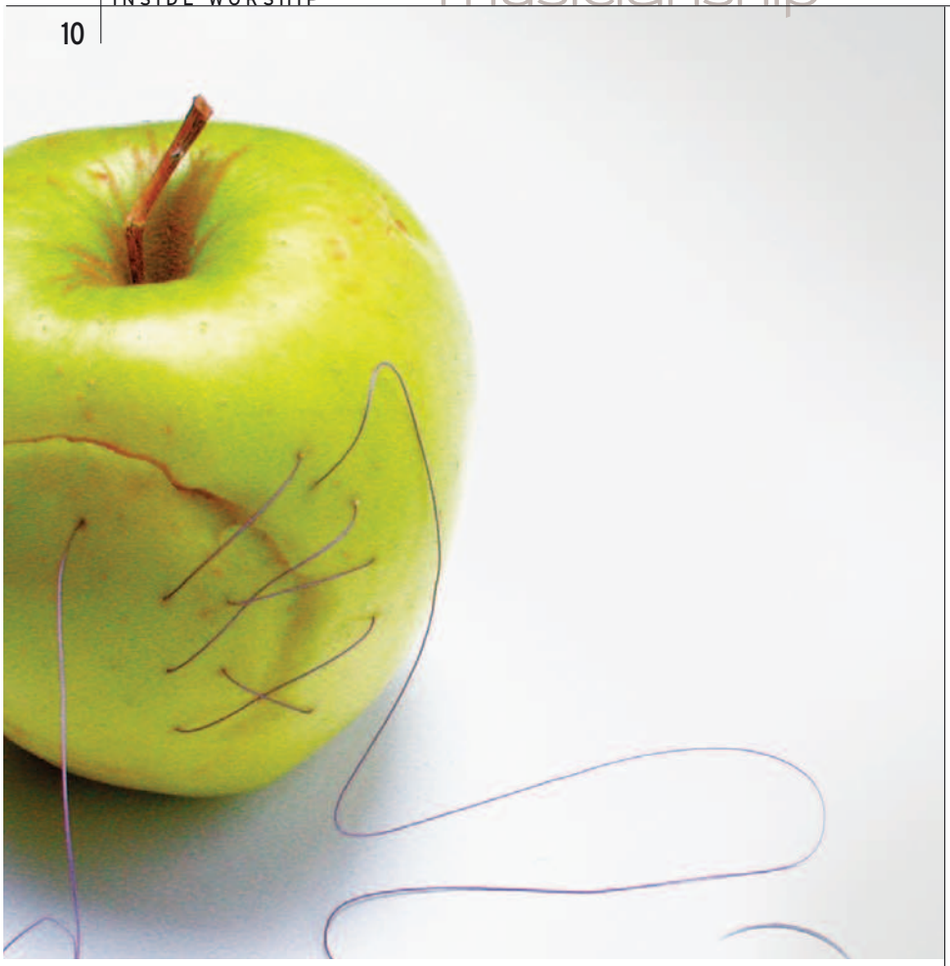
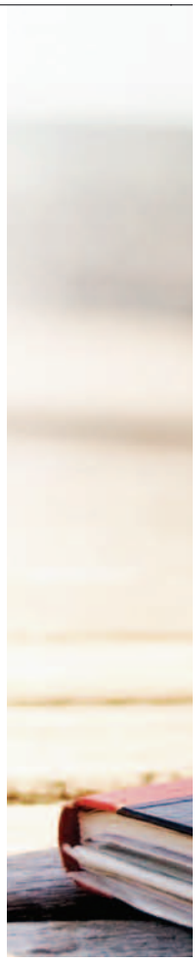


# Spiraling into self-pity



- There is an infinite range of liturgical and spontaneous prayer and worship forms that could contribute to such a healing service: readings from prophetic OT books, multi-media presentations, liturgical confessions or renunciations, symbolic actions, and intercessory prayer for certain nations or people groups.
- The goal of this kind of exercise would be two-fold. The obvious goal would be an increasing wholeness in participants who find relative freedom from some of the fear, envy and enmity that had been present in their life. A secondary goal would be an increasing integration of the concepts of individual and social wholeness.

### The Goal Of Shalom

Issues of social justice can be divisive in the Church. Many churches find their identity in certain political positions. Presumably this division is not a reflection of God's heart for humanity. If we focus on healing the underlying emotions that feed injustice and violence, we might find a common unity instead of bitter division. Common enemies (like fear, envy and enmity) can be resisted while common goals of shalom can be mutually sought. The more such socio-political issues can be discerned free from fear, envy and enmity, the more Christian worship will draw us toward where God is truly leading.



Walter combines teaching at St. Stephen's University (www.ssu.ca) with a private counseling practice in St. Stephen, NB, Canada. He and his wife, Carol, are associate pastors at the St. Croix Vineyard where his latest joy is leading a small group on justice and peace issues.

**When it comes to worship songwriting how do we measure success? Are you only a success when your songs get recorded by someone other than yourself? Maybe you are a success when your song(s), or you as a writer, get some sort of public recognition? I recently read a quote from Mother Teresa, where she said, "The Christian life is not about success; it's about faithfulness." What does faithfulness look like for us as songwriters? I want to share some thoughts that I hope will be helpful and encouraging for you as a songwriter.**

### A Skewed Perspective

Starting out as a songwriter, I had the privilege of learning from writers such as Andy Park, Brian Doerksen, and Craig Musseau. Back then, I personally bought into a skewed picture of what success meant as a songwriter in the local church. To be a successful writer meant that I would write lots of great songs, make lots of recordings, lead lots of conferences, and make lots of money.

Though this was not at all what I was being taught, nor what was being modeled around me, I remember thinking, "If I could just get a song recorded, then I will have arrived!" But after get-



MICHAEL HANSEN

# THE MEASURE OF A SONGWRITER

ting a song recorded, the ante went up. "If I could just sing on a recording, then..." or, "If I could just write 'that song', then..., or "If I could just win a Grammy award, then... I would be successful."

For as long as I can remember, questions of identity and significance have been ongoing struggles for me. Who am I? Where do I fit in? Am I good enough? Buying into a lie of what success means is a costly mistake. You start to look at other writers as the competition. There's a fear that there are only so many good songs that will be written, and you had better hurry up because they are going fast! You forget that we are one Body with many parts; that our Father has just the right place for each one of us according to His design.

### The Comparison Trap

I recently purchased a new worship CD, and as I listened to it, I could feel insecurities and comparisons stirring deep inside. I thought to myself, "Why is it that it is only a handful of writers who get to write the 'big songs'?" That thought was quickly followed by the thought, "Why do I even bother trying to write?" Thankfully, God didn't let me spiral too deeply into my self-pity. Instead, I sensed Him come close with some words of exhortation and encouragement.

He told me to be grateful for those writers who write the songs that go around the world. I was reminded of when I was a boy growing up in a small town where my Dad owned the local gas station. From time to time different tool salesmen would pay Dad a visit hoping to sell him some of their wares. They would open up the doors of their panel van, and Dad would go in and pick out specific tools that he needed to be more effective as a mechanic. When I listen to a new project, I'm looking for those songs, or tools, which will help me to be more effective in leading the church in worship.

### The Local Call

At the same time, God reminded me that I was the one He chose to serve in the church I am in. As a local church songwriter, I get to experience the ups and downs, the victories and defeats of everyday church life. As best as I can, I write songs that capture what God is doing in this part of the Body. Songs of celebration when we've seen God move in a powerful way, songs of comfort when the church is hurting, songs that help the congregation express what's deep inside their hearts, or even songs that reinforce what our pastors are teaching, all flow out of this privileged role.

### God Appoints Each Person's Work

Finally, I was reminded of the verse in John 3:27 which says, "God in heaven appoints each person's work." John the Baptist fulfilled what he was put here to do. He took great joy in seeing Jesus take center stage while he faded into the background. Each one of us has a job to do. As songwriters, we have songs to write. Let us not be distracted by the allure of worldly success, but rather in humility, pursue the road of faithfulness to what God has called us to be and to do.



Michael is Worship and Arts Pastor at Vineyard Church of Columbus. He is married to Helen, and they have two sons, Jeremy and Daniel. He has been featured on several Vineyard Music releases and has written such songs as *Come Walk Among Us, We Are Your Children and Turn Your Eyes.* Michael's vision is for people to experience the presence and power of God, and to see the arts become more integrated into the life of the Church.