

How to write ~Real~ Christian Music

by Isaiah Bridges

First of all, you cannot write 'real' Christian music until **after** God has changed your heart; because *music comes from the heart*. We see the essence of musical praise primarily in David, sitting in a field, guarding sheep.

A shepherds crook on the ground and a harp in his lap; he sings to God...

Composing Christian Music:

This document is written for that small minority of humans who

- Love God
- Are musicians, and
- Want to write music

That is a pretty small percentage of mankind, so... Hello! Glad to meet you! Let's go...

First: I suspect that there are many who already know how to do this. To them, I give thanks for their hard work! But for those who have never tried it; I hope this short document is of help.

Any questions?

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Peace

Three Levels

Let's break *songwriting* into 'levels'. I will claim that there are (loosely speaking) three levels of songwriting:

- The 'jam' or 'vamp'
- The 'song', and
- The 'big production'

All three of these are different types of ... musical tools (?), or approaches... and each has it's application, and its value to YOU the musician, and to The Church. Let's outline some ideas about how to create Christian Songs in each of those three environments.

TIP:

If you are new to this, I suggest exploring each of these ideas in sequence. That is, learn how to get good at executing the first idea. After that method is fairly easy, and you can do it comfortably, start learning how to do the second idea. When you are good at that... learn the third.

I repeat: If you are new to Christian song writing, then please follow that 'tip'.

1) The jam, or vamp

Definition: A jam, or vamp is a repeated musical ‘sentence’, over which improvised melodies and/or harmonies can be explored. The ‘sentence’ can be a short melody, a bass line, or a chord progression... any short, repeating musical form.

How to create a Christian song using the vamp (or jam).

The first thing to do is PRAY BEFORE YOU START!
Get your spirit into the right place to worship God.

Now...

Just pick up your instrument, and ‘play around’ until you find some chords, or a melodic phrase (a ‘riff’ or bassline) that repeats well, and start playing it, over and over.

Normally, when ‘jamming’, you would explore various melodic lines or harmonies, you could lay over your “musical sentence”, and you would basically enter into

a state of
musical exploration

Entering into a state is a scary idea! Only a musician understands this. Music creates a state that you get into, where you can allow the music to flow, some people call it ‘cutting loose’. *It is in that state that inspiration happens.* (I can already hear the “These are *my* rules! Therefore they are *Gods* rules!” guys – screaming in my ears. *The spirit world is a scary place to them.* The word of ‘rules’ is much safer... Trust me: They’ll love the song that God gives you when you are done!)¹

So what I want you to do is

- create that riff, bass line, or chord progression (something simple!),
- and instead of exploring *the music*,
- let your mind *explore your ideas about God*, while you repeat this short musical idea.
- Explore your thoughts about
- His might, His Glory, His Love, His Mercy, His Judgment, anything about God
- Profound ideas or lessons you have discovered in scripture
- Explore your praises for His Son, Our Lord, The Christ
- Consider His miraculous birth, and ministry, And the salvation it created!
- Consider the majestic works done by God, through the prophets....
- Ask yourself: If I watched those things happen, would that affect my ideas about God?
- Any Godly thing that comes to mind. Don’t push it... and don’t rush it...
- There is a lot to ponder!
- Now start putting words to these ideas... figure out how to rhyme them... make sure they can be supported with scripture! But... in general: Give your spirit to God, and then...

just let it happen
as you jam

If you decide to write it down: you now have a “worship song”!

That’s it! Try it. It’s a good starting place. **Important note!** Remember **1 John 4:1** at all times!

¹ The spirit world is scary... Isaiah was asked to walk around naked. Jeremiah was asked to eat human dung. Hosea was asked to marry a street hooker. The spirit world is scary! The prophets had it rough: Musicians have it easy! Consider all those the “I was in the spirit when...” passages. I am asking you to get “in the spirit” when you compose. MUSIC IS SPIRITUAL. I can’t prove it, but I know that it is. Remember: God invented music: it comes from the spirit world! So... Allow God to get you “in the spirit” when you compose.

2) The song:

Songs are more formal than jams. For example, they typically contain definite structures (verse:chorus, verse:chorus, break, verse:chorus, outro or something like that). Songs are more detailed, and therefore require more work.

Personally, my songs usually originate from jams. I find a chord progression that I like, and I play it over and over until I get an idea for a Christian topic that 'fits', or that just emerges from the music. Then : USING THE CHORD TONES I construct a melody. Please... don't just "chant" out something that 'kind-of' goes with the music. USE THE CHORD TONES to build the melody! Use the most choice chord tones on the strong beats, and let other scale tones join them together on the weak beats. Okay? This will produce much higher quality – much more 'singable' music!

Here is a famous example: "**Blessed Assurance**": A well-known Christian hymn.

The lyrics were written in 1873 by blind hymn writer [Fanny Crosby](#), to music written by her friend [Phoebe Knapp](#). Crosby was visiting when Knapp demonstrated (on the piano) a new melody she had written. When Knapp asked Crosby, "What do you think the tune says?", Crosby replied, "Blessed assurance; Jesus is mine." Blam! Done! (reference: Wikipedia)

Another way to write Christian songs is similar to writing a term paper.

- Pick a subject
- Gather information (scripture verses) about that subject
- Look for powerful scriptural passages that address that subject
- Find the **symbols** and **links** (especially the prophetic links!) that the subject reveals
- Now start constructing the music and the poetry (lyrics) as you go along.

This is a more work, but can produce some amazing results.

3) The Big Production

This is where you get a bunch of musicians and/or singers together, and give them written music. You all rehearse the music, and work out the bugs, and on presentation night (like some formal event) – you play with all you've got.

You don't see this much anymore. I personally hope it will become more frequent. This last step requires a deep knowledge of arranging, orchestration, etc. It is the last step in a lifetime of formal training – HOWEVER -

Don't forget that this is all about God!

The spirit that you get when you are praising God to informal jams should *never go away*.

DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT (1 Thess 5:19)

I pray this is of help to anyone who reads it.
Peace