

WHAT WILL YOUR NEXT SONG BE? WRITING SONGS ON PURPOSE

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How can we learn to be more intentional about the content and music of the songs we write?

Is songwriting simply a matter of waiting for the Spirit to inspire you? Do you need to wait until you have inspiration?

First of all, PRAY and ask for the Spirit's help. Then begin to write. Try to write often, consistently. Stravinsky was at his piano every morning at eight o'clock writing.

I. Overcoming writer's block -- ideas for lyrics

1. Read books, study theology. Devotional books, e.g. Morning and Evening
2. Write songs on some of the great doctrines in Scripture, e.g., the Trinity, the incarnation, election, grace, salvation, sanctification, God's providence, etc.
3. Look through a systematic theology -- read through the attributes of God (God's holiness, an eternity, self-sufficiency, omnipotence, omniscience, faithfulness) or the order of salvation or the effects of salvation (regeneration, adoption, seated with Christ in heavenly places, forgiveness, righteousness imputed, fellowship with God, access to God, mercy, grace, favor, etc.). Again, what is our unique response to the particular attribute expounded on?
4. Rewrite a psalm in a metric scheme
5. Think of the verse as a meditation on God and the chorus as a response to that meditation. Given a particular meditation on God, what various responses could you have (e.g., I praise you, I'm grateful, I will trust you, I will hope in you, I will always love you, etc.)
6. Pick a theme and write as many thoughts and ideas as you can about it without trying to rhyme or put into song form
7. Use a hymn, either word-for-word or rewrite the lyrics of a hymn keeping the main ideas and theme
8. Take the idea of a well-known song and rewrite the lyrics trying to capture the idea of the song with different words
9. Write a song based on the current teaching series in your church
10. Write new lyrics to a well-known song using that song's metric scheme, then write new music to those lyrics

11. Try to begin with a title - write a page of song titles
12. Begin with a question
13. Begin with a statement about God
14. Begin with a word -- then right ideas that spring from the word
15. Use a psalm
16. Use a non-psalm portion of Scripture (e.g., No eye has seen, no ear has heard)
17. Pick a Scripture, do a search for other similar Scriptures (either using a Concordance or Treasury of Scripture Knowledge), print out related Scriptures on a page
18. Begin with a contrast (e.g., God's infinite nature versus our finite nature, God's holiness versus our sinfulness)
19. Write a song based on current situations people are facing -- e.g., do they need a song about trusting God, receiving comfort from God, believing that God is in control of all the details of their life. Are they happy, sad, fearful, etc.
20. What does your church need to sing about God?
21. Keep a song idea notebook. When you're stuck for lyrics, go back to a song you attempted to write last year.
22. If you normally write with your instrument in hand, try writing lyrics completely apart from your instrument.
23. Pick a metric scheme and just begin to write lyrics

II. Overcoming writer's block -- ideas for melody

1. Begin with the chorus if you normally begin with the verse
2. Take the notes of a well-known melody, change the rhythm, length
3. Start with a drum loop or musical loop and sing or play over it
4. Try forcing yourself to write a song in a different style, e.g. if you normally write in a rock style, try writing in an "island" style
5. Take another melody's rhythmic scheme -- put new notes to it (in other words, same rhythm, different melody)
6. Take a popular song's chords, change the tempo of the song, and sing a different melody over it
7. Take a popular song's chord progression and put it in a much different key and sing a different melody over it.
8. Take the first few notes of another song's melody and change the metric scheme
9. Begin with a part of a well-known melody, e.g. take the first six notes of Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring -- repeat and vary them
10. Start with a rhythm, for example the school clap
11. In a phrase, pick one word to hang or soar on, then sing the other words more quickly
12. start on a different chord than you normally start on, e.g. the five chord

13. Start with a strange chord, e.g. a seventh or a major seventh or a sixth
14. start on a different note than you would normally start on, e.g. if you start normally on a low note try starting high
15. Try to write a song in the style of a well-known band or performer
16. Try a different meter than you normally ride in, e.g. 6/8
17. If the last song you wrote was a fast song, write a slow song
18. Sing a harmony line to the first line of another song
19. Write on a different instrument than you normally write on
20. Start with three or four notes, keep repeating and try different chords underneath