

Songwriting, installment 2:

Well, now that you have a good children's Bible, let's talk about some fundamentals. I most often work with my partner in crime, Keith Caldwell and we both have a varied background. Both of us grew up with the music of Bill & Gloria Gaither and had similar musical training, except mine was more geared toward piano and he was more of a singer. Both of us developed an appreciation for music that spanned the culture (or lack of) surrounding us. It was years before we either one developed a real appreciation of how God blessed us with "some of everything." My daddy loved Jimmie Rogers and Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys. It didn't interest me then, but as I grew older, I began to really admire the storytelling capabilities that were available in no other genres except country and Broadway. The reason I bring this up is because it matters a great deal about "where you came from" as to the way you tell your story.

Keith & I met working in clubs; he was the king of the NY cabaret set and had good background in performance while I had all the fundamentals of theory and instrumental music. This became our greatest boon as writers when we began to use God's talent for God's purposes. I had written for Gary R Smith for years and got a good idea what God was calling me to do, but nothing like what happened as we earnestly began to seek His will in writing & He poured out His Spirit.

So with all this background info, let's talk about our first insight into writing music. **"Use what you have."** Our mothers instilled an appreciation for reading in us. My daddy was one of the best natural storytellers you could find, so the idea of spinnin' a yarn was not new to me. I had really good SS teachers growing up, & I knew the stories of Jesus pretty well. I also had a few funny stories growing up in my family that I could share with people and get a good laugh. With that in mind, I wrote about Noah and his experiences on the ark. Stephanie Boosahda, a good buddy of mine had great success as a Contemporary Christian Artist in the late 70's/early 80's, helped me tap into the more commercial side. She encouraged me to remember to keep my songs under 4 minutes and to see what other people were doing and try to model it. (Not copy, model)

One of the funniest songs I've ever done was about Noah. It's a great story and there are a variety of lessons we can learn. I don't care if you are funny or not in your writing, but I want you to go in and read the story of Noah, Genesis 6:13 – 9:1. Read it in the Children's Bible keeping a notepad with you. Jot down several ideas that jump out at you, such as God's Providence, His Grace, His Mercy, etc. and how these apply in the Noah story. When you are ready, pick a style, such as Verse – Chorus, Verse – Chorus, Bridge – Chorus, or maybe Storyteller's format, which is 2 or 3 "verses" of 8 to 16 lines each. The last 2 to 4 lines will normally function as a "Chorus" or repeated hook. If you are like me, the pattern of the words will suggest music at the same time, but let's mostly concentrate on the words. Try to find a "hook," (a catchy idea said in a memorable way), and get it to come about 45 second to 1:10 minutes into the song. I'll give you my words next week and we'll see how close or how different we got on the "take" of the story.