THE
ESSENTIALS
IN WORSHIP
COURSE WITH DAN WILT

THE WORSHIP SONGWRITER'S TOOLKIT

Includes:

✓How To Start A Songwriting Circle
✓How To Evaluate Someone's Song
✓Worship Song Evaluation Worksheet
✓Song Vision Clustering Worksheet
✓Sample Chord Chart

Tool: How To Use The Songwriter's Toolkit

The Songwriters Toolkit is made up of a number of tools that will aid you in your journey of songwriting. Copy the following pages so that everyone has a few on hand at all times throughout the module.

- Watch the Tool: How To Use The Songwriter's Toolkit (1:45)

Included in your Songwriting Toolkit is:

1. How To Start A Songwriting Circle

This tells you how to go about gathering a few people, and helping one another to write more effective songs for worship – or for artist applications.

- Tool: How To Start A Songwriting Circle (3:05)

2. How To Evaluate Someone's Song

This sheet is what will enable you to give and receive feedback well from others in your local church setting. It teaches you to 1) encourage the writer first, 2) affirm the qualities of the song that you like, and 3) suggest areas that you think the songwriter should consider working on in the song.

- Watch the Tool: How To Evaluate Someone's Song (2:35)

3. Worship Song Evaluation Worksheet

It asks fundamental questions about the song you've written. Don't use this until after you've played with the song and written your first draft.

4. Song Vision Clustering Worksheet

This is your tool for honing your song vision. Don't be afraid to scrap what you've done, and start again. Also, don't let your clustering paper go too broad. Be specific – God as Father, or God as Savior – which idea are you going to emphasize? These are two very different ideas, and the best songs give us a snapshot of just one or two of them.

5. A Sample Chord Chart

Tool: How To Start A Songwriting Circle

Writing and evaluating songs together with others desiring to grow is one of the most inspiring experiences you may ever have. The mutual vulnerability that occurs when experienced and inexperienced writers come together, gives a great opportunity for feedback, encouragement, re-thinking of the song, and in many cases, co-writing.

A Relaxed, Quiet Atmosphere Is Important

Find a relaxed, restful location, with good acoustics, good instruments, and a creative, relational atmosphere. Sitting in a circle in the middle of a cold, large sanctuary is NOT ideal. The sound disappears, and people feel more formal in their approach to their songs. A living room, or den, or recording studio are the types of environments in which good song-sharing can occur. Have drinks and snacks around, and make the atmosphere as soothing and inspiring as possible.

Every songwriter will feel the most comfortable sharing their songs in an environment where *only those invited to hear their work-in-progress can hear it* – not the neighbors, Aunt Ethel, or the apartment-dwellers next door. There's nothing worse than hearing someone from another room yell, "I like that!" or worse yet, "I don't like that!" when you didn't know they were listening.

Here is a 3-Step process for running a Songwriter's Circle.

1. Keep the group a manageable size.

3-5 people is a great place to start. This enables everyone to share their song-in-process each time you gather, and get some input. Give each person 5-10 minutes to share their song, and then 10-15 minutes for some good feedback based around the *Worship Song Evaluation Worksheet*. Or, create an artist's group that focuses on far more than the genre of writing songs for worship. Both are a blast!

2. Always bring a chord chart with lyrics with each re-write, and copies for all.

Your fellow writers need to be able to 1) see your song and chords written out for each re-write, and 2) have a sheet on which they can write and give you to take back home.

3. Always leave each other with honest feedback, and encouragement.

Take the time to make sure that everyone has had some thorough feedback. If you run out of time, make sure you all commit to hear the missed person's song first, next time.

Finally, know that some people have created a **closed Facebook Group** for this purpose. People post their song at different stages, and give each other feedback. This is an excellent way to do a Songwriter's Circle "long distance."

Tool: How To Evaluate Someone's Song

Songwriting is a vulnerable process. We feel like the song is our "baby," and we don't quickly want commentary on how other's like it! However, just because God may give us the idea for a song, that doesn't mean it is in its finished form – any more than a baby is in its finished form.

A song must be fed, formed, re-written, re-approached, and offered to the humble and gracious input of others. In most cases, while others' opinions can be difficult to hear, when we apply some of the input that comes our way, the song can be become something much stronger than it would have been otherwise.

Give input with grace and kindness, but balance that with honesty and humility. In a songwriter's circle, allow others to speak into your song after hearing it, based on the *Worship Song Evaluation Worksheet*. Here are some general principles to keep in mind as you evaluate another's song, in text or in a live setting.

1. Encourage The Writer First.

It is always important to encourage the unique, individual voice of everyone who has the courage to attempt to write a song. On many levels, the activity of singing and creating is, in itself, valuable simply for the personal devotional tool it can be. Affirm this; not everyone is called to the same thing.

2. Affirm Qualities Of The Song You Like.

In a similar spirit to the above, search for qualities in the song vision, melody, structure, lyrics and hook that you like. Point out what seems to be working well, or is moving you. It is vital that everyone in a live songwriting circle agree to be honest, without being mean-spirited. Celebrate only what you can in the song, and care for the person who was vulnerable enough to try.

3. Suggest Areas You Think The Songwriter Should Consider Working On.

Using the Worship Song Evaluation Worksheet, point out areas in each category that you would suggest the writer work on.

Does the song feel disjointed, like it is two songs and not one?

Is the song vision clear to you? Can they say it in one sentence?

Are their lyrics theologically strong?

Is their bridge actually a chorus?

Do they think the song is for the masses, when you think it is just for them?

Be honest, be encouraging, and give the writer good feedback with which to work.

NOTE: Avoid suggesting specific lyric replacements, chords, etc., unless invited. That is co-writing, and co-writes happen by the original writer inviting another to join in the writing. When that happens, then the song goes up on the hoist for some hard work.

Worship Song Evaluation Worksheet

Song Title: _____ Writer: _____

Suggested Application for Song (for whom is this song written – age, style?)

_____

_____

Song Vision

What is the song vision for this song? Can you say it in one sentence?

_____

_____

Is the title the best choice? Could there be another?

_____

_____

Do "all roads lead home" to the song vision (i.e. do all sections directly or indirectly lead back to the song vision?)

_____

_____

Song Form

What song form is used in this song? (Verse/Chorus, AAA, AABA, ABAC?)

_____

Is the song form transparent (i.e. easy to follow and recognizable)?

_____

Hooks

What and where is the hook(s)? (melodic, rhythmic, lyrical?)

_____

Is it memorable, and could you sing it right now? Is there passion in the music and lyrics?

_____

_____

Lyrics

Is there lyrical consistency to the song (is the song consistent with itself in pronouns/ content)?

_____

_____

What lyrical devices are used (metaphor, simile, contrast, rhyme, alliteration)?

_____

_____

If a corporate worship song, is there lyrical integrity (theologically, biblically, experientially)?

_____

_____

_____

Melody

Is there a strong usage of motif (i.e. repeated, developed themes)?

_____

Is there a strong sense of melodic story?

_____

_____

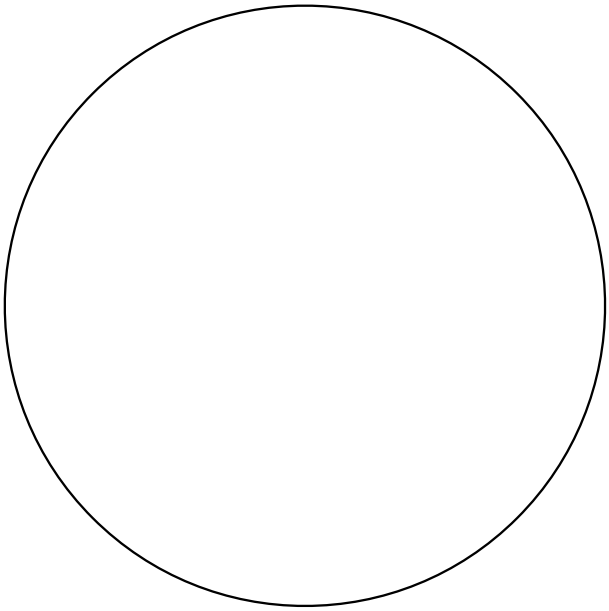
Is the melody memorable?

_____

_____

Notes:

Song Vision Clustering Worksheet



Sample Chord Chart

A good chord chart, printed out accurately for each session in which you gather with someone, is a must. A Chord Chart enables you and others to go thoroughly through the song, line by line, to make suggestions, corrections, or check marks.

When a line feels strong and finished, put a check mark beside it to say – "this feels finished." ALWAYS create a chord chart, for *every* rewrite, and bring it to the group.

All You Are
Dan Wilt
Key: C

Verse

```
            C/E
All that's good, and
            F
All that's right,
            Am7           G
All that's beautiful in life
            C/E
All that's pure, and
            F
All that's true,
          Am7               G
It all begins and ends in You, and
```

Pre-chorus

```
       Dm7          Am7
Every star in the sky
          F                 G
Joins in thanks, and we reply, for
```

Chorus

```
         C
All You are, and
            F
All You've been
        Am7             G
We say thank You once again, for
         C
All You are, and
            F
All You'll be
         Am7            G
We will worship endlessly, for
          C
All You are
```

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