela:

And it looks like we have lost Mike. I am hoping he will call right back in. Mike Parker, who we're talking to, is the author of Shameless Self-Promotion (And Networking for Christian Creatives). Shameless Self-Promotion (And Networking for Christian Creatives), the website is, a little bit tricky here, but we've got [wordcrafts.net/shameless-self-promotion](http://wordcrafts.net/shameless-self-promotion). So [wordcrafts.net/shameless-self-promotion](http://wordcrafts.net/shameless-self-promotion). WordCrafts is the network that he is on, is the publishing company that he is published with. And Shameless Self-Promotion is really about getting your message out, telling your story effectively, and having the tools to promote your message without, well, Mike says, is without shame. And so, really what we were, oh, Mike has, we've caught you back. Glad you're back, Mike.

Mike:

I'm sorry sometimes we drop calls out here.

Angela:

I hear you, no problem. So we're talking about the Hardy Boys and your first love of books, which I'm totally with you. I was choose-your-own-adventure girl myself but I'm down.

Mike:

Yup, yup. Cool. Ok, I have no idea where I left off. I just kept talking when, wow, there's nothing there. Anyway, yes, my first love was books and I always wanted to be an author. But the people who were authorities in my life - my parents, my teachers unfortunately, were pretty much of the opinion that nobody makes a living writing books so you need to go get a real back. And so I did a bunch of other stuff in life. I was a stockbroker at one time, I was a restaurant manager at one time, I was, I did my time in the army as an officer and a number of other things. But eventually, it all came back to writing. So in the midst of all of it, when it came time to write, something that would be a little bit more extensive than an article or an artist's bio, writing a book just made sense. Plus the fact that it can get into so many hands and a book takes on a life of its own. So why this book? Why at that point? That's why. We wanted a resource that would be able to reach people, that they could take with them, electronically or in print format, and be a resource that they could use and hopefully improve their lives.

Angela:

And you had co-authors right from the beginning?

Mike:

We did. Actually, Torry is a very good friend of mine, and my wife obviously is a pretty good friend of mine, too.

Angela:

Keep her around, yeah.

Mike:

Yeah, yeah, after 40 years, I figured I'm gonna, it would be hard to break in a new one.

Angela:

Sounds like a plan. So talk to me about the process and two co-authors as well. Talk to me about the process of co-authors. What advice would you give people? What was your process like? Who did what? How did you split that up? And then what advice would you give to people about working with a co-author or two co-authors?

Mike:

Well, the way that we did it primarily is we would sit down together and plot out what the book needed to look like. Each of us have our own areas of expertise. Torry is probably the most amazing networker I've ever seen in my life. The tagline that we have for Torry is "Once you meet Torry, you suddenly have two hundred new friends." And it's really true. He has an amazing heart for connecting people together to help both of them. And I love that about him. He's just like got a great, great heart. And he's an incredibly intelligent man. He knows how to, uhm, he just has ideas that spout out of the top of his head all the time.

Angela:

And you're still there, yeah?

Mike:

I'm trying to keep my call from dropping here, so good.

Angela:

Oh good.

Mike:

Paula is an amazing wordsmith. She's written several novels and has been writing for much longer than I have, and she's a much better writer than I am, quite frankly. I, on the other hand, am more on the business side of the deal. I have a lot of experience actually working with people in other industries. So when we put the whole thing together, basically Paula did the lion's share of the actual writing of the book and then Torry and I were more resources and providing additional information on how all of it put together. So that's kind of how the whole co-authoring thing did for us. The advice that I would have for people who are going to be writing as co-authors is to really delineate at the very beginning whose responsibilities are what. Because when we first kick around the idea of writing a book together, it's all like, okay well everybody will do their own thing. But the problem is when you try to get everybody doing their own thing, you end up stepping on each other's toes, you don't know who's gonna actually do the writing, who's,

know what, “I thought you were going to write, no I thought you were going to write.” That kind of stuff. So it’s a good idea to sit down, have a really good long coffee time with someone and find out really whose responsibilities each task belong to. And once you get that delineated out, everything pretty much takes care of itself.

Angela:

Where there areas where you disagreed on what to include or what not include or how to approach a certain problem you were addressing?

Mike:

Uhm, not really. I think after we had the opportunity to sit down and hash out who was going to do what, we knew each other well enough that we were all pretty much on the same page before we ever started putting pen to paper. And I think that’s another key so that there’s not a whole lot of surprises going on. Now I’ve collaborated about other projects where it wasn’t quite so peaceful, if we can use that phrase. But this one though was an absolute joy to work together.

Angela:

So what was your vision for the book, you know, before you started writing or before maybe it was published, what was your vision for how the book would work, not for readers so much coz I understand the message, but in your life?

Mike:

Ah, boy, in my life, when we started this whole thing out, one of the things that we discovered was that everybody has a story tell but most people don’t know how to tell that story very well. And it goes back, it starts back to the days when I used to do a lot of interviews with artists for magazines and websites, that kind of thing. And I realized that people don’t know how to tell their story. They hem and they haw, you can hear the uhms and the ahs, all of that kind of stuff, and stuff that I do as well. Ah, I just did. But what we would find is that a number of record labels and artist management companies, that kind of thing, would hire Paula and I to come in and actually do media training for their artists so that they would get a feel for what kind of questions are gonna be asked. How do they answer those, how do they make it sound better than what they might otherwise. And we would be able to go through there and explain to them how the process works, how the media perceives you when you speak with them. How do you dress for an interview? How do you do different... Because the way you’re going to speak to your mom’s group is different from the way you’re gonna speak to a youth group. It just is because everybody communicates differently. So going through that process of training individual artists on how to relate to the media, we determined, we figured, that there’s a big need out there, not just for performing artists but anybody who’s going to be in the public eye to have some information that they can use to publicize themselves. So that was kind of the vision behind it. That was the driving force behind why we wrote the book and what we were looking to do with it.

Angela:

And how close did what happen with the book match your reality? Did you get what you wanted out of writing this book?

Mike:

I think we absolutely hit the nail on the head for what we wanted the book to be. What we have provided in the book is we... people how to assemble a press kit, what are the basics of publicity, how to handle interviews, how to brand themselves, and how to harness the power of networking to increase their own, ah publicity, for lack of a better word. And to get their own name out there. So I think the way that the book turned out is exactly the way that we wanted it to look. I'm very, very pleased.

Angela:

The cover is pretty, by the way, I love the cover. You guys uhm...

Mike:

We had a marvelous cover design. Yeah, absolutely.

Angela:

It's fantastic. You guys can go to [WordCrafts.net](http://WordCrafts.net), [WordCrafts.net](http://WordCrafts.net). WordCrafts is actually the publisher that Mike and his co-authors used. And if you go to [wordcrafts.net/shameless-self-promotion](http://wordcrafts.net/shameless-self-promotion), or go ahead and search on that site, you will be able to see his cover, it's fantastic. So great job there.

Mike:

Thank you.

Angela:

So let's talk about publishing since I mentioned WordCrafts. You used a small independent publisher, you didn't self-publish but you also didn't go with one of the majors. So how did you find WordCrafts and tell us about that experience.

Mike:

WordCrafts Press is a small independent publishing company that we're associated with, and the thing that I love about them is that it is not a big, it's not one of the big publishing houses where you totally get lost in the process. The idea behind WordCrafts is to be a resource and a partner for the author. The concept that they use is one of - the people who actually create the work should benefit most from the work. I think in the general viewpoint of publishing, if you go to a publisher and they publish your book and put it out, the trend is that advances are almost a thing of the past, particularly for new authors, particularly in a non-fiction realm like we are in, particularly in a niche market like we are in. And the royalty is gonna be somewhere between, maybe 10 to 12% on the wholesale price of the book. With WordCrafts, they do a 70-30 split, with 70% going to the author as opposed to, you know, what you would think of as the 30.

Angela:  
7%.

Mike:

So that's kind of a big plus to start off with. And they use print-on-demand technology which means you don't have 5,000 books sitting in the warehouse someplace hoping to go out. And you also don't have a whole lot of books that are gonna be returned, which means that goes against your royalties. Like most publishing houses today, promotion is primarily on the shoulders of the author unless your last name happens to be King or Rowling. So we kind of figured if we're gonna be doing all the work ourselves, we might as well get more of the money ourselves. So that was kind of our thought...

Angela:

Now where there up front costs or investments that you needed to make in order to work with them?

Mike:

No. WordCrafts is a true publishing company as opposed to a vanity press so they don't charge the authors anything. There is no charge to the author, period. Bottom line is, as soon as the first copy is sold, the author gets paid royalty. And they pay on a monthly basis as opposed to a quarterly basis and they don't hold anything back so it's kind of a win-win.

Angela:

That's fantastic.

Mike:

Yeah, the big difference is that they are a small company so they don't have a sales force that's going out pushing the books into bookstores. So although they are distributed by Ingram, which is the largest independent book distribution company in the country, so any bookstore in the country can certainly order the book. But the bulk of the sales come through online - Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Tower Books, that kind of thing. And it's available on all the book formats, so you can get it through, you know, Apple iTunes, or Kindle, or BN.com or whatever else if you wanna download it for a... format.

Angela:

And so, for you, working with an independent publisher, did you feel like you had enough of a say in the design of your book, the title, the various different aspects of the book that the publisher was in control of, did you feel that your voice was heard?

Mike:

Absolutely. I think they were very, the editorial process was very collaborative, the cover process was very collaborative. I know that there have been instances when authors have disagreed, you know, in some of the choices that were made, but I think there's always been a very strong

pro-author leaning towards WordCrafts Press, so they're leaning towards the author more often than they are with anything else. So it was a very good process for us.

Angela:

That's fantastic. So we have a couple of minutes left, and I really wanna ask you about your advice for authors. What are some of the things, and this is interesting coz your book is so perfect for most authors, but what are some of the things that you have told authors who really wanna write a book but haven't been able to get it out there, haven't been able to get maybe over the obstacle of "who am I to write this book?" Some of the challenges that maybe you faced as an author. What advice would you give them?

Mike:

You know, yeah, the first advice that I've got for anybody who wants to write a book is, write the book, tell the story. You know, that's the first thing is, who are you to write a book for? Who are you, who is anyone to write a book? Who is Stephen King to write a book? He's just another guy who has a story to tell. Everybody has a story to tell. So the idea for me is, tell the story. Just get it down on paper or electronic or whatever method it is that you're using to write with. Tell the story. Everything else can be fixed, you know. That's the first thing, is just tell the story. Once you get it written, then you can figure out what to do with it at that point. But nothing's going to happen until the story gets written. I don't how many people have come to me as an author and said, "I've got a really great idea for a book. And the ideas and I want you to write it on." I'm not gonna write your book. You write your book, you know. So that's the primary advice that I've got for anyone, to just write a book. Quite frankly, with self-publishing where it is today, there is no reason, if you have a book and you wanna get it out there, that you cannot get it published. You can, I mean, self-publishing is certainly a wide open realm right now. And, you know, with places like Kindle and Amazon and, just name them, there's a ton of independent publishing companies out there that would love to work with you. So tell your story. And if it's a good story, it'll get out there. It will find its own.

Angela:

Well, that's fantastic advice. Mike Parker is the author, the co-author I should say, of *Shameless Self-Promotion (And Networking for Christian Creatives)*. His other co-authors are Paula K. Parker and Torry Martin. Mike, thank you so much for being our guest today. I love your book and I love your advice.

Mike:

Thank you so very much and I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Angela:

Fantastic. Well, we will be back next week on Book Journeys Radio. Changing the world one book at a time.