

WRITE



WORSHIP



SONGS

10 STEPS FROM *INSPIRATION* TO *COMPLETION*

AN EBOOK BY
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WRITE WORSHIP SONGS

10 STEPS FROM *INSPIRATION* TO *COMPLETION*

Whether you're new to songwriting or an experienced professional, my hope is that this ebook will be helpful to you or to someone you know. I've been on staff at my church since the fall of 2005 as the Director of Worship and have been leading worship for over 15 years. Although I'm not a songwriting expert, I do know a few and they have contributed significantly to this ebook.

Since 2009 I've been spearheading a songwriting movement of Canadian worship leaders called WorshipRises. Our focus on writing songs together has resulted in our songs being sung, recorded and shared with churches in different parts of the world. Most of my songwriting development has happened through WorshipRises and I'm happy now to pass on some of what I've learned to inspire and help you along the way.

In 2007 I began writing on my blog www.chrisfromcanada.com and have loved how social media has become an incredible tool to connect and communicate with other worship leaders all around the world. My passion for connecting and resourcing worship leaders led to the writing of a series of posts on my blog called "Write Worship Songs." The response was phenomenal and I decided to bring those posts together, throw in some bonus content and make it available to you - free! - as an ebook as a way of encouraging you to take some next steps in your songwriting journey.

Want to connect with me? Here are a few ways:

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Blog www.chrisfromcanada.com

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WRITE WORSHIP SONGS

10 STEPS FROM *INSPIRATION* TO *COMPLETION*

GET ME TO THE GOOD STUFF!

Write Worship Songs – 10 Steps from Inspiration to Completion.

01 **3 People To Talk With Before You Write Worship Songs**

02 **The Most Important Conversation Before You Write Worship Songs**

03 **3 Ways The Bible Inspires You To Write Worship Songs**

04 **3 Reasons To Write Worship Songs With People Inside Your Church**

05 **3 Reasons To Write Worship Songs With People Outside Your Church**

06 **Where Do You Start – Lyrics Or Melody?**

07 **5 Things To Remember About Lyrics**

08 **5 Things To Remember About Melody**

09 **Share & Rewrite & Share**

10 **Copyright Your Song**

This ebook started as a series on my blog www.chrisfromcanada.com and I'm happy to share now through this ebook. Find more songwriting resources at www.writeworshipsongs.com and follow me on twitter @chrisfromcanada

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16&17

My prayer for you.

01
3 People To Talk With Before You Write Worship Songs

When you begin to write worship songs for your church you should have conversations with three people. Having these conversations will give you some incredible perspective, it will go a long way to show that you are serious about doing this and it will also hopefully give you some encouragement as you begin the process.

01 Your Pastor

Speaking with your pastor about your desire to write worship songs for your church as soon as possible is a great move. This allows your pastor to encourage you, to pray for you, to cheer you on. It also gives him the opportunity to talk with you about some future sermon series he may be working on – perhaps there's a certain series that needs a song which just isn't written yet.The pastor/worship leader relationship is not always perfect but if you can go to your pastor with more than an "I wanna" when it comes to your desire to write worship songs, chances are he will be excited and will want to see you pursue this.

Make sure your pastor knows that you are coming at this from a place of serving your congregation and not your own career – if there's the sense that you only want to use your position as a platform for your original songs, that's going to put a bad taste in your pastor's mouth from the very beginning. Allow your pastor to speak in to the direction of new songs and maintain communication as songs are being written. He will appreciate the opportunity to look at lyrics, give some early feedback and encourage you along the way.

02 Key Member Of Your Worship Team

Getting buy-in from another worship leader or solid musician on your worship team is great and will help as songs get finished and begin to be introduced to your congregation. Having a conversation with someone from your team early in the process to get them excited about the idea of writing original worship songs will give you someone to cheer you on and help develop music ideas as you write worship songs.

Involving other musicians and songwriters from your church is a great idea and we'll be talking about that later but at this point I'm not necessarily talking about someone who is a songwriter. They should be someone who is respected by other musicians in your worship ministry and can help encourage the implementation of these new worship songs.

03 Key Leader In Your Congregation

This isn't about making the right people happy but you should have a conversation with a key leader from your church and explain to them that you sense this new desire to write worship songs and that you really feel there is an opportunity for your church to be involved in helping to write these songs. I promise that as you pursue this songwriting adventure there will be times of questioning and discouragement – to have someone on your side who is one step removed from the songwriting process but who also understands the blessing that these songs are to the congregation will be huge.

Keep this person updated. Don't come at it from a place of self-promotion or blowing your own horn but if you do get to the place where you are teaching new original songs to your congregation, send this person an email before the Sunday comes to let them know. Maybe you've got a rough demo of the song you can send them so at least one person in the congregation is familiar with it before you sing the song.

Three people you should talk with before you begin to write worship songs: your pastor, key member of your worship team and a key leader in your congregation.

Next up: the most important conversation before you write worship songs.

02
The Most Important Conversation Before You Write Worship Songs

As much as you love your congregation, love the people you are trying to reach, love the musicians on your team and love the leadership of your church I promise you there is someone who loves them more. As much as you care about the songs that you sing and the process of how you will write worship songs for your own congregation, you need to be reminded that Jesus cares about your church, your people, your music, your mission much more than you ever will.

This is a good thing.

The success of new worship songs is not dependent on your own talent. Important to develop as a songwriter? Of course! But if bringing new worship songs to your church is only about marketing, you're missing the point. You want to give your church worship songs which allow them to give praise, honor, adoration and glory to God and to Him alone. We pour our heart and soul into these songs and the hope is that the acclamation goes to Jesus, not to us.

This is a good thing.

As you begin to write worship songs, before making plans or coming up with strategy, bear your heart before the Lord. He knows your plans better than you do. He knows the steps which have been set out before you. He knows if you are coming at this from a place of integrity or a place of selfishness.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. ***Proverbs 4:23***

Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble. ***Proverbs 28:14***

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ***Matthew 6:21***

Speak with God about your plans and your desire to write worship songs for your church. Pray that God would be honored, that your church would be given some new words to sing as an expression of their worship, but above all pray that God would search your heart and that you would be coming at this from a right place.

The most important conversation before you write worship songs: talk with God about this hope and dream and desire that He's given you and ask Him to speak to your heart clearly.

Next up: 3 ways the Bible inspires you to write worship songs.

03
3 Ways The Bible Inspires You To Write Worship Songs

So you've got this idea to write worship songs for your church, you've had conversations with three key people and you've asked God to search your heart as you begin. There is no inspiration like the inspired word of God and it is an endless well of ideas, encouragement, teaching and motivation.

So many great worship songs throughout the history of the church have been written either directly from or inspired by scripture and this will not end anytime soon. Every generation needs to hear the voice of God through His word and discover what it is He is speaking. Songwriters and other creatives have the opportunity to read the Bible, pray that the Spirit of God would speak and form some of those key thoughts into creative art forms which inspire and inform those who know Christ and those who don't.

Here are three ways the Bible can be an inspiration to you as you write worship songs -

01 Write worship songs for a sermon series
This is one of my favorite ways to get inspiration for a new worship song. I'll talk with my pastor about an upcoming sermon series and what book or passages he'll be using for that series. As I spent time thinking about songs we could use during that series I'll usually spend some time looking at the passages and the overall big idea for the series and ask if there is the opportunity to write a new worship song just for that series.

Read through the passage, look at the context and what the author is trying to say. Think about how this will apply to your congregation and how your pastor is going to relate it as part of his message. You may want to write a song which could act as an introduction to the whole series, as a lead in to one message or maybe as an opportunity for your congregation to respond to what they've heard during the sermon.

02 Write worship songs which help memorize scripture
Scripture memory is incredibly important and our brains remember melody and lyric much easier than we remember verbatim text. Help them learn and memorize more passages of the Bible by putting them to music word-for-word.

Remember that the Bible was not written to be put to music so the authors were not thinking of you and your need for a verse/chorus/bridge structure but that's okay. Find the key phrase of that passage and build your chorus around that. Build verses which support the main chorus idea.

When you introduce a song like this to your congregation, tell them right up front that it is directly from scripture and so it may not sing like other songs you do as a church but if they're able to memorize songs like this they will actually be memorizing scripture.

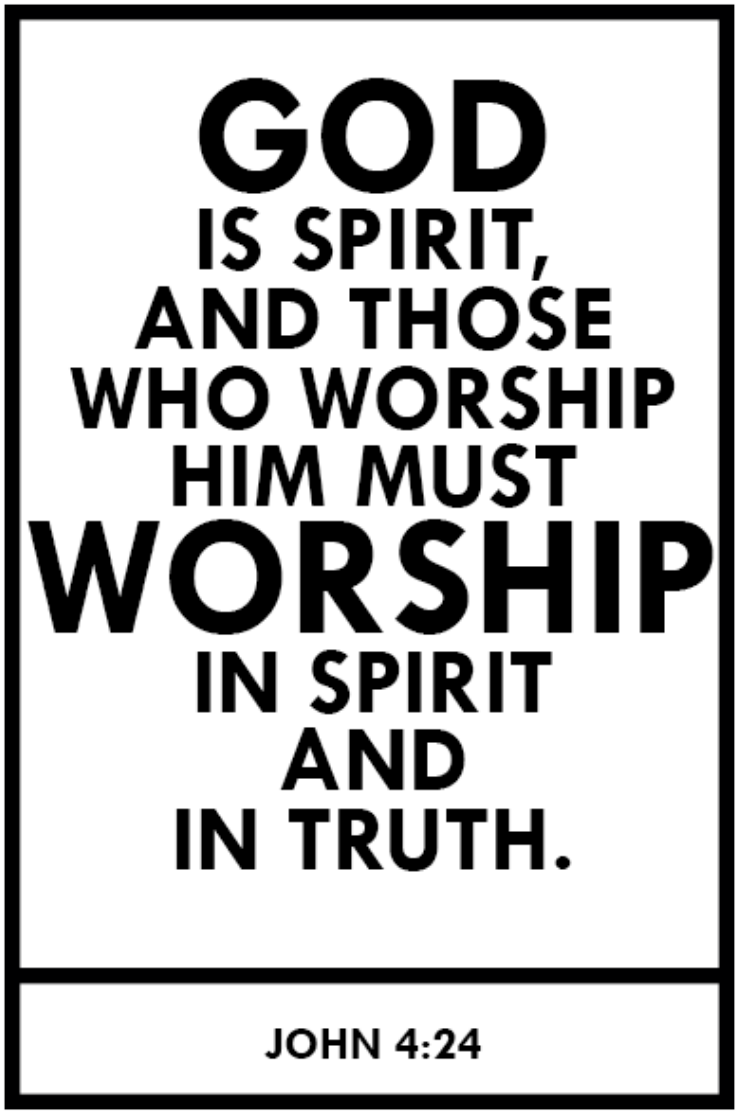
03
3 Ways The Bible Inspires You To Write Worship Songs

03 Pay attention to verses God brings to mind
There are times in my life when I see specific verses or passages more times than normal in a short period of time. I've learned to pay attention when I see or hear verses mentioned by different people. I take this to mean that God is trying to get my attention and there may be an opportunity to write a worship song out of what this verse would have to say.

Don't ignore these times when a verse or passage seems to impact you in a unique way and it shows itself in your life multiple times. I know this has happened for me with Psalm 121, Colossians 3, John 4, Luke 24 and other passages. Every time I've recognized this I've spent time writing a worship song out of these passages – sometimes it's a song I'll use in personal worship, sometimes it's a song I'll share with others.

Three ways the Bible can be an inspiration to you as you write worship songs: write worship songs for a sermon series, write worship songs which help memorize scripture, pay attention to verses God brings to mind.

Next up: three reasons to write worship songs with people inside your church.



04
3 Reasons To Write Worship Songs With People Inside Your Church

As you start to write worship songs for your church, you would be wise to make co-writing a regular part of your songwriting process. One decision I made early as a songwriter is that I wanted to find songwriting collaborators and not try to tackle writing worship songs completely on my own. This has helped form new friendships, allowed me to discover new creative opportunities and given me the chance to cheer on other songwriters.

When you are thinking of the kinds of people you'd like to start writing songs with, don't jump in too early. Songwriting is a delicate process and even strong friendships can be damaged by a songwriting session gone bad. Co-writing can definitely be beneficial and one of the best places to start is by writing worship songs with other people inside your own church.

Listen very closely – don't jump too quickly into a songwriting relationship because there are all kinds of stories of friendships which did not survive but don't be scared of pursuing this as an option. Co-writing is not for everybody and there are lots of great worship songs which are written by individual songwriters.

If your hope is to write songs which speak directly to your congregation, here are three reasons why you should consider co-writing with people from your own church -

01 They know you
Don't underestimate the power of relationship. Writing songs with strangers or new friends can be exciting and energizing but there is something special about writing songs with people you know. You share common experiences, common struggles and if you're part of the same church you share a unique history as members of the same congregation.

Coming at a topic or a theme for a song from the perspective of relationship could be a real unique advantage for your songwriting and may give you a headstart as you write worship songs for your church.

02 They know your congregation
The most direct opportunity for singing new worship songs will be within your own congregation and by co-writing with another member of your church you won't have to go through any kind of education process on the past, present, future of your church's congregation.

There are definitely songs which speak to universal issues for any follower of Christ and these are the songs which go global and can be sung in any church around the world. But as you write worship songs for your own congregation, remember that there are songs which will only be able to come from within your own congregation – some of those global songs just won't capture the right words that your church needs to sing.

04
3 Reasons To Write Worship Songs With People Inside Your Church

03 They know your pastor
Remember that your relationship with your pastor is more important than whether or not one of your songs gets sung in your church. As you bring creative ideas or direction to the table for a particular song, someone from your church may be a great source of wisdom when it comes to encouraging you to purse a specific idea or to look for an alternative. Consider them your first line of defense when it comes to ideas which may be pushing the envelope.

At the same time, if you are writing a song with someone from your church and come up with a lyric which may get some resistance, you can approach your pastor together with some of your reasoning behind a particular word choice. Having someone from your church as part of the process creates trust all around.

Three reasons to write worship songs with people inside your church: they know you, they know your congregation, they know your pastor.

Next up: three reasons to write worship songs with people outside your church.

05
3 Reasons To Write Worship Songs With People Outside Your Church

The previous chapter in this ebook focused on helping you to write worship songs focused on co-writing with people from your own church. What about co-writing with people outside your church when it comes to writing worship songs?

I'll give the same caution I gave in the previous chapter – choose wisely when it comes to co-writing relationships but don't be afraid of pursuing this. If you have a dream to write worship songs for your own church, here are three reasons to write with people from outside your church -

01 Fresh perspective
Whatever is happening in your own church it's good to remember that God is alive and at work in every other church around the world. Getting together with a friend and beginning to write worship songs together gives you a chance to hear about what's happening in their own church, giving you a new perspective on what God is like and what the church is called to.

They will also help give you a fresh perspective on what's happening at your own church. As you talk about things happening in your own congregation and why writing worship songs for your church is part of your journey, they'll be able to encourage you along in the process. Fresh perspective can be very helpful!

02 Expand your network
Let's assume that the co-writing session goes well and you actually manage to put together some different ideas which are eventually turned into a worship song that your church is able to sing. This is a win! You'll both feel great about the experience and begin to build a new level of trust – you will be more willing to recommend them as a songwriter to other people looking to co-write and they will do the same. You'll be introduced to people in your co-writer's network who you didn't know before.

Even if the process doesn't go well and you struggle through a songwriting session with no tangible ideas when you come out the other side, good songwriters will recognize times when it was just a bad fit and they may know some other writers you should reach out to. I can think of times when I've gone to a co-writing session and although we didn't manage to put a song together we each knew songwriters the other should get to know and have a chance to write with. That's a win!

03 Shared ownership
I'm not talking about copyright (although that should definitely come up and we'll talk about that later in this ebook) but a co-written song immediately has twice as many champions than a song written by a single writer. If you are both worship leaders at local churches, that means there are now two churches where the song can be tried out. It's not *my song* anymore, it's *our song* – and when it comes to writing worship songs, that's a big distinction.

Writing worship songs with people from outside your church gives you increased ownership of the song and its success when it is released as a finished product.

Three reasons you should write worship songs with people from outside your church: fresh perspective, to expand your network and shared ownership.

Next up: where do you start – lyrics or melody?

06
Where Do You Start – Lyrics Or Melody?

When it comes to writing songs in general but writing worship songs specifically I've found there are all kinds of "yabuts" that come from new writers or those who are considering beginning to write worship songs for their church. *Yabuts* – you know what I mean.. "Yaaaa… buuuut…" Yabuts!

Yabuts can unveil some hidden assumptions or insecurities when it comes to actually beginning the process. (Sidenote: If you are an artist and have not read **The War of Art** by Stephen Pressfield, you owe it to yourself and your community to do this, now!) When new songwriters bring up concerns or questions about the process of actually writing worship songs together, it can often be a red flag that the person wants to find the perfect step-by-step outline rather than just doing the work of writing worship songs.

Although there are several concerns and questions which are raised, I've found the most common one is this: where do I start, lyrics or melody?

I *get* the question – Is it better to spend time finalizing lyrics which are accurate, helpful, inspirational, instructive? Or it is better to start with a melody which is singable, familiar and memorable? The next two chapters in this ebook will talk more about lyrics and melody specifically when it comes to writing worship songs but in a general sense here is how I answer this question.

Where do I start, lyrics or melody?

Yes.

Start. That is the important part.

I know great songwriters who start with lyric and feel like a single phrase can become the cornerstone of an entire song and they will work, work, work until they nail down that phrase, build it into a chorus and develop verses around it before they go to melody.

I know other writers who just record melody idea after idea after idea – they have a bank of melody ideas just waiting for lyrics and have spent hours and hours refining melodies, trying different notes on top of different chord progressions to come up with music their congregation will be able to sing.

The key to each of these options? Start. **You must start.**

You can spend all day debating whether it's better or more helpful to start with lyrics or melody when you write worship songs but if you debate more than you write, you're wasting your time. So write! Start!

When it comes to lyric and melody – both are very important when it comes to worship songs. The melody needs to be singable, the lyric needs to be accurate. The melody needs to be memorable, the lyric needs to teach. Both are important but both have different roles. You'll sometimes hear the phrase "the lyric is king, the melody is queen" from those who write worship songs.

The lyric is king – this is really the distinction of what makes a worship song a worship song. The lyric must be *focused* on Jesus, *accurate* in its theology, *teaching* for the believer, *instructive* for the skeptic – all of those things. The lyric is king.

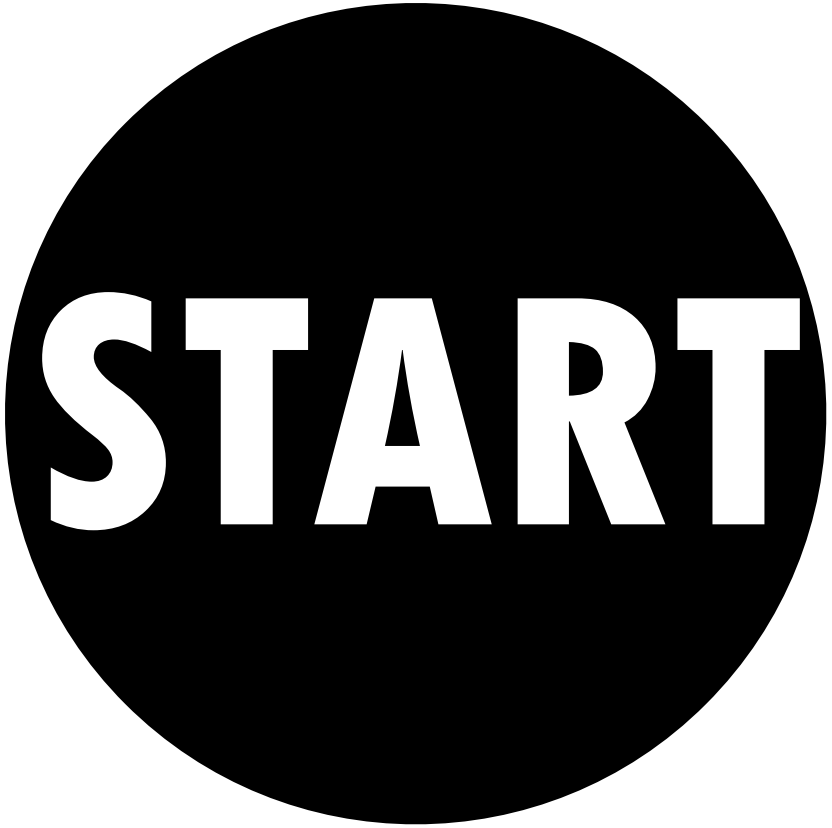
06
Where Do You Start – Lyrics Or Melody?

The melody is queen – don't neglect the role of melody as you write worship songs! The melody is actually what helps us memorize songs. We remember the notes, the hook, the phrasing of our favorite songs even if we don't remember all the words. The melody is crucial to help our congregation actually sing these songs we are writing.

So don't neglect either – both are important! But don't get so tied up in asking questions that you neglect to actually do the thing you are trying to do: write worship songs!

Where do you start, lyrics or melody? Yes!

Next up: five things to remember about lyrics as you write worship songs.



07
5 Things To Remember About Lyrics

For me, there is no question that the most meaningful part of the journey as I write worship songs is developing lyrics. The lyrics of our worship songs are what makes them unique – the subject, the object, the topic, the focus should all point towards God, glorifying and honoring Him because of who He is and what He does. The church's responsibility is to sing the praise of God with songs that speak clearly of His attributes and His activity.

Lyrics can also be a real sticking point for new songs and there is no shortage of controversy when it comes to the lyrics of worship songs. To be honest, sometimes it feels like there are songwriters who are using odd words and phrases simply for their own sake rather than for the purpose of writing a better song.

At the same time, certain words or phrases can quickly become trite, overused and lose any kind of significance for our churches as they sing.

Here are five things you need to remember about lyrics when you write worship songs:

01 Jesus is the centre
Don't run from it, don't deny it, don't hide it and certainly don't try to be tricky and clever about it. Make Jesus famous with your songs. Proclaim His goodness and mercy. Write about His compassion and His grace. Tell the story of the gospel – the whole story! - through the lyrics when you write worship songs.

Lyrics focused on Jesus is the hallmark of Christian worship and really the only distinctive that makes a worship song a worship song. And no, capitalizing You and He is not enough! Be clear, be specific!

02 Rhymes are a two-edged sword
Rhymes help your audience remember the song and give our brain some hooks to grab on to when we are learning a new song. Rhymes can be very helpful and you should learn about rhyming patterns and structure as your write worship songs. Do you have the last word of each line of your verse rhyme? The 2nd and 4th lines? The last line of each verse rhymes? The structure should serve the song but use rhymes in a way which will help your audience remember the song.

At the same time, rhymes can very quickly become cliché and every songwriter has had the experience of tearing a song apart because he just can't find a way to get out of the face/grace rhyming trap! Don't go to a familiar rhyme too quickly. Look for alternatives, find a different way to say what you're trying to say and find a better word to use.

03 Lyric ideas are everywhere
Expect words and inspiration to find you at the strangest moments. Sitting in the chair at the dentist. Waiting at a red light. Eating the first bite of a great meal. Be on the lookout for phrases or word combinations which catch your attention. I've heard Paul Baloche describe this as having your "antennae up" – always expecting that a conversation or book or movie might produce a line which could eventually find its way to a song.

Be ready for this inspiration. Don't dismiss a phrase which comes to mind after you hear it. If it's caught your attention it might be a signal that there is a deeper significance to this phrase which could be used as you are writing worship songs.

07
5 Things To Remember About Lyrics

04 No, you will not remember!
I don't know how many great song titles or ideas have been lost forever by great songwriters because they were never captured. I know my first reaction when I come across a word or phrase which grabs my attention is *"Of course I'll remember that!"* No, of course you will not. You need a way to capture these ideas quickly that will allow you to process them later.

At the end of this post I'll show you three tools you must have to remember lyric ideas.

05 Lyrics live on
The last 10 years or so has brought a resurgence of rewriting old hymns of the church. The interesting thing for me from a songwriting perspective is that when we talk rewriting we are really talking about new melody – in most cases we have kept the lyrics the same but found a way to make the melody more singable, more accessible, more memorable for a modern audience.

The point of this is not to say that this is what *should* happen but this is what *is* happening. The lyric lives on, the melody is temporary. Should you ever write a worship song which is being sung after you are dead it will probably be due to the lyric – what the song says about Jesus, how it encourages followers of Christ in their faith and how it proclaims different attributes of His character.

Here are three tools that I use to help remember lyric ideas and inspiration:

- Notebook: I have a **Moleskine notebook** with me almost all the time. I have several Moleskines filled with notes, ideas, conversations and all kinds of scribbles. I review these often and go back to ideas I'd captured years ago.

- **Evernote**: I know people who love Evernote and people who hate it. If it works for you, make it work! I have mine setup to receive new notes via email and use the iPhone app all the time to capture lyric ideas. Again, I go back every now and then to review these ideas.

- Voice recorder: This might be an app on your phone or maybe a voice recorder like the **Roland R-05**. The beauty of a voice recorder is that you can quickly explain what it is about the idea that captured your attention.

Of course the key to any tool is that it must be easily accessible all the time. If you always have your phone with you, get a voice recorder app. If you are able to always carry a notebook, do that. Any tool is only going to be as good as its accessibility.

Five things to remember about lyrics when you write worship songs: Jesus is the centre, rhymes are a two-edged sword, lyric ideas are everywhere, no you will not remember and lyrics live on.

Next up: five things to remember about melody when you write worship songs.

08
5 Things To Remember About Melody

I had a blast writing this blog series focused on helping you write worship songs and the response from worship songwriters was incredible. It didn't take long to see that there were many people passionate about songwriting and looking for some encouragement along the way. If this ebook has been helpful for you, please encourage songwriters and those who are writing worship songs for your local churches to visit the site and grab a free copy for themselves - www.writeworshipsongs.com

So far, we've talked about inspiration, co-writing, conversations and begun to talk about lyrics and melody. This chapter is going to focus on five things you need to remember when it comes to melody as part of writing worship songs.

01 Know the rules then break them
Don't run from it, don't deny it, don't hide it and certainly don't try to be tricky and clever about it. Make Jesus famous with your songs. Proclaim His goodness and mercy. Write about His compassion and His grace. Tell the story of the gospel – the whole story! - through the lyrics when you write worship songs.

02 From C to shining C
Remember that you are writing melody for your congregation not for you. How many minutes of actual singing do you think the typical Sunday morning attender does outside of the songs you are singing together? In an average week? Zero. Zilch. Nada. Zip. Not one. You are not writing songs for singers, you are writing songs for talkers who are being asked to sing.

As a general rule, the majority of your melody should remain in a one octave range "from C to shining C." For women, this is middle C up one octave. For men, this is middle C down one octave. There are definitely exceptions and there's nothing wrong with a low Bb or a high D but your melody shouldn't live up there.

03 Keep It Simple!
Stop for a second and hum the melody of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." Seriously. Do it. I'll wait….

How many notes in that melody? Six. Six notes in that melody. What about "Mary Had A Little Lamb"? Four. Four notes in the melody of that song. Complexity is not memorable. Simplicity is memorable.

This applies to worship songs as well. Think of the chorus of "Mighty to Save" – five notes. Chorus of "Blessed be Your Name" – four notes. Chorus of "How Great is Our God" – five notes. When is the last time you wrote a melody which includes only four or five notes? Up for the challenge? *You might create the most memorable melody you've ever written.*

08
5 Things To Remember About Melody

04 Melody serves the lyric
Earlier in this ebook I mentioned this idea that "*lyric is king, melody is queen*" – the lyric of our worship songs is what makes them distinctive. The object and subject of our worship is Jesus and this is what makes our worship songs what they are.

As you write, remember that the melody needs to serve the lyric. If the words of your song are focused on celebration, rejoicing, exalting God for His attributes and His activity but the melody of your song is a slow, droning, mournful line, you may not get the response you're looking for. Doesn't mean it's a bad melody, it just doesn't serve the lyric. If it IS a good melody, there is another, better lyric which it can serve in another song.

05 Capture Ideas
I mentioned this same thing when it comes to lyrics but from time to time you will have a melody just drop in to your brain and if you are like me you may think to yourself, "No problem, that melody is so great I will remember it!" No, you will not! Get yourself a way to remember your melody ideas in a way that makes sense to you.

I love the Evernote app for iPhone and us it to record audio notes all the time. You could also use a standard voice recorder like the Roland R-05 or any other kind of voice recording app for your phone. You could even call yourself on the phone and leave a voicemail with the melody idea to retrieve later.

Five things to remember about melody when you write worship songs: Know the rules then break them, from C to shining C, keep it simple, melody serves the lyric and capture ideas.

Next up: Share & rewrite & share

09
Share & Rewrite & Share

Question - do you create mostly in private or public?

As a songwriter, do you rush to get your ideas heard, look for feedback, post lyric ideas on your blog asking what people think? Or do you keep your creative treasure hidden from the world until that perfect moment when it's finally ready for public consumption?

If you are anything but a brand new songwriter my guess is that you tend to keep your creations safe in your head, your office, your music room, wherever partly from a desire to create something good and partly out of fear of what people will say when they actually hear what you've written.

I mentioned it earlier but if fear is something which is paralyzing you as an artist, you *must* read **War of Art** by Stephen Pressfield and a new book I read this year called **Pursuing Christ, Creating Art** by Gary Molander. Do not give fear more power in your life than it deserves.

Perfect love casts out fear. Open your Bible and spend time in 1 John 4 if fear has gripped you. You are loved - loved perfectly - by God who made you, who knows you, who adores you. His perfect love casts out fear because His love for us is not conditional on our creating. He does not love you more if you write great songs or love you less if you write junk. You are loved.

I mentioned collaboration in a couple of earlier chapters but I want to revisit this idea and tell you that the potential impact of your song and your songwriting ability will increase ten, fifty, one hundred times if you are able to master this concept: **share and rewrite and share.**

Share
Find some fellow songwriters who get what you are trying to do, who will respect the work you are sharing with them and who are willing to

help make your songs better. Either begin writing together from scratch and encourage a sharing of ideas right from the beginning *or* bring them an idea that you've been working on, explain what you are hoping to do with the song and give them a chance to respond.

For some of you, you have already quit reading and turned the page. The fear of what someone may do to your precious *song-baby* is too much and you are not willing to give anyone permission to change anything about what you have created. Fear has won.

For others, you have so little confidence in your own ability that you would never share what you've written with anyone else because you *know* they would laugh, ridicule, tear your song apart and leave the room, never speaking to you again. Fear has won.

For some, the idea of collaboration is thrilling and the possibilities seem endless. You understand that healthy, vibrant, mature, creative collaboration can quickly increase not only the end result of the song you are working on now but also your songwriting ability in the future.

Rewrite
Great songs are not written. Great songs are rewritten.

If you spend one hour on a song from start to finish and think it's worthy of putting in front of an audience, not only is the song not ready, you are not ready either.

09
Share & Rewrite & Share

Great songs are not birthed this way. Yes, there are exceptions but they are exceptions for a reason. The exceptions need a rule and the rule is that songs need work and time.

Once you've begun the sharing process, don't stop there. Take the idea which came from the collaboration - again, it may be a starting point, it may be taking the song a few steps further along - and begin the rewriting process.

Rewriting doesn't mean your song is bad, it means the song has potential to be great and is worth working on. Some of you will drop the song and let it die without getting to rewriting. Fear has won.

Rewriting may mean changing a lyric, moving a melody line up or down, even seeing that a verse or a chorus may function better as a different section. I've had rewrites where I realized that a chorus from one song would actually work much better as the verse for another song. Both songs were better and that only would have come through sharing and rewriting.

Share
Once you've worked the process of rewriting, share it again. Sharing may happen with the same person you started with or it may be someone new. It may be your pastor, your spouse, your worship team - at this point you may want to start opening the circle up a little to bit to see if the song really does have potential or do you love it simply because it's *yours*.

Take the feedback and responses of these people seriously and develop a sense of trust in whether or not the song is worthy of another rewrite and share or if the idea needs to be reworked from the beginning.

As I mentioned in the very beginning of this ebook, my prayer for you as you read is Colossians 3:16-17. "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

If you have never shared one of your songs with anyone, that's the first place to start. Allow the perfect love of God to conquer the fear that has gripped you. Send that email, make that phone call - reveal your *song-baby* to that one person you trust who will give you helpful, honest, encouraging, challenging feedback because they love you and want to see you succeed at this.

Next up: Copyright your song

10
Copyright Your Song

Copyright is one of those things that artists really don't want to have to deal with but you need to know that it is *crucial* for copyright to be part of your thinking as a songwriter.

I want you to know three things about copyright by the end of this chapter and then I'll share some resources at the end which you can check out for further reading.

01 Make copyright an issue before it becomes an issue
What do I mean by this? If you are involved in collaboration when it comes to songwriting, nobody thinks copyright is an issue at the beginning. Copyright usually only becomes an issue when there is money involved. There are countless horror stories of copyright gone bad and relationships are often the collateral damage.

Solution? Make copyright an issue before it becomes an issue.

If you are working on a song with someone, agree before you begin on an ownership split. Generally, if you are starting from scratch, the copyright will be split evenly between everyone involved. Two people writing? Each owns 50% of the copyright. Three people? 33% each, and so on.

If one of the writers is bringing an idea or a mostly finished song to the writing time, there may need to be a discussion about percentages being skewed to reflect the increased ownership. At the same time, the original writer is bringing in a collaborator to get the song finished so maybe that is worth a 50/50 split rather than 60/40 or some other breakdown.

Because there is no *rule* on how this split should be done, make it an issue before it becomes and issue and agree on how copyright will work.

I promise you that the first time this conversation happens it will be very awkward but better to have the awkward conversation among friends than among lawyers.



02 Get it in writing
This doesn't mean you need a lawyer to write up a legal document outlining every last details and protecting your interests in the case of any legal action but it does mean you should have something in writing before you begin which is signed by each person involved in the collaboration.

At the very least, this will acknowledge that everyone is on the same page when it comes to percentages or shared ownership and can be used as a starting point if there is any kind of disagreement in the future.

As your songwriting increases and you have more opportunities to write with other people, you will begin to lose track of verbal or handshake agreements with different people on different songs. Having something simple in writing makes sure that everyone has a copy of what was agreed to.

By all means, if you think legal advice is needed and you would like to have a proper legal document in place, nothing wrong with that. *I'm not a lawyer so please don't take anything in this chapter as legal advice.* To start, you could join either ASCAP or BMI as a songwriter and have access to some of their member resources or search online for a quality copyright lawyer who can help you with this.

10
Copyright Your Song

03 Copyright protects you
Nobody wants to think poorly of people they are collaborating with - you wouldn't have wanted to write that song with that person if you thought they were a jerk or didn't trust them. Unfortunately, people change, circumstances change and even ethics change. If that should happen with your co-writer you've got something in writing which can be used to protect you if the end result is a legal situation.

Of course nobody wants to begin a creative relationship by thinking about all of the things which could go wrong but by simply playing out some of the "what if..." scenarios in your head you can very quickly see why having a copyright agreement in writing will be very valuable.

One simple piece of paper with an agreement on how the ownership of the song is split could save you endless amount of money, stress and heartache.

Copyright Resources

You'll need to check on regulations in your own country but if you are a citizen of a country which is part of the **Berne Convention** then copyright is automatic once the song has been produced in a physical form. Got a song ready to copyright? Type up and print a lyric sheet with the names of the authors and the date of completion. Make a quick audio recording of the song and capture it on CD, USB, online storage, etc. Copyright is now in effect.

Registering copyright is a whole other kettle of fish and here are some links which may help you learn more about copyright registration and how to do it. Again, check with regulations in your own country but these should be a good start:

United States Copyright Office - **www.copyright.gov**
Canadian Intellectual Property Office - **www.cipo.gc.ca**
UK Intellectual Property Office - **www.ipo.gov.uk**
Songwriter Associations (USA) - **www.bmi.com/associations/listing**
ASCAP - **www.ascap.com**
BMI - **www.bmi.com**
SOCAN - **www.socan.ca**

Congratulations! You made it through.

So what now? Now you write. Now you take action. Now you pull out those ideas you stashed away for *someday*, you pick up your guitar, you sit at the piano, you grab a pencil and you begin to write.

If the only thing you accomplish from reading this ebook is *reading this ebook* we have both failed. I have failed in providing you a resource which inspires and motivates you to actually spend time writing and you have failed in allowing that inspiration and motivation to actually work itself out as some new creative work.

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Write.
Worship.
Songs.

God is with you.

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"Write Worship Songs" is an ebook of original content originally published at www.chrisfromcanada.com
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