THE GIFT OF FAITHFUL SONGWRITING

Inspiration • Craft • Theology • Community

A workshop about receiving a song, developing it faithfully, and giving it away.

1. THERE MAY BE A SONG IN YOU

Sometimes discovering a gift begins because someone else gives us permission to try.

- A Nicaraguan pastor showed me that ordinary people could write songs.
- At twelve, I wrote my first song: “The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.”
- It was not a masterpiece — but it was a beginning.
- Maybe there is a song in you.

“O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.”

Psalm 96:1 (KJV)

2. BEFORE THERE WAS A SONG, THERE WAS SOUND

Music begins with vibration — but becomes pattern, memory, emotion and meaning.

- Vibration • Rhythm • Resonance • Frequency
- Pattern • Expectation • Tension • Resolution
- Great music often lives between familiarity and surprise.
- Music emerged within a universe already filled with order and pattern.

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”

Psalm 19:1 (KJV)

3. RECEIVING A SONG

Sometimes songwriting feels less like inventing and more like receiving.

- There are songs I have awakened singing.
- Sometimes I listen to my own songs and cannot believe I wrote them.
- I often cry while writing — overwhelmed by the mercy of God in my own life.
- Perhaps the first posture of the songwriter is not speaking, but listening.

"I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

1 Corinthians 14:15 (KJV)

4. INSPIRATION NEEDS CRAFT

Inspiration is a gift. Craft is our responsibility.

- WORDS — Is this really what I mean?
- ACCENT — Do language and musical stress work together?
- MELODY — Does the melody carry the meaning?
- HARMONY — What emotion does the harmony create?
- EDITING — Do I have enough humility to change what I love?

5. THE THEOLOGY OF A SONG

We are putting words into people's mouths — and into their memories.

- Is it beautiful?
- Can they sing it?
- Is it true?
- Simplicity is not the same as shallowness.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly… teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."

Colossians 3:16 (KJV)

6. OUR LIVES BECOME SONGS

Some of our deepest songs are born in our strongest emotions.

- Joy • Gratitude • Love • Fear • Grief • Hope • Pain
- “I can’t wait to hear the song that is going to come out of this.”
- Difficult seasons can give us a vocabulary we did not have before.
- What truth is hidden inside what I am living right now?

“My heart is inditing a good matter… my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.”

Psalm 45:1 (KJV)

7. A SONG CREATES A SHARED EXPERIENCE

The private can become communal.

- Different lives. One pulse.
- Different stories. One breath.
- Different voices. One declaration.
- Those tears are not new to me. I already cried them when I wrote the song.
- Can they hear it? Can they sing it? Can they mean it?

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:19 (KJV)

8. THE SEED OF A SONG

Group exercise — five groups of approximately ten people

- 1. FIND ONE TRUTH — What is worth singing?
- 2. GIVE IT WORDS — Write one or two lines.
- 3. GIVE IT MUSIC — Find a rhythm and a simple melody.
- 4. SHARE IT — 30–40 seconds per group.
- Do not try to impress us. Listen to each other.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit… the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

1 Corinthians 12:4,7 (KJV)

9. WHEN A SONG BECOMES SOMEONE ELSE'S HOPE

The story of "Mi Libertad / I Am Free"

- Written by Daniel and me for Jimmy, who was struggling with drug addiction.
- The song began as a declaration of hope for one person.
- Today Jimmy is free from drug addiction.
- Now the song belongs to anyone who needs to declare freedom.
- Translation is almost like writing the song again.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

John 8:36 (KJV)

NOW LET’S SING

I AM FREE / MI LIBERTAD

- Don’t sing it politely.
- Sing it as a declaration.
- Sing it with gratitude.
- Sing it with hope.
- Don’t sing our song. Make it yours.

GIVE THE SONG AWAY

Some songs are for a person. Some for a moment. Some may outlive us.

- Receive faithfully.
- Write truthfully.
- Create beautifully.
- Share humbly.
- And then… give the song away.

"…the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal."

1 Corinthians 12:7 (KJV)