

## Songwriting for Congregational Singing

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Ps 45:1

45:1...My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer. NIV

What is a worship song?

What is its purpose?

### I. Purified Vessels

James 3:10-12

10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. NIV

2 Tim 2:20-21

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. 21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. NIV

***Before He puts His music in you...you have to get the world's music out of you!***

John 3:6

6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. NIV

### II. Presence Vessels

Ps 101:6

6 My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me. NIV

**The birthing of new song usually is a direct result of a songwriter having a new revelation and experience into a new aspect and characteristic of God.**

- That is why God likes new songs. It shows that we are progressing in our revelation of who He is! Give a psalmist a new revelation and experience with God and you have given him a new well of music to draw from!

Ps 40:1-3

1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.  
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.  
3 He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

- **Praise songs are birthed out of an experience.**
- **True worship songs are birthed out of a revelation of Him.**

### III. Practical Vessels

#### 1) Prepare

- Be Ready. Always carry a recorder.
- Log/Journal songs.
- Set aside a time to work on them.
- Environment! Environment!
- If you don't control your environment someone else will!

#### 2) Practice

- Songwriting is an ART but it is also a honed CRAFT.
  - Craft is our responsibility
  - "Craft" is knowing what to do when inspiration strikes.
- Some songs are just PRACTICE!
- **Handle Rejection! You can't be insecure and be a songwriter!**

*"A song is like your baby...you don't want to show it to everyone because some might think it is ugly" Paul Wimber*

*One of the best ways to practice songwriting is to use your songs in your church services. Practice the whole process of writing and producing the song.*

- **COLLABORATION - Get others involved in the creativity of the song.**

*One of the best ways to advance in songwriting and production is to write with someone who is better than you are.*

- **The main limitation to most songwriters is their OWN musical ability.**
- **Get better on your instrument and you will get better in songwriting!**
- Use technology to help your songwriting...
  - *Key Sounds...Guitar - new sounds inspire us in new ways...*
  - *Rhyming dictionary*
  - *Thesaurus*
  - *Masterwriter!*
  - *READ, READ, READ...*
- Some songs take TIME!
  - *Bob Fitts wrote "Blessed be the Lord God Almighty" in 5-10 minutes*
  - *Tim Hughes "Here I Am To Worship" nine months*
  - *Chris Tomlin "Forever" took four years.*
- The Greenhouse (Paul Baloche, p38)
  - *Creating a song is a lot like having a little plant growing in your greenhouse*
  - *It is good to have lots of little plants growing and maturing at the same time.*
  - *Not all will be worth pursuing but some will grow to be beautiful flowers.*

#### 3) Produce

- There are 3 rules to writing the perfect song, problem is, no one remembers what they are!
- There are NO rules, just principles. These are observable, definable qualities common to effective songs.
- These principles apply not only to writing good congregational songs but to CHOOSING them as well.

## The 12 S's of Songwriting

1. **Stirring** – needs to stir the emotions.

**“Make all the elements of the song work together to enhance the FEELING of the message.”**

- Dynamics – this is the reason for music.
  - Music adds emotion. Emotions are outward expressions of inner feelings.
  - If you wrote about something that stirred you, the words and the music need to stir others.
  - Music and words need to stir people as a team.
  - If words are up, music needs to be up.
  - Leave room for dynamics. Start low and go high...
  - This makes the song more than a simple communication, it makes it an experience!
  - CCLI top 25: majority of the songs have a “heart-cry” message.
2. **Simple** – keep it simple! Less is more.
    - Simple but not simplistic
    - Simple in harmony.
    - Don't lose your congregation!
    - Mark Twain: “My books are water. Those of great geniuses are wine. Everybody drinks water.”
    - Simple does not mean shallow.
    - Matt Redman: “Worship songwriting is not about being absolutely ‘precise’ or ‘clever.’ Often a simple little overflow of the heart is all that is called for.”
  3. **Singable** - !!!!!!!!!!!!!
    - Every congregation is different
    - You want the song to be a catalyst of worship not of learning.
  4. **Sticky** (HOOK)
    - The hook is what grabs people's attention and it sticks with them.
    - Vocal hooks and instrumental hooks.
      - Repetition is the key to a good hook.
      - This is great for congregational songs because it is easy to remember.
  5. **Structure** – structure needs to make sense and propel people or take people somewhere. Remember the language and the code.
    - Song Form
      - AAA – verse, verse, verse (hymns – Amazing Grace)
      - ABAB – verse, chorus, verse, chorus (Heart of Worship)
      - AABA – verse, verse, bridge, verse (As the Dear)
      - ABABCB – verse, chorus, verse, chorus, bridge, chorus (Here I Am To Worship)
    - Song Key – adds to the singability and/or power of the song. Determines where vocal parts will rest. CCLI top 25: 90% are in major key
  6. **See It** – See your congregation singing it.
    - Three categories of praise and worship songs:

- Songs sung directly to the Lord (I Love You Lord) - Vertical
- Songs about the Lord (Great is Our God) - Horizontal
- Songs that encourage people to praise and worship (Shout to the Lord) - Horizontal

7. **Specific** - make sure it has a specific message and that you don't change subjects every verse or chorus.

- As the deer....then making war in the heavenlies...

8. **Sense** - it needs to make sense.

- One line needs to lead us logically to the next
- This is called sequential writing
- CCLI top 25: nearly all have this quality.

9. **Scriptural** - for obvious reasons.

10. **Surprise Me**

- It must be original, fresh and inspiring but also simple, repetitive and predictable.
- Not so predictable that it is boring (the "ah ha" factor).

11. **Sound** - Relevant to the times. PLEASE BREAK THE MOLD! This generation has it's own sound...find it and write it! WHAT IS THE NEXT SOUND?! What are you listening to?

12. **Stuck** - don't stay stuck. Move on if dry and going nowhere.