

## A Worship Minute... ~ by Lindsay Terry ~

**“As the deer,”** written in 1981, is one of the most popular songs in the contemporary Christian musical (CCM) genre written in the latter twentieth century. Composer Martin J. Nystrom (b. 1956) is a native of Seattle, Washington. After graduating from Oral Roberts University, Tulsa, Oklahoma (BME, 1979), he served as musical evangelist with Christ for the Nations, Dallas.

Marty was a schoolteacher in Seattle, and since he had the summer off, he decided to go to the summer term of Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas. Little did he know what was about to happen to him, especially with all that he would be exposed to and the worship emphasis of the school.

He had graduated from Oral Roberts University and, frankly, was a little overwhelmed in ministry. He had been involved in many things at the school, not the least of which was the television ministry of ORU. All of his studies combined with many other activities had caused stress to take its toll on Marty’s spiritual life.

Marty’s roommate at CFNI was a vibrant Christian who challenged Marty to go on a fast, thinking it would help him recover his joy. Marty took up the challenge, and on the nineteenth day of the fast, he found himself sitting at the piano in a room of the school, trying to write a song. He was simply playing chord progressions when he noticed a Bible on the music stand of the piano, open to Psalm 42. His eyes fell on the first verse of that chapter. After reading the verse he began to sing its message, right off the page. He wrote the first verse and the chorus of a song, practically straight through. The entire song was completed in a matter of minutes.

After paraphrasing the first verse of Psalm 42, the song reflects on this passage, continuing in the first person perspective of the psalm:

*You alone are my heart’s desire  
and I long to worship you.*

The second section draws upon the familiar biblical images of “strength and shield,” concluding with the sentence cited above.