

AARON KEYES

I'm honoured to be here with you and grateful for all you do as publishers behind the scenes because I get to see the impact of what you in positively affecting lives out there on the front line. I'm really prayerful for what God is going to do during our time together. I represent a community of worship pastors and families that are trying to train up a generation of worship pastors to lead families and communities called 10,000 Fathers. My heart is burning about what we're going to talk about today even though it's pretty pragmatic – my team back home is praying for all that we're going to do and I think the world is waiting for what we're going to do today.

I want to start by talking about the power of song.

Great songs travel. All these famous songs have one thing in common (Indiana Jones theme song, Jaws theme song, Star Wars theme etc.) and that is John Williams wrote them. There is another thing that they have in common and that is that they don't have lyrics – it's easier for songs to travel if you don't have to bother about lyrics. When we think about the great songs, we also have to start with the concession that songs are subjective.

What makes a great song is subjective. Remember last year's Grammy Awards and the controversy between Beyoncé and Beck? I remember seeing a comparison of their works: Beyoncé used a team of 25 writers and 16 producers, Beck just one – himself; Beck sang and played 17 instruments on Morning Phase including a charango and a zither, Beyoncé sang. When it came to the lyrics, here's a Beyoncé lyric:

*Wave your hands side to side, put it in the air
Wave your hands side to side, put it in the air
Clap, clap, clap like you don't care
Smack that, clap, clap, clap, like you don't care
(I know you care)*

compared to this lyric from Beck:

*I'm so tired of being alone
These penitent walls are all I've known
Songbird calling across the water
Inside my silent asylum*

So we know that great songs travel and we know that what makes a great song is subjective. I first encountered what we're dealing with today in about the year 2000. I was leading worship down in South America and I ran across this song in Spanish. I have since heard it sung in Portuguese, in English and around the world. I even heard it sung in Lebanon. This simple song has travelled and affected nations:

You Deserve the Glory	Você merece o Glória
You deserve the glory	Você merece a glória
And the honour	E a honra
Lord we lift our hands in worship	Senhor, nós levantamos nossas mãos em adoração
As we lift your holy name	À medida que levantar o seu santo nome
For you are great, You do miracles so great	Pois tu és grande, Você faz milagres tão grande
There is no one else like you, there is no one else like	Não há mais ninguém como você, não há mais
You	ninguém como Tu
For you are great, You do miracles so great	Pois tu és grande, Você faz milagres tão grande
There is no one else like you, there is no one else like	Não há mais ninguém como você, não há mais
You	ninguém como Tu

Last week, I read in worshipleader.com an article about how we need songs that break the language barrier. I was so excited to see this come out – but so disappointed to see that the point of the article was that we need to be taking more English songs and sending them out to the world. It breaks my heart because the more that I've travelled, the more that I've seen, I've recognised that some of the most beautiful songs that I've heard lately weren't born in the USA. God is doing stuff all over the place in all kinds of nations and now when I go, I'm not going to show and tell, I'm going to discover and find and listen and I'm finding amazing anointed songs all over the place that I want us to be able to sing that. I'm discovering some translations that are clunky and breaking down and asking myself what can I do about this?

For a long time we have been exporting songs from English-speaking nations out to the world but I don't think this is going to be a one-way street anymore. I think we're going somehow to stumble our way into what God had intended all along for us – to discover the kingdom of priests with everyone bringing their dignity, their tongue, their culture.

Let's remind ourselves of the song How Great Thou Art – the second most loved hymn of all time according to some song indexes. So many of us grew up singing this song – it affected our view of God and his creation. This is a Swedish song – O Store Gud. I can't help thinking what would I have missed if someone hadn't translated that song into English?

So that makes me wonder what are we missing now?

I've just been reading *The Song Machine* by John Seabrook¹ which looks at pop music and considers how a group of Swedish guys changed the way we do pop music. To this day, these guys at Cherion Studios own about a third of the songs in the top 100 Billboard - one third of songs from one tiny nation. So why Sweden? - there are cultural differences; historically the terrain meant work was primarily agricultural so people had more time to write songs; the government has consistently supported culture; there is the Swedish philosophical approach of 'jantelaw' (tall poppy syndrome) where everyone just keeps their head down and gets on with focussing on being the best that they can be without getting into all the celebrity hype.

There's something about the philosophical approach, the cultural background, even the terrain that affects what we bring to the table. We can't help that – but it might be to our advantage to start to notice what that is and to dignify that.

One of the early pop groups from Sweden was Ace of Base. "*I think it was to our advantage that English was not our mother language,*" Ulf Ekberg, keyboardist and vocalist for the band, explained in John Seabrook's book *The Song Machine*, "*because we are able to treat English very disrespectful, and just look for the word that sounded good with the melody.*"

So if you look at the lyrics of these high performing songs, you will laugh out loud at the lyrics which often made no sense. For example in the number one hit *All That She Wants* is the line 'it's a day for catching tan' – not a phrase I would ever dream of saying! As Seabrook says: 'Freed from making sense, the lyricists' horizons became boundless.' What I am afraid is that worship has freed itself from making sense too and so lyrics have become boundless too – except in the wrong direction!

In 10,000 Fathers, when we teach song writing we talk about the kind of songs that we want to see – songs that are artistically beautiful, songs that are congregationally accessible and songs that are theologically insightful. If writers can create songs that contain these three things they're off to a good start.

¹ <http://www.johnseabrook.com/>

It's so difficult to find songs that contain all of these elements and when we talk about finding international songs we find that translating songs simply isn't enough – it falls short. Our approach therefore is not to simply translate, but to *re-imagine* these songs. Translation might be ok with an essay or a book but with song-writing, how you say what you say is what you say. So a straight translation misses out on how it's being said in a myriad of ways.

Even with the original lyric, the melody matters within the lyric. So if you sing a vowel with the same note, you hear something different for each vowel you sing. Therefore, even within the lyric there is melody and if we disregard the melodic implications of lyric and just look at the communicative part of lyric, we're missing out. I was a communication major at college and they said that only 7% of communication is verbal, that 35% is tone and the rest is body language. So if we only look at translating songs we are looking at only 7% of what makes that lyric work and I wonder if this is why a lot of translated songs don't work – because we are not paying attention to the other 93% of what makes that song communicate.

The tone matters – a simple phrase like 'where have you been' can mean and sound very different when you're catching up with a friend or when you're checking up on your child who's come home in the early hours of the morning! Tone changes everything. So if we just translate the sentence and don't translate the tone, we miss the full sentence. That's why we have to do a lot more than just translate the songs and here are some things that we think we need at 10,000 Fathers to help when we are re-imagining songs – we need melodic math and lyrical logic.

In the limited time available today, here are just a few things to consider in re-imagining songs:

Prosody

This is the connection between the meaning and the sound. So as a simple example, in singing 'ain't no mountain high, ain't no valley low' the note for the word 'high' is higher than the note for the word 'low'. It doesn't make sense to do this the other way round. In songs with bad prosody the words are saying one thing and the music is saying something else, so the song comes apart – great songs don't have bad prosody.

Leonard Bernstein did a series of lectures for Harvard in the 1970s² in which he broke down the tonal implications of emotion and psychology – basically, what every note in a scale does emotionally. Each note has meaning in how we experience emotion. So if we're singing about Jesus being the cornerstone and we're putting that very high or very low notes, those are unstable notes which conflict with our message about how stable and secure God is.

Pay attention to poetry

Even within the same language, words and meanings can be understood differently by different people. So when working in other languages, you have to understand that words have different meanings. Mark Twain said: "The difference between the *almost right* word and the *right* word is really a large matter - 'tis the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."

We have to be honest with our song-writers about the difference between talent and skill. God gives us talent but we have to work on our skills. Some people have a talent for re-imagining songs but we have to give them tools to hone their skills so that they don't get frustrated. Without tools you are paralysed, with the wrong tools discouraged – but with the right tools you are empowered and that's what we're wanting to do in our community.

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MB7ZOdp__gQ

In writing songs poetically, we are trying to learn to say what we mean as well as we can – in reimagining songs from other contexts we are trying to say what they mean as well as we can. We recognise that they won't be able to say it as well as we can because we speak the language.

We also have to do a lot of work, even within English it's not straight forward – see this!

I take it you already know
Of tough and bough and cough and dough?
Others may stumble, but not you
On hiccough, thorough, laugh and through?
Well done! And now you wish perhaps
To learn of less familiar traps?

Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird;
And dead: it's said like bed, not bead —
For goodness sake don't call it 'deed'.
Watch out for meat and great and threat.
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.³

Our languages are tricky, so we have to know what we're doing to be able to use words that say what we mean as well as we can. Not forgetting that we still need good prosody to bring those words to life.

With poetry rhyme is a helpful function, although we have banned several rhymes in our worship school (eg me and free, love and above, fire and desire)! All the obvious stuff is over-used and clichéd so we have to teach people to use the tools of language and rhyme to create new rhyme. For example, in English there are 5 vowels but 17 vowel sounds. In Spanish there are only 5 vowel sounds. Great song-writers understand the spectrum of vowels and we teach at this technical level to help equip our song-writers to write.

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itWxXyCfW5s> which features Jerry Seinfeld talking about how to write a joke. He describes taking two years to write his pop-tart joke and describes how in his joke writing he even trims syllables to get the rhythm of the joke right. At one point he says that it's like song writing. The placement, the way that the stresses fall is all important. So my contention for my students is that if Jerry Seinfeld is willing to work for two years on a joke, maybe we could spend a little more work on what we do for the glory of God, for the healing of nations.

[See Aaron's worksheet tool for re-imagining songs.]

So taking every line of the song, we break down every line and come up with lots of ideas for each line to try and make every line as strong as it can be. Then we 'comp' (compile) the best lines to craft the song – looking for prosody, poetry and placement.

Example played of https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WCwd_30WfcI which features *Jesus, jeg har brug for dig* by Arvid Asmussen. I heard something in this song which I don't hear in my songs – there's something going on that's fresh and different. So I put this song into my worksheet – I started with counting syllables and adding those in, then I added in what Arvid says the song is about in English and then started to add my ideas and thoughts looking for prosody and placement. There was a question on theology on one point so I asked Arvid and some theologians for their views.

³ <http://www.wordhord.com/humor/english-pronunciation-poems/>

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQCT-zmq6Og> for Arvid and Aaron singing English re-imagined song.

You can see how it's following syllable count, stress and even how it's trying to follow vowel sounds - sometimes that doesn't work but what I'm trying to do is rhyme the English version with the original version because when people sing the song I want them to feel like they're singing the original song. It doesn't always work of course!

I asked Arvid to comment on how this process was for him and this is what he said:

"...I've been working with Aaron on a few of my songs and it's been an honour. It's truly amazing to me that that someone over in the States recognises a quality, but also what God is doing in Denmark with my songs. So we worked on translating a few of them although translation is not the best way to describe what's going on – it's a re-write, a re-interpretation of the original idea and it's been an amazing process to work with Aaron through this. Not just translating, but to re-think, to deepen and to explore how to re-interpret the original desire, the stirring that God put in my heart, into a new context, a new vocabulary – building new images with new words."

Hotspots

One of the things within the poetry that makes this work is the concept of hotspots – certain words get more attention than other words. With hotspots we learn to recognise which part of the line is the most important part so that we put the most important ideas under the brightest light. We need to pay attention and be aware. Melody can shine a spotlight on lyrics, by hitting a high note or putting something at the end of the line for example so watch for that. The key with hotspots is that is you take everything away except for the hotspots, if the song is well written you actually get the whole point of the song.

I don't feel that what we have done with Arvid's song is in any way 'selling out' but I feel that what we have done is to celebrate his song, so I asked him about that and he said:

"So what I feel is that God is calling me to renew and inspire worship in Denmark in the Danish tongue. Working on these songs with Aaron transcends what I had imagined for these songs. It seems like God has put something on my heart for Denmark but I'm more than willing to share what God has given me with everyone. There is a calling to inspire worship in our own tongues but let's be willing to share that with others."

See here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwPpSsqUdZI> for Jeg Vil Ikke Glimme Dig (Jesus, I remember You)

Psalm 97 – the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice and the distant shores be glad. I feel that when we sing this song, the distant shore (Denmark) rejoices.

See also Klippan by Johan Åsgärde et al - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA7jM9hRJzY>. I asked Johnan about the song and he said:

"Klippen was written out of a desperate situation ... and worry got to my soul. I wrote this song as a declaration of God's supremacy over everything I go through – being honest about how it felt but confessing God over it. It's a song I return to over and over again in my devotional life and I hear that people use it as well... I got to know Aaron on a trip to the USA and he took the initiative to translate it. In a wonderful way, he captured what I formed in Swedish ... because of that, a song that started

out as a simple devotional song between me and the Lord has been exposed to many more people and sung by a new continent.”

So you can see how we have used prosody, poetry and placement to craft this – but we have had to change some stuff to make it fit for our new context. Even within the poetry section, we’re paying attention to alliteration, to voice leading, to juncture in order for this song to have an audience. If we’re not willing to give this song time and attention, then these songs that deserve a shot are never going to get heard.

I am currently working on a song from Mozambique called Kiro by Francisco Helder.

I hope that we are just at the beginning of an epidemic of songs coming from around the world and being celebrated in contexts bigger than just their own. Imagine, if a country as small as Sweden can change the world of pop music, what might happen to worship if we would open up the table to lots of different tribes. That’s what we know it will be like in heaven, so why not start now.

At 10,000 Fathers, we are putting together a team of song writers – ‘re-imaginators’ – who are serious about releasing the worship of whatever nation into all nations. If you find great songs that we can help re-imagine, please get in touch.

Questions & Answers

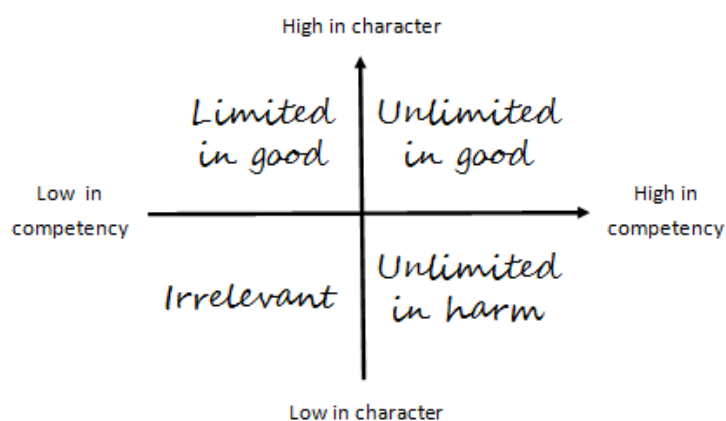
How do you identify the right people to work with you on your team?

10,000 Fathers is a non-profit ministry – it's a worship school which my wife and I started eight years ago when we opened up our home to worship leaders around the world to come and live with us and do discipleship. Before that, I'd been doing internships through my church and getting alongside people but we recognised that we weren't seeing the fruit we wanted (eg after 5 years, only about 50% of our interns were no longer leading worship). So we began praying about how we could do more than internship and how could we step into discipleship – and how to understand the difference. So we recognised that one of the differences was to let people into our lives to see our real lives so we bought a new house and ran a worship school by having people come live with us for six months. By the end of the third year of doing this, having combined it with all our other responsibilities, we were fried! We took a year out on sabbatical and God did some really important and much needed work in me.

When we returned to Atlanta, there were two big epiphanies that came up for us – firstly from John 15:16 'I have appointed you to bear much fruit and fruit that lasts' and John 17:6 'I have been faithful to those you have given me'. I realised I was more interested in who God hadn't given me than those he had. We were done with investing in anything that didn't bear fruit.

So we changed our model of worship school where people could come and train with us over time and distance in a more 'real' setting. So now people come and stay with us for a week at the beginning of the first 6 month semester. The first six months is all about the character of a worship pastor – so we work with them their identity in Christ, how they handle the Bible, we look for the paradigm shift that moves them from being someone who leads songs to being a worship pastor who lead people. For some people this is difficult because it's all about the music so we ask our students what would happen if they lost their musical ability – would their churches still want them as a spiritual leader?

We talk about those who are high in character and high in competency. If high in character and low in competency, we are limited in the good that God can release through our lives (because our low competency isn't going to cause many people to want to follow us). If we are high in competency and low in character, we are unlimited in the harm that we can cause (competent leaders fall because they don't have the character to stand). What we want to be is growing in our character and growing in our competency because we are then unlimited in the good that God can release in our lives.



So in the second six months we concentrate on competency and this is where we build on character but we also start to build their competence in song writing, preaching, communication, leading a team, building a worship set, Berkeley curriculum etc. At this stage, we ask them to create one song every month and we (ruthlessly!) critique it with them.

Each semester starts with 5 days together doing intense teaching and then for the remainder of the six months we do weekly coaching and training.

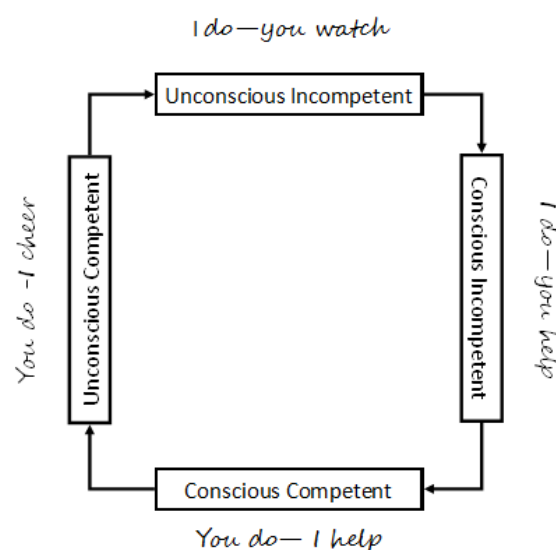
The final semester is where we get into calling. By this time, it's a pretty tight group which has been together for 12 months. At by the end of 18 months, with weekly coaching we start to see real lives changed as they graduate.

We have now started an online school, still with live coaching every week, still having to create songs and submit essays, but they are watching the lectures online. We are trying to make the model as widely available as possible and the online model allows us to broaden the school to include people who can participate within their normal life and commitments.

Do you have any worship leaders within your churches who could benefit from this – or who could learn it so that they can share it with others?

The way we structure everything is as follows. When we bring people into a disciplining relationship with us it starts with us asking them to just come and be with us and watch what we do (I'll do it you just watch). They are keen, excited but they don't know yet what they can't do because they are 'unconsciously incompetent'. As time moves on in the relationship, this becomes I'll do it but you help and this is where they start to realise that they can't do it yet – they are 'consciously incompetent'. By the end of the 18 months, we hope to have them at the stage of becoming 'consciously competent' – they're doing the stuff but they're having to think about it. Eventually we want to get them to 'unconsciously competency' where they're competent but not having to think about it.

Note that once 'unconsciously competent' it becomes impossible to help others because you can't empower them, only inspire them. Ultimately, in order to be helpful you may have to step back into being 'consciously competent' to figure out how you became conscious of what you have done so that you can teach and empower others.



Note that at the beginning of his ministry, Jesus “appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach” (Mark 3:14). And after Jesus had ascended, we note in Acts that “they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Jesus said that they would do greater things – and they actually do. How amazing that the greatest man that ever lived wanted to be surpassed – what does that tell us about his character? If we aren’t secure in our character and grounded, we will always be threatened by whoever is coming round the next corner. We want to be men and women who are able to recognise God’s anointing on others and champion that.

1 Corinthians 4:15 – the church in Corinth would be the church we would want to be in, and yet Paul says that although they have many teachers they do not have what they need, not enough fathers. So my heart for you guys is to either ask God to give you the heart and the willingness to become spiritual mothers and fathers to the leaders in your countries or to find spiritual fathers and mothers for the leaders in your countries, so that the next generation doesn’t have to grow up without spiritual fathers and mothers. The beauty of discipleship is that we get to be for the next generation what we desperately wanted from the previous one. “But tell to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done.” Psalm 78:4

My guess is that there is so much capacity for ‘unlimited good’ in your countries and if that’s the case there will be so much attack from the enemy to turn it into ‘unlimited harm’ and leaders need fathers and mothers, not just teachers and mentors. It is such an important formative role.

After the book of Acts, the word ‘disciple’ disappears in the Bible because the gospel is now outside the context of the Jewish culture of rabbis and disciples – the language that replaces it is that of mothers and fathers. Paul describes Timothy as his son (1 Corinthians 4:17); John talks about there being no greater joy greater joy than hearing of his ‘children’ walking in the truth (3 John 1:4). How much love is in that? Our leaders and worship pastors need people who will invite them into their lives, their real lives – this is how Jesus transformed the disciples, not just through his words.

It was through worship that I fell in love with Jesus and got set free. In the Bible, when worship goes right everything goes right – when worship goes wrong, everything goes wrong. I think this is the reason why the enemy has divided so many churches over the issue of worship, knowing that if it would go right so much else would go right. If all we have is a generation coming up who see the YouTube videos, hear the albums and see these guys in front of large crowds of people - and then with their 50 people in their church they become more concerned about the songs than the souls of those people, then we’re already off in the wrong direction.

I hope that you guys will become more than publishers – that you would have a heart to become spiritual fathers and mothers. Jeremiah starts his prophecy with these amazing words in chapter 1: 4-5

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah’s calling was known by God even before he was born. What if God wants better worship in your country and that’s why he made you? And what if that same calling is upon worship leaders in your country – what are we doing to tend these guys, to help them generate unlimited fruit that lasts.

Let's come back to the basics for the next generation by laying down our lives. It's true that in laying down our lives we find a much better life – it's so much more rich, rewarding and transformative.

Long answer to a short question!

In working with translations, how do manage the ownership and royalties?

We're still trying to figure all this out but it's been suggested that the original writer retains 50% of the new version (the whole song) and the translator receives 50%. We've discussed this with the song writers we've worked with and this seems fair to all that we've worked with. We want this to be a win-win but it's still very fluid.

Can you tell us more about the European worship school?

This starts in a few weeks and we still have a few spaces left. We kick off with an intensive first week together and we've rented a place where we can all stay together in more of a home environment – hospitality is important to us so we don't want to be in hotels. We have about 10 worship leaders joining us plus team. We're linked in with Mission Worship and will do some stuff in and around that programme too. Then there will be weekly huddles for 24 weeks.

Instead of coming back together at the start of Track 2 (to keep the costs down), we'll continue with the weekly huddles and add in the video lectures that we would normally have done in the first week. Then the following November we gather again for the start of Track 3.

And ...

Our school has recently become accredited by Association of Theological Schools meaning that anyone who completes our course is already half way towards completing a Masters' Degree if they choose to go that route (Master of Arts in Worship and Liturgics).

Our students also come out of the course with a prophetic painting which is done by an artist of what we feel God was saying to the student throughout the process.

Song writing and song translation is such a small part of what we aim to do through the training. We want people to understand who they are in God – so we use tools like Enneagram and Myers-Briggs, we want to be holistic so we look at nutrition, exercise etc. We're inviting people into everything we do.