

## CHAPTER ONE

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# THE CHRISTIAN POETIC EXPRESSION

Inspirational poetry goes back to before the Old Testament prophets. In fact, according to Holman's Bible Dictionary, one third of the Old Testament is cast in poetry. Thirty-five Old Testament books contain poetic expressions that often include prophetic overtones.

From Genesis 2:23 through Zechariah 9-11:3, words of encouragement and religious instruction are evident. In some cases, as in most of the book of Isaiah, even future events are presented in poetry.

Prophecy and poetry have been teammates through the centuries. Their voices cry out to a lost and dying world. They speak to a troubled church. Both declare the majesty and glory of God.

It was the 1st century Christians, however, that led the way for modern Christian poetry. Their relationship with Jesus inspired their writings as they focused their attention on being in harmony with God. The result was an in-filling of love, joy, peace, compassion, and a host of other deep emotions that gave evidence of their love for God and their faith in Jesus Christ. Out of this inspiration came a poetic expression that we now call Christian.

This uniquely Christian expression was and still is characterized by three separate and distinct factors: **Co-Authorship**, **Christian Focus**, and **Spiritual Unity**. These are the building blocks of good Christian poetry.

**Co-Authorship** is the trademark of all Christian poetry. The inspiration comes from the same Holy Spirit that moved upon the prophets of old. However, this time, it's from an indwelling presence rather than an overshadowing anointing that fell only to depart again. The inspiration is from God and the style is from the poet. Together they form the content of the poetic expression.

**Christian Focus:** The focus of all Christian poetry is on the Christian experience through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The poet's inspiration is more personal in nature than even traditional secular sources. Instead of the beauty of a tree, it is the glory of the one that created the tree that inspires the poet.

**Spiritual Unity** is a two-fold process that involves both redemption and restoration. Both are central to the overall message. Both validate the inspiration as truly being from God.

This unique partnership in poetry quickly spread into the main stream of the Christian experience. Suddenly and without warning, Jewish and Gentile Christians began to express their most intimate and personal experiences with God through poetry. Slowly but surely, a "Christian Poetic Expression" emerged outside of its Hebrew origins into the entire Christian world.

As the "Christian Poetic Expression" became evident in all ethnic groups, its pulse was felt in poems of praise, prayer, prophecy, and thanksgiving. Its voice was heard through poems that edified, declared, revealed, and encouraged.

Christian poetry quickly became therapeutic in nature. It calmed the troubled soul; it strengthened weary hearts and fostered faith.

## THE ART OF WRITING CHRISTIAN POETRY

It offered comfort, blessings, guidance, encouragement, instruction, and even a gentle rebuke.

Many of today's Christian poets have their own Internet website and use computers as an every day tool to compose, edit and log their work. They come from all nationalities, all denominations, all walks of life, all ethnic backgrounds, and all age groups. Their poetry is an expression of the times in which they live. They author poems on anti-abortion, human rights, as well as, love, praise, faith and the other relational aspects of their Christian walk.

Today's Christian poets share their gifting as a ministry of love. Their ministries include; comfort to the elderly, sending poetic letters of protest to local newspapers, penning poetic tracts for the lost and greeting cards for various holidays. Some even design giant poster poems for public display.

The "Christian Poetic Expression" is very alive and well in today's world. It has survived the trials and tribulations of over 2,000 years and will continue until Jesus returns. Its future lies in the hands of countless thousands of Christians who seek and enjoy Divine Inspiration. Its value is as good as the poet's relationship with Jesus.

## **For The Joy Set Before Me**

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I could have lived forever,  
As a simple mortal man.  
I could have called 10,000 angels,  
To help me to stand.  
But I laid down my life  
Despising the shame.  
For the joy set before me,  
Was your life to gain.

I could have stayed in heaven,  
As the supreme ruler of all things.  
I could have played among the stars,  
And listened for the flutter of angel's wings.  
But I laid down my life,  
Despising the shame.  
For the joy set before me,  
Was to know you by name.

I could have sent my armies,  
To rid the world of sin.  
I could have destroyed the earth,  
As I did way back then.  
But I bore the suffering of the cross,  
Despising the shame.  
For the joy set before me,  
Was to take away your pain.

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I could have done a lot of things,  
To make this world right.  
Or I could have done nothing,  
And ignored your plight.  
But God so loved the world,  
That I endured the shame.  
For the joy set before me,  
Was your love to gain.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# WHAT IS CHRISTIAN POETRY?

**Let's first look at what Christian poetry is not.**

1. It is not just poetry that was written by a Christian.
2. It is not the reflections of your personality or imaginations.
3. It is not humanistic, religious, political or secular.
4. It is not a forum or pedestal for the expression of "self."
5. It is not a quest into the painful past.

Most poetry in the world today is what we would call "secular" poetry, which is to mean, "non-Christian." I have a book published for children that is not Christian poetry and many poems about life that are not characterized as Christian.

Christian poetry has one key distinction that sets it apart from all other poetry. This distinction is the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Secular, religious, political and other poetry does not have this distinction. It is only given to Christian poets. I do not mean to say that other poems are not funny, good, or less in their expressions than anointed poems. I do mean to say that an anointed poem stands out and identifies itself as definitely Christian.

## THE ART OF WRITING CHRISTIAN POETRY

The anointing brings certain qualities to a poem. They include: The glory to God; attention to the name of Jesus; a ministerial message of hope and encouragement; the presence of God upon the reader. When a poem is anointed, the Holy Spirit breathes upon it. His Divine revelation is hidden within the words and imagery. It is always redemptive in nature.

### **Other characteristics include:**

1. Up-lifting therapeutic messages that cleanse the soul and set the spirit free.
2. A symphony of thought that clearly reveals a co-authorship between God and man.
3. Praise and adoration towards Jesus for all that He has done.
4. Various styles of expression that are uniquely Christian such as: prophecy, prayer, biblical doctrines, praise, thanksgiving, etc.
5. A road map that leads the reader to a haven of rest where he or she is set free and edified.

Writing Christian poetry is a gift from God. I can't tell you how many poets have come my way saying that they had no real interest in poetry until one day when God just dropped it into their spirit. Most have little or no formal training, yet fashion poems that are power packed and oozing with the presence and glory of God.

That is not to say that the basic mechanics of good poetry are not relevant. They are! It just seems as though they overflow with the glory and presence of God and often still fill the mechanical requirements.

**Is secular poetry then of no value?** Of course not, it is still of value and can be enjoyed by friends, family and other poetry readers. However, you should never, ever search for sorrowful or painful experiences from the past as topics for fashioning a poem.

The enemy would love to lead you down a path where he can torment you and keep you dwelling on the past instead of going on with the Lord. Instead, write from your happy experiences or imagination that will bring joy and laughter to others.

**In the final analysis, Christian poetry can be clearly distinguished by:**

1. The Presence of God
2. The Anointing of God
3. The Glory of God
4. The Truths of God's Word
5. The Revelation Knowledge of God
6. The Power of God
7. The Peace of God

We should acknowledge that all of us write secular poems, as well as, those that are breathed upon by God. However, the secular usually does not fit in our ministerial environment.

*Listen*

*Listen for the voice of God. His Holy Spirit will witness with your spirit that you are His child and that He loves you.*

*Your poetry will come from those encounters with God.*



## **With Earthen Vessels**

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Earthen vessels have never shown,  
Such Glory that once was known.  
Through time and all of eternity,  
Came the Glory of His Majesty.

Full of love and full of grace,  
He dwelt among the human race.  
To heal the sick, the blind and the lame,  
To free mankind from sin and shame.

With earthen vessel He conquered all,  
By perfect obedience to His call.  
For this we praise His holy name,  
Full of grace and full of fame.

The Glory of His Majesty  
Still shines through from eternity.  
Again and again to meet life's call,  
In earthen vessels to conquer all.

## CHAPTER THREE

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# TYPES OF CHRISTIAN POETRY

When we speak of types of Christian poetry, we mean the categories or headings in which poems tend to gather. If you know all or most of the types, you can experiment with them in developing your skill.

**Praise & Worship...** This type of poem calls attention to the glory and majesty of God. It brings to the reader the awesomeness of God and the reality of His power, beauty, holiness and love. It primarily focuses on the attributes of God as a central theme.

**Prayer & Petition...** This type offers an intimate picture of the relationship between the believer and the Lord. Prayer poems can be conversational, petition or adoration. They can and often mix in praise, declaration, petition and faith.

**Encouragement...** There is nothing better than a word in due season, when the answer you seek is set before you. This type of poem is usually one of encouragement when the Lord comforts, strengthens, challenges, and heals the saddened heart.

**Spiritual Warfare...** This type of poem emphasizes the battle, the process and the weapons to accomplish victory. It often is a chant or faith declaration based upon the spoken word from the Bible.

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**Redemption** ... This type of poem includes the atonement, the cross, the sacrifice and all of the many ramifications that follows.

**Evangelism**... These poems focus on the call to salvation and the outreach to the lost. Also included are the concept of sin, forgiveness, and repentance.

**Prophecy**... A prophetic poem deals with the future. It will display the gifts of the Spirit in operation as a revelation to the poet or as a message to all who read.

**Instruction**... A poem of instruction is a “Thus Sayeth The Lord” that provides the reader with direction, truth and stability.

**Exhortation**... This type is the positive, full of faith, power packed gospel in a non-preaching yet ministerial manor that counsels, comforts, confirms, and convicts the reader.

**Biblical Stories**.... About Biblical characters, events and happenings.

**Celebrations**... Including Christmas, Easter, and other Biblical celebrations.

**Creation & Nature**... This category reveals the handiwork of God in nature and the creation.

**Biblical Doctrines**... Including: The body of Christ, discipleship, the rapture, the resurrection, sin, judgment, communion, heaven, hell, eternal security and other doctrinal aspects.

**Eschatology**... The study of God. His revelation to, and relationship with, man.

**Spiritual Gifts**... The operation and experiences of divine gifting in the life of the believer.

**Thanksgiving...**The giving of thanks for blessings and help from the Lord. It is a thankful recognition of His awesome power in the life of the believer.

**Miscellaneous...**This type is for other not so well know or used types like Rapp etc.

As you can see, there are many types of poems and even more categories. I have tried to identify and elaborate on the major ones so you will have an idea of the scope and depth of the “Christian Poetic Expression”. It’s as big as ever and seems to keep expanding as we search out the truths of God.

### *Don't Be Afraid*

*Don't be afraid to write, even if others do not like what you say. If you feel it is not inspired, toss it. If you feel that it came from God, keep it and share it as the Lord leads..*

## **With Eagle Wings**

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I mounted up with eagle wings,  
To soar above the clouds.  
I viewed life above its trials,  
Separate from the crowds.

Just me and God,  
Together in the day.  
With eagle wings,  
He led the way.

Forgiveness and peace in a distance,  
Suddenly I could see.  
Joy and happiness trailed behind.  
Then overshadowed me.

With eagle wings, I soared  
Above life's every trial.  
Now I walk by word of faith,  
Rejoicing with every mile.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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# PROFILE OF A CHRISTIAN POET

I hear people saying, “I am not sure about my writing”, “It isn’t good enough”, “I am not really a poet”, “I just dabble at it”, or what’s worse, “I didn’t have anything to do with it... it was all God”

Most of us feel that we are not really important in the process of creative writing. God does it all and we just hold the pen for Him to think and express Himself. This notion is very wrong. It goes against the Biblical teaching that says...We are co-laborers together with Christ and carry His anointing as a partner with the Holy Spirit in the ministry of reconciliation.

We need to get away from the idea that we are sub-standard and unworthy. After all, God created us in His own image. He wants us to express ourselves, but not in a fleshly show of self-ego, but rather as a demonstration of the inner spiritual person that we really are in Him. It is to this end that I attempt to profile a Christian poet.

### **The Christian poet should be:**

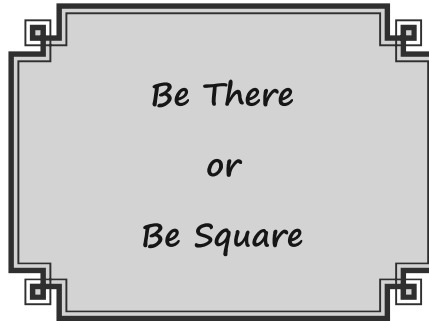
1. **Confident:** That the Holy Spirit will be there to inspire the thought process.
2. **Courageous:** To pen the hearts cry, no matter if it’s politically correct or not.

## THE ART OF WRITING CHRISTIAN POETRY

3. **Cautious:** To review, re-write, and edit until clarity and truth are obtained.
4. **Curious:** To inquire of God for a deeper revelation of life and experience.
5. **Caring:** Enough not to hurt the wounded soul, but rather to bless it.
6. **Commanding:** In authority over the stewardship of God's gifting.
7. **Courteous:** In the demonstration of the gift and presentation of its message.
8. **Concise:** In focus of thought and expression, without rambling.
9. **Concerned:** About anyone or everything that would hinder the flow of inspiration.
10. **Captured:** By God's love and holiness.
11. **Colorful:** In the use of modifiers, imagery and poetic expressions.
12. **Crazy:** Enough to follow after God and to stir up the gifting inside.
13. **Candid:** About life, personal experiences and one's deepest dreams.
14. **Crowned:** With the glory and beauty of the Lord.
15. **Creative:** In the development and construction of thoughts.
16. **Coordinated:** Enough to think and write at the same time.
17. **Covered:** With the wonderful anointing of His love.
18. **Crowded:** By rhymes of prayer and praise.
19. **Confined:** To biblical truth and the Christian life experience.
20. **Consumed:** By Divine revelation and visions of destiny.

The 20 C's listed above pretty well describe a Christian poet.

What does it say about you? Are you an, "I'm not sure," type of poet...who is afraid to stand up and be counted? I hope not. My prayer for you is that you stop caring about what others think and get to the business of enjoying your gifting as a Christian poet.





## Poet of the Lord

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Hear, Oh Poet of the Lord.  
I offer you a great reward,  
A gifting that shall never cease,  
An outpouring of joy and peace.

I send you from my throne above,  
As a messenger of my eternal love,  
To a lost and dying land,  
To every creature, every man.

Speak, Oh poet of the living God.  
Dare to walk where angels trod.  
Tell your world in rhymes of praise,  
Of Jesus, whom from the dead I raised.

I give you words full of life.  
Use them as an end to strife.  
Send them by land and sea,  
For this is your destiny.

I have chosen you especially by name,  
So set aside your sorrow and shame,  
And speak now on my behalf,  
Of love and peace and even wrath.

Listen closely for my inner voice,  
And pen your rhymes of choice.  
Then cry aloud, as I speak to you,  
So others may know me, as you do.



## CHAPTER FIVE

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# RECOGNITION, SELF-WORTH AND POETRY

We all desire recognition and praise from our family, friends and the people around us. We'll even accept it from strangers.

We are creatures that need approval in order to go on in life. As a Christian, we are to draw that recognition from God and one another.

Here are excerpts from an e-mail that came to me that is typical of most of us.

“Dear Bro. John:

I want to take just a moment to thank you for the encouragement I have received from the Fellowship of Christian Poets. You will never know how God has used you to be such a blessing to my life. I am confident that God directed me to you. Though I had written some poetry, I had never defined myself as a poet until I became a member of the Fellowship of Christian Poets.

Receiving the first recognition for my Thanksgiving poem in 2000 flipped a switch that turned on the inspiration to allow God to write through me. Then this year's honor bestowed as “Poet of the Year” has opened doors that I never dreamed.

## THE ART OF WRITING CHRISTIAN POETRY

Again, thank you for allowing me the privilege of representing FOCP as “Poet of the Year”. May God continue to bless you with all the dreams and aspirations you have for FOCP for the future.”

Linda Stevenson, Roanoke, VA

Linda is only one of many who are awed at the presence of God in their gifting and how He uses others as a source of blessings and assurance. She is also typical of most of us, who never really see ourselves as serious poets. After all, we are housewives, clerks, secretaries, salesmen, and lots of other ordinary folk with regular jobs.

Isn't it supposed to be the renown or famous that do great things? It can't be little old me that changes the world or makes a difference in the life of someone else. It is this lack of self-worth and insecurity that causes us to doubt and fall prey to the work of the devil, who seeks to extinguish the light of God's glory that dwells in us and shines through our gifting.

I am so very glad that Linda has come into that special awareness that God really does want to use her gifting to bless others and that she is indeed an instrument in His hands.

What about you? **Are you still feeling inadequate as a poet?** Are you questioning the seriousness of your calling? Do you say within yourself, “It's not a calling, just a hobby?”.

Linda said, in her e-mail, that there was a point of recognition that turned on a light inside of her that let her know this thing was really of God. I think there are several things that turn on that mysterious inner light. Recognition is one, but there are others; things like faith, obedience, hope and sheer determination.

**There's no getting around it, to be recognized is the best.** When a fellowship or other group sees your talent and praises you for it, it's really great.

But what happens when you are not seen or praised? Most of us fall into that "Poor Me" void and either stop trying altogether or keep it to ourselves.

I still remember the hurts and the disappointments that fell upon me over the past 30 years, when my family said, "**I think you can do better**". You know, I still get that. However, now I do not fall apart or get angry. I see it as a prompt from God... "**To Do Better.**"

The devil will try and try to cut you up in little pieces with the well-meaning negative comments of family and friends. He will even bring criticism from so-called "authorities in the field".

It's up to you to recognize your calling, practice it often, and above all, take the negative as a prompt to strive for excellence.

It should be noted here that we should also watch out for the "**Chronic Critics**" who finds fault, just because. When you are pleased with your work and know that it is good, do not let the chronic critic steal your joy. Just consider the source and go on with what you are doing.

I must say that if we never received a positive comment, we should still follow our vision, because it was placed into our hearts by God and is ever-growing and will continue, until the hour of birth; when the world will stand up and take notice of what God has done. He is our comforter.

Some Christian poets do not realize the uniqueness and value of their gift. It comes on some of us suddenly and without warning and drives us through a thought process that leads to a whole new perspective. Most of us don't even know why. But I know why and