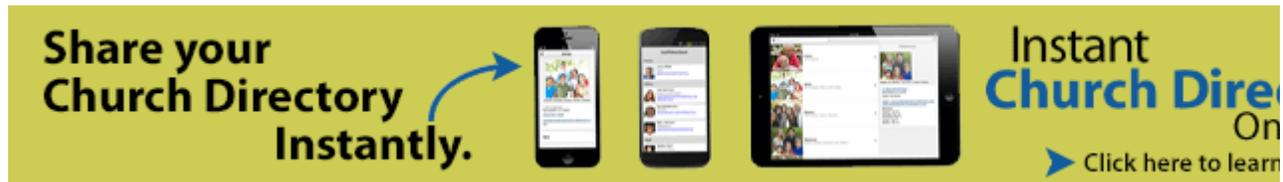


CHURCHLEADERS

Lead Better Every Day

[Find Your Ministry](#)[Features](#)[Videos](#)[Daily Buzz](#)[Podcast](#)[Home](#) [Worship & Creative Leaders](#) [Articles for Worship & Creative](#)

3 Tips for Writing a Worship Song

By Acts 29 Network

[Email](#)[Share On Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)

Luke Abrams served as a worship leader for nearly ten years at Mars Hill Church in Seattle, WA. He began at Mars Hill when the church was roughly 100 people and wrote many of the songs still sung there and at other Acts 29 churches today.

Worship songs tend to stick around for centuries, if they're good ones.

Introductions

I led worship at Mars Hill Fellowship in Seattle for over 6 years and have written a number of worship songs.

The Lord tells us to sing new songs

to Him, and it is a good thing to write new worship songs, especially if the church is new or going through a season of change. Worship is our response to the Lord, and writing songs relevant to the season and to the congregation is extremely powerful.

Synopsis

This is not a "how to" on songwriting, but rather on writing worship songs.

Lead your church to live out their faith in this post-Christian era.

LEARN MORE

HEBREWS initiative

90% WHO DOWNLOAD THIS APP USE IT TO GIVE TO THEIR CHURCH

SEE IT IN ACTION

Pushpay

Obviously, basic songwriting talent is required to write a good worship song, and musical ability does not hurt either. Know your audience, play your instrument well, these are good pointers, but out of the scope of this article. The focus here will be on how to write a song that people can best worship to.

Disclaimer

A how to article about art is difficult. How to write a book, how to paint a masterpiece – these are not as straightforward as how to change your oil or how to put together a boy band. By definition, art is not formulaic, so take this not as a recipe for song craftsmanship, but as a set of filters that I use to determine whether a song I have written meets the quality bar. These are my opinions, and therefore, may not prove relevant, but hopefully, they will be of some assistance to aspiring worship leaders.

The “how to” part I keep talking about

1. A good worship song is singable.

If no one sings, it's not worship.

Worship songs are different than other songs in one distinct category – there are way more singers than musicians. Everyone in the congregation should be able to – and want to – sing along to the song.

How do you know if a song is singable? The “yeah duh” answer is if people sing to it. Though this doesn't always tell, you should see some songs that people consistently sing along with, and others that they consistently don't. Ask yourself the difference between these two songs, and I think you'll see some of the things in this article.

Why does a song have to be singable? The congregation is not the audience, and the leaders are not performers. When worshipping, we are all one body lifting up our voices to the Lord. As singers and instrument players, our whole job as worship leaders is to encourage as many people as possible to worship, and this is usually manifested through singing.

A singable song is in a good key. Nuts and bolts – if a song is too low or too high, less people will sing along. The same goes for a song with a wide range. Sometimes, it is hard to remember that most members of your church are probably not musicians or singers, and if the song is all over the place, it can be intimidating to sing along with.

A good worship song should be fun to sing. Nuts and bolts – if a song is not fun to sing along with, less people will. The most important test here is the shower test – would you sing the song in the shower? Similar test – if the power went out in the church on Sunday, and you had to lead the congregation in a cappella worship, would the song fly? A strong melody is the backbone of a good worship song.

Clumsy phrasing should also be avoided. Putting too many words in a song or having awkward pauses or drawn out syllables can make it more difficult to sing along with.

Slight tangent on PowerPoint – Words have to be seen to be sung. Nuts and bolts – if the lyrics to the song are not made visible to the congregation in an easy and immediate way, they won't sing as much. PowerPoint is a beautiful thing – if you have the means, use it. It adds the possibility of a whole other dimension to worship – visual. Artists in our church that have a knack for beauty of the eye participate with the musicians in ways that are inspiring. If you instead use handouts or some other means of textual delivery, the same rules apply. Make sure that the lyrics are large enough for everyone to read and are in a clear font with a high contrast background. Keep in mind people in the back of the room, poor eyesight, bad lighting, etc. Take the extra time to make sure that the lyrics on the

slides are the same (and in the right order) as the ones you sing. Also, regularly correct any spelling or grammatical errors – these distract during worship, interrupting the flow.

2. A good worship song is captivating.

If everyone's minds are wandering, it's not worship.

This is a little more than nuts and bolts – and can be quite subjective, like asking, "Is that painting beautiful?" Hopefully, I can explain what makes a worship song captivating to me, and that will prove of some use.

Worship happens when people recognize the awesome majesty of God and respond. This happens all the time, and mostly without music – hiking, driving, washing dishes – all can be worship. Additionally, it is not your job as a worship leader to "make" people worship or to convince them to. I always start with the assumption that the congregation wants to and knows how to worship. It is my job to capture their attention and direct it to God.

The problem: worship hypnotism. Even if you've done the first part right and made a singable song so that people are standing, singing, smiling, it does not mean that they are worshipping. If a song has been played too often or is too familiar, often the lyrics can wash right over the worshippers, and they never contemplate the meaning or meditate on how it applies to them. Repetition is the constant enemy and companion of the worship leader. A worship band that plays regularly needs 20-40 songs that they can play at the drop of a hat and about twice that many in reserve – ready to go after a touchup. Playing a song repeatedly, especially right after it is written, can be very helpful in generating familiarity and comfort. However, if you play the same song every week for three months, it will become harder and harder to worship to.

Worship hypnotism can also be caused by bland lyrics. This goes back to know your audience – if they are reasonably intelligent, don't challenge them with gems like,

"Lord, You are good. Oh, Lord, You are so good. Good Lord, Your goodness is so good. I will sing about Your goodness because You are so good."

Yes, you can worship to this, but the number of people that mentally check out and the blandness of the lyrics are directly proportional.

3. A good worship song has Christ-centered lyrics.

If the lyrics aren't focusing the attention on Christ, it's not worship.

This doesn't mean that you can only write songs about Jesus or that you even have to say His name in the song. It does mean that the sum total of the worship experience should be to direct admiration and adulation where it belongs – God. Even if you have written a singable and captivating song where everyone is way

into it, if your lyrics are about robotic puppy helmets, you've defeated the whole purpose.

As for me, I've all but decided never to write lyrics again. I'm not that good at it anyway, plus there is a far superior source of worship material: Scripture. I've fallen head over heels in love with God by reading His word and hearing Him speak directly to me through it. Scripture has this magical property to it that isn't inherently obvious in small chunks – it is God breathed. They are just words connected together like any others, but they hold up to every angle, every thought, every problem – they are Truth. If you write enough lyrics, you will eventually tell lies and blaspheme and a host of other nasty things because you are not perfect. Scripture is, and it is more powerful than your lyrics ever could be.

Songs are a perfect medium for Scripture memorization as well. How many Def Leppard or Michael Jackson songs do you know by heart? Dumb, painful lyrics forever etched into your memory banks by a catchy tune. How much better if it were Proverbs or Romans?

Therefore, I recommend taking Scripture and writing your lyrics from it. It can be difficult to take Scripture and put it 100% identical into your song (see the section on clumsy, awkward wording) though if you can manage it, that's the ideal. I would not go so far as to say that the only acceptable worship song is one that is taken directly from Scripture. Instead, I say that my songs are inspired by Scripture – and that makes them more suitable for worship.

Conclusion

Writing a great worship song is an experience that cannot be equaled. Having a song get played on the radio or MTV is all fine and good, but that music is disposable. Worship songs tend to stick around for centuries, if they're good ones. Some say that music is the language of the soul, and it is true that something magical happens when you respond to God with your voices in song – He shows up. 

Like  46

4

 1

 [Print Version](#)



Over the last ten years, Acts 29 has emerged from a small band of brothers to almost 300 churches in the United States and networks of churches in multiple countries. Scott Thomas serves as president and director of the network, which focuses on the gospel and advancing the mission of Jesus through obediently planting church-planting churches. Founders and contributors to the Acts 29 movement include Mars Hill teaching pastor Mark Driscoll and lead pastor of The Village Church Matt Chandler.

[More from Acts 29 Network](#) or visit Acts 29 at <http://www.acts29network.org/>

Please Note: We reserve the right to delete comments that are offensive, uncivil and off-topic. Read a detailed description of our [Comments Policy](#).

1 Comment ChurchLeaders.com

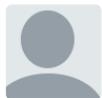
 Login ▾

 Recommend  Share

Sort by Newest ▾



Join the discussion...



chawoott • 4 years ago

Great article!! Considering the bland, pronoun-filled songs that come across the stage today Luke Abrams has got a hit here in declaring that we should take Scripture and write songs from it! What a concept!! When I got saved in 1979 that's what we were singing. Somehow in the intervening decades we've lost focus. Songwriters and worship leaders should memorize this article, then discard the error-filled, pronoun-filled drivel that passes for music today.

 |  • Reply • Share ▾

ALSO ON CHURCHLEADERS.COM

WHAT'S THIS?

Dan Heath: Why Change Is So Hard

1 comment • 7 days ago

Avatar **B. Gladstone** — This is great to understand so that we can work better with others. We have to first seek to ...

Top 10 Ways Pastors Spend Time That Doesn't Make Disciples

25 comments • 7 days ago

Avatar **vic Pitman-Jones** — Wasting time making stupid lists like this.

8 Reasons People Are Leaving Denominational Churches for ...

87 comments • 4 days ago

Avatar **Trinity Bernhardt** — If we did not need community why did Jesus choose to surround Himself with people? Not ...

I Preached 98 Times in 2 Years—Is That Too Much?

10 comments • 5 days ago

Avatar **Jeff Phillips** — Three times a week here. Have a young man we are working with who says he feels called to the ...

 Subscribe

 Add Disqus to your site

 Privacy

Copyright © 2014 ChurchLeaders.com
[Newsletter Signup](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy](#)
[We're Hiring](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

[Advertise](#)

[About Us](#)