

THE RE-WRITTEN RULE

By Shaun Groves

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I wrote a hit song once. Only once. That's what some people say anyway. And because of that, other aspiring writers sometimes ask me how I did it. "How do you write songs?" they ask. "I don't," I always answer. "I rewrite them."

"Welcome Home" might be the best-known song I've written. At least twenty people, my family and friends, think it's pretty good. And so I often use it to explain how I write. What happened the day it was written was this: I was renovating my bathroom, standing ankle-deep in discarded wallpaper shreds, the smell of glue remover in the air, thinking about a conversation I'd had with my pastor about the Christian life and how God is perfecting our lives over time. He said that the process of becoming less and less like we once were and more and more like Jesus is called sanctification.

I pondered the thought, and then I wondered if there was another way of saying all that. And inspiration hit. So, I ran to the piano and wrote the chorus: "Come inside this heart of mine; it's not my own, make it home. Come and take this heart and make it all Your own; welcome home."

Then, over the next few hours I wrote two verses and a bridge. Finished right? Not yet.

I waited for a month or so. Then I pulled the song back out and wrote seven more verses. Then I waited for a few more weeks. I pulled the song out again and wrote three more bridges. Then I waited a little longer and went through all those words and made tough choices about what stayed and what went away. Then I played it for people I trusted and they insisted I make some different choices than I had already made, and that I do some more work on the melody, too. I did. Then I played the "finished" song for a coffeehouse crowd and listened for good feedback, watched faces for emotional response or confusion or light bulbs going on—looking for any sign that I'd connected. Then I wrote some more, erased some more, wrote some more, played some more, listened some more and then, finally, after two years of labor, I recorded it. But there are still a couple lines that bug me.

Like I said, songs aren't written, they're rewritten.

The best metaphor for sanctification might not be home remodeling, but songwriting. The Writer, who began this good work inside me, placed His Spirit in me, wrote His law on my heart and moves me towards virtue and perfection (Ezekiel 36:26-27), is still working on me. And He promises to complete what

He started.

My job is to rely on His pen and not my own. To not declare myself complete before He does. A mentor once instructed me to continue my journey with Christ the same way I began: dependent, convinced I'm nothing but powerless and corrupt without Him. Or as Paul said, and I'm paraphrasing, it's foolish to begin my life with God by trusting His power and His Spirit to save me from sin and then continue by trusting in myself for everything else from that day on.

You and I are living lives that sometimes require revision and erasers. Thankfully, God still has His pen in hand, reworking us until we perfectly express His thoughts to everyone who's listening. Some of us are first drafts and others are nearly completed masterpieces, but none of us are perfect reflections of our Maker, yet. None of us are all we will become.

So be still. This might sting a little—probably a lot. It's time to be rewritten.

Prayer: God, I admit that sometimes I think I'm complete. Or at least I act like it. It's been a while since I've asked you to whittle away at me, to revise my life, to make my words and actions say everything you want said. God I'm asking you now to rewrite me, make me a better song, a holier song, a more selfless song. And may the audience listening to my daily life hear You when they're near me. Thank You for holding the pen and doing the work of rewriting me, for loving me just as I am—so much that You won't let me stay this way. Amen.