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WHAT MAKES THESE SONGS GREAT?

I. Characteristics of a well-written congregational song:

SMACU (or SUMAC or MUSAC) All well written congregational songs have each of these characteristics woven into their fabric in varying degrees.

A. SKILLFULLY WRITTEN

- Uses devices and methods proven to impact people

B. MESSAGE/CONTENT

- Biblical truth; a focused message to awaken hearts to God

C. ACCESSIBLE

- Average person can easily learn it

D. CREATIVE

- A freshness in the music and/or words that engages people

E. UNIVERSAL

- Average person identifies with it

II. Questions that can help us identify some the devices, methods and creativity the song uses.

A. Melody Questions

1. What song structure did the composer implement?
2. How many bars are in each song section (Verses, Chorus, Bridge)?
3. What is the meter for each line of the song?
4. Is there a Pre-Chorus or a Climb? How many bars does it contain?
5. Does the Chorus melody start out higher or lower than the Verses?
6. Does the melody contain a unique hook anywhere in the song?
How many bars/syllables are in the hook?
7. How much melodic repetition was used, and where?

8. Are the melodic and rhythmic repetitions exact, or are the phrases similar?
9. How does the song use adjacent notes and larger intervals? Are there pleasing, unexpected intervals in the melody?
10. Are there varied rhythms in the different sections of the song?
11. What is the range of the song?

B. Lyric Questions

1. Does the song have an interesting title? Is the idea fresh?
2. Do the word choices fit the emotion of the song?
3. Do the lyrics sing well?
4. Do the verse lyrics clearly lead to the title?
5. Do the opening lines of the different sections “grab” the listener and set an emotional tone?
6. Is there a consistent tone and style throughout the song?
7. Is there a use of devices such as irony, contrast, alliteration, metaphor and simile?
8. Are detail, action, and fresh imagery used?
9. Is the lyric conversational, or hymn-like in style?
10. Is there a lyrical hook?
11. Does the second Verse add new information?
12. Does the Bridge (if applicable) add a new angle to the song?
13. What is the rhyme scheme of the lyric?
14. Are there imperfect rhymes used?
15. Are the words properly placed in the melody so as to preserve the proper stresses of the word? Prosody...
16. Does the lyric, apart from the music, inspire you to worship God?