

Worship Song Rewrites: What the Songwriter is Saying

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Rewrite All the Things!

We seem to live in an era of rewrites. Movie franchises, reborn TV shows and novels, even the News seems to be reworks of previous stories at times. The long and rich heritage of worship music is not immune to this cultural trend. Many of our recently written songs have been reworks of both ancient and not-so-recent classics.

But like their pop culture counterparts, the writers of the re-fashioned worship anthems are telling us something.

Reprise, Why!?

There are many ways that a song writer can change a song and each method reveals the writer's opinion of the original.

Technique	What the writer is saying
add a verse	"They missed something" Everything is fine, they just missed something
remove a verse	"No likey that verse" Might not be relevant or it's possibly out-of date
add a new chorus/refrain	"People won't sing this" Needs something modern to connect or the original is uninteresting musically. A lot of old songs were written during completely different musical eras. Eventually, they no longer relate to people without a master's degree in music history. A fresh chorus/refrain can keep the theme & content while connecting to modern worshippers more effectively. Possibly the most common rewrite technique
update old lyrics	"What's a bulwark? I don't get it." Language changes with generations just like music. Songs that live through history can lose their weight of meaning. A fresh take on time-worn lyrics is tricky, but when done well, carries the weight of meaning farther forward.
same lyrics, new music	"Love the content, can't sing it" A lot of Christian classics are born of great lyrics wrapped in a far gone musical scene. To preserve the content (lyrics), a full musical rewrite that respects the content can work.

Have Some Faith

I see and hear a lot of criticism on modern worship rewrites. Hopefully this breakdown helps people see that worship-centered songwriters are generally trying to respect what has gone before, maintain great content, and connect to the Christian worshipers that they serve.

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