



SESSION 1 FOUNDATION = COMMITMENT

WELCOME

Welcome to Session 1!! I'm so excited you are here. I've been praying for you! Today is a beautiful day for beginnings. It seems to me that shaping our hearts, not to mention our writing skills, is much like building a house. The quality of the materials we build with will make a big difference. There are tools we will discover that make the process much smoother. Building also happens in stages, with purpose for each step. So roll up your sleeves, we are about to see what amazing things God can build through you!

OPENING PRAYER

Before we begin, let's pray. Jesus, we surrender to the process you have ahead of us. Clear the land of our souls, break ground where you need to. Make us completely ready for building. We realize that our gifts of song are a means to build your kingdom, and that is what we want more than anything. In Jesus' name, amen.

PRAISE

Before we do anything else, we are going to start our time together focusing on what is most important, Jesus! You get to choose how you would like to worship here. There are charts available if you'd like to play and sing these songs on your own, you can play these songs on Spotify and sing along, or there are also YouTube links in the course. Let's worship!

Use Chord charts, watch via the YouTube link or listen using Spotify.

PERSONAL

The Foundation

As we begin our journey together, I feel we need to first talk about foundation. When it comes to houses, many times we don't even know the foundation is there. If we go house hunting, for instance, it's not really the first thing I look at. It's one of the last. It's hard to know the health of a foundation because at first glance you can't see it. Honestly, many times it takes a lot of work trudging deep into a basement or crawl space to get the full view. But I think no one would argue that it's the most important part of building. One crack in the foundation and the entire structure could be destroyed. It may not be seen by others, and it may not be decorated or celebrated, but it holds everything together.

How many times do we want to rush past the foundation to see the floor plan, the rooms, the colors, the creativity. How quickly we forget that the work of building and creating is completely dependent on the foundation. But not today.

Matthew 7: 24-27

"Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

I think it's interesting to notice that there were storms in both cases. There will always be. But it's the foundation that makes the difference.

I also love this passage in Revelation 21:19-20. Here we see a beautiful picture of the wall surrounding the bride of Christ in heaven.

Revelation 21:19-20

"The wall was made of jasper, and the city itself of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were adorned with every kind of precious stone: The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst."

The jewels make up the foundation of the wall! This shows the true picture of the value of the foundation. I have never seen this in real life. In fact, in many of the houses I've seen being built, including one of my own, I have seen concrete poured over trash leftover from the construction workers. Because who is ever going to see it? But heaven knows foundation is precious.

Through many cultures and centuries, gemstones have represented commitment and identified who we belong to. In the Old Testament, each tribe of Israel was designated a gemstone. Many times the name of their tribe was engraved on it. Not only did it represent identity, but also a covenant between the Lord and that tribe. Today feels like just that. A reminder of who we are individually, a commitment to our community, and a covenant with Christ. The following "jewels" are the foundation of the Worship Songwriting Mentorship Community culture. Let's take a look at this creed together.

THE CREED OF THE JEWELS

Here are the precious stones we agree to lay as a foundation in our hearts today. Would you join me in declaring each of these commitments out loud?

1. I will speak blessings. I will honor others, the church, and the music industry.

Ephesians 4:29

"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Psalms 34:1

"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Colossians 4:6

"Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."

2. I will be a champion for others. I will cheer others on, remembering we are building the same kingdom.

Philippians 2:1-3

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus"

2 Cor. 10:12

“When they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another they are without understanding.”

3. I will be teachable. I will not be easily offended, but open to loving shepherding that is for my good.

Galatians 6:9

“Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.”

Proverbs 9:9

“Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.”

4. I will commit to a clean heart. I know that my heart affects my family, my community, my songs, and the greater church.

Luke 6:45

“...for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.”

Proverbs 4:20-23

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”

5. I will be humble. I will see each opportunity as a blessing, and not something I am entitled to.

1 Peter 5:6

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.”

Luke 9:48

“Then he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.’”

6. I will seek Jesus first, even above things that seem like good things, like my dreams.

Jeremiah 29:12-14

“When you call on me, when you come and pray to me, I’ll listen. “When you come looking for me, you’ll find me. ‘Yes, when you get serious about finding me and want it more than anything else, I’ll make sure you won’t be disappointed.’ GOD’s Decree.”

7. I will strive only to make God famous, not myself. I believe that music is the tool God has given me to expand his kingdom, and that is my desire.

Psalm 40:3

“He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; Many will see and fear And will trust in the LORD.”

1 Chronicles 16:23-24

“Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”

PRACTICAL

We know that jewels in the foundation represent commitment and tribe. We have expressed our commitment. Now, let's take a look practically at our songwriting tribes.

Many times, as songwriters, we believe we are supposed to fit into one of two categories: WORDS or MUSIC. Have you heard this before? After over 1,000 co-writes, I have come to believe that I see 7 types, 7 tribes. I hope this broader view helps you to understand who you are as a writer and those you will write with in greater ways, since this too is foundational! There are amazing things about every one of these types, and we need them all!

I put together a songwriter personality test using these 7 songwriter personality types. It is really fun and informative! Let's go there now and see which type you are. Click the link to get to the test: KrissyNordhoff.com/Test

Did you get what you expected?! Knowing what your strengths are will only help you know how to grow them. It will also help later when we write with others.

The 7 possible songwriter personality types are:

Hearing/prophetic

Structure

Content

Melody

Chords/Arranging

Concept

Producer/Track

DESCRIPTIONS OF PERSONALITY TYPES:

Hearing/Prophetic: These writers don't necessarily focus on either lyrics or melody. They focus on listening. They love truth! They feel responsible for delivering an accurate message. They are less concerned about following rules than following the Spirit, and are always willing to write something completely different or new.

Structure: Structural writers are logical writers. They believe that order, rhyme and syllable count are imperative to an effective song. They like creativity, but it is more important to them that the lyric makes sense and progresses, and the transitions and sections feel natural.

Content: Content writers are gatherers of lyric. They are very conversational, both in and out of the writer's room. If there is a melodic space that needs filled, they can hear the lyric to match. They are great at getting things started and keeping things going in a write.

Melody: These writers light up most when they hear a fresh, compelling melody. In their minds, lyrics can live or die depending on the music line they ride on. In a cowrite, the melodic hook is the north star that guides them. Their songs are always memorable because of them.

Chords/Arranging: Someone with this wiring is always experimenting with new chords and chord progressions. While writing a song, their mind zeros in on which chords would best support the melody in an original way. To them what really makes a song stand out is fresh placement of chords.

Concept: These are the storytellers. They are great at mapping out the big picture of where the song needs to go. They help to make sure all the details that come out during the write fit in to the overall goal of the song. They are the guardrails.

Producer/Track: A producer/track writer hears an entire landscape of a song. When writing a song, they love to work on a track at the same time so they don't forget all the details they are hearing in their head! Many times their ideas inspire greater melodies and lyrics from the others in the room.

THE BASICS OF WORSHIP WRITING

When it comes to writing worship songs, there is one foundational element, and only one: WORSHIP. It's a posture of the heart when writing. All other elements are debatable, but this one thing is not. Coming close isn't enough. It must be real.

I've written many worship songs, and I've tried many approaches. Over time, it's become so clear that formulas and strategies don't work like heartfelt worship.

QUOTE

“I’m done writing FOR: for practice, for projects, for churches, for others, for an upbeat slot, for a ballad slot. I want to write BECAUSE: because I feel His love fresh, because I see new mercy, because I’m moved to worship, because I can’t help it.” ~Krissy Nordhoff

If we are getting back to the basics, the foundations, we need to look at the worship songwriter that has stood the test of time: King David. I have learned more about writing worship songs by studying the Psalms than any other way. His style is raw. He is so honest about both joy and sorrow. When you’re looking, you can find a chorus or refrain, structure, and poetic devices. So. Much. Beauty.

One of my favorite things about Psalms is the format. It usually goes something like this:

1. David is in a tough place. Fear, sin, isolation-you name it- he has been there. This is where he starts.
2. David cries out. He cries out to the Lord, knowing he will be saved, even though it may take a long time.
3. The Lord hears and answers!
4. WORSHIP

See if you can hear what I’m talking about...

Psalm 28 The Message

Don’t turn a deaf ear when I call you, God. If all I get from you is deafening silence, I’d be better off in the Black Hole. I’m letting you know what I need, calling out for help and lifting my arms toward your inner sanctum...Blessed be God—he heard me praying. He proved he’s on my side; I’ve thrown my lot in with him. Now, I’m jumping for joy, and shouting and singing my thanks to him.

I believe this formula is important to remember when writing songs, especially worship songs. We can write, and do need, songs that just lead us to worship. But, there’s something much deeper when you can hear the cry before the worship breaks out. Worship is a journey.

PRACTICE

I would like for you to choose a Psalm to literally sing aloud. Imagine what melody King David may have sung to those very words. Sometimes it is helpful for me to locate a musical or lyrical hook that I would like to repeat to give some more structure to a Psalm. Sometimes there will be a “chorus” or “refrain” naturally in the text.

Let me show you an example of what this looks like in real time.

Link to a live Psalming

Starting with a Psalm many times will springboard me into my own heartfelt worship. You may be inspired the same way! Regardless, the goal here is to begin to experience raw worship. The kind where you are thinking more about Jesus than writing a song.

You will find over time that there is an unexplainable imprint pressed into your heart from the Holy Spirit Himself. It just cannot be put into words, but I promise He will begin to teach you how to write worship. He's the best teacher I know.

I would love this study of Psalms, and Psalming to continue to pour into our worship songwriting. I have found the best way to do that is to soak it up daily. So...

ACTION STEP

Sing a Psalm a day. Word for word. You don't need an instrument to do this with, just sing. Focus on FOLLOWING the Spirit. Go where He leads you.

You can use your Bible. Write in chords if you hear them. Or you can even use a devotional book, like Timothy Keller's "Songs of Jesus".

- As you complete your Psalm each day, from now till the end of this course, be sure to check off the Psalming boxes as you complete them in the Action Step Completion Chart!
- Also, video any ideas that you want to share with our community, and upload them to the Worship Songwriter Mentorship Community. There will be a Psalming Module in the community group, which is where you would want to upload these videos. I highly encourage this!!

Also, note that at the end of each session, there will be an Action Step Completion Chart. This will list everything that needs to be completed. You will be able to click the boxes once you finish that step. This gives you a great way to keep track of your progress!

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank You! Thank You for beginnings. Thank You for foundations. We know that the work we do in our hearts, while unseen, is the most important work of all. We trust You to patiently guide us every step of the way. We are so grateful to be a part of bringing You glory through song and building Your kingdom. Amen.