

The Fine Art Of Co-Writing

BRENTON BROWN

When I first began to co-write with Brian Doerksen (which was very fortunate for me because he is a very experienced and very good writer and I just felt lucky to be able to do that) the first times we sat down and I had an idea tumbling around that connected with him, we worked on that. After that, for the next few months when I came up with a new idea I thought, "Well, I'll just get this to Brian and we will finish it." But it doesn't work like that. Not every idea that you have is going to connect with someone else, and there are times when you can even finish a song with somebody, but the thought that inspired it, that initial connection with God and that idea that you wanted to communicate doesn't get finished – simply because you skipped the process.

There is a time and a place for just sitting with a song and letting it grow over weeks or months or even years, which is often what happens. Brian was very good in the way he introduced me to co-writing, because there were rules. The idea with co-writing when we wrote together was that one of us would present an idea. Whoever presents the idea gets to have the call on how it works out. Regarding the practicalities of publishing and practical things, the person who presents the idea gets to make the final call on where the percentages go. But there is also a check and balance, in that because if either of you are unhappy with the song as it stands, and don't feel ready for it to be released, then the song doesn't go *anywhere*.

So, that's how it works. It's kind of a gamble. Basically when you start to co-write you just say, "Okay, I am ready to release the song into the creative process, and I will be happy for it to develop and go to a place that I am not comfortable with initially with for the sake of seeing it finished." That is risky. Once the process starts and both of you are throwing around ideas, you need to take it easy on yourself and on the song, and just be able to relax. If you are uncomfortable with an idea initially you just say, "Let's see where this goes." At the end of the day you can say, "I am not entirely sure about this idea; let's try another track."

With songs and musical ideas, very often it is easy to grow comfortable with a musical idea, simply because you have heard it many times - *not really because it is the best idea.* Co-writing often involves a lot of "hands-off," and releasing creative control to the process (rather than holding on). That is tricky, but really fun to learn.

Brenton Brown is among today's most gifted worship leaders and songwriters. He has written many well-known songs such as *Lord Reign In Me* and *Hallelujah (Your Love Is Amazing)* with Brian Doerksen. Brenton and his wife Jude make their home in the UK.

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