

The Gift of Music/Vocal

A gifted story: There is sweetness to the sound of her voice that can only come from her love of God. You can see it on her face as she sings—she is praising God with every breath she takes and every note she sings. Alice has been singing in the choir for decades, and she no longer has the power she had when she was younger and there is a slight wavering in her voice. But the richness of her delivery nearly stops the heart because you know an angel is singing, and the beauty of this outpouring of love stirs your soul. Alice's faith shines through her singing, and it is a privilege to witness the presence of the Spirit as she sings. Her gift of vocal music is wonderful to behold.

Biblical references:

1 Cor. 14:26 - This is what I mean, my brothers. When you meet for worship, one person has a hymn, another a teaching, another a revelation from God, another a message in strange tongues, and still another the explanation of what is said. Everything must be of help to the church.

Acts 16:25 - About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them...All at once all the doors opened, and the chains fell off the prisoners.

Eph. 5:19 - Speak to one another with the words of the psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts.

Psalms 26:7 - I sing a hymn of thanksgiving and tell of all your wonderful deeds.

Definition and comment:

The gift of vocal music: the special gift whereby the Spirit enables certain Christians to praise God through song in such a way as to enhance the worship experience of other believers. It is an ability that gives the believer the opportunity to present personal witness and inspiration to others through singing. The key to understanding this gift is not so much the beautiful sounds or the skill with which the notes are delivered, but the inspiration behind the delivery. The spiritual aspect of the gift is revealed in the fullness of song as the gift bearer gives witness to love and praise for the Lord, and thus glorifies God. Listeners become inspired to feel the presence and majesty of God when song is lifted in this spiritual manner.

Singing ability alone is something to admire, but when that ability is raised up as an act of prayer in music from the heart, it can open up others to the presence of the Spirit and lead them toward faith. Not everyone with singing ability has the supernatural gift of vocal singing, but those who have been given this spiritual gift have a special motivation to make sounds that please God and bring joy to others.

Affirm that you have this gift; questions to ask yourself:

1. When you sing, do you truly feel the presence of God?
2. Do you see your ability to sing as your means of sharing God with others?
3. Do others see the significance of God in your life through your singing?
4. Have others been led to a new understanding of their own faith through your singing?
5. Do you sense a gifted power and ease in singing that at times seems to transcend your own capabilities?
6. Were your talents in singing evident even at an early age?

Areas for study and personal growth:

1. Singing ability can be enhanced with vocal training to improve such things as breath control, pitch and timing. Consider voice lessons to help you develop your talent fully.
2. Opportunities to sing within the church are varied, and your gift may be needed for both choral and solo pieces. Train for appropriate vocal deliveries for the type of singing required - learn how best to blend your voice with singing partners in choral situations and how to project your voice fully when singing solo.

3. Come to understand the nature of your gift and how it appears to be utilized for best effect. Strengthen the tie between your singing and your prayer life so that it becomes always an act of prayer for the glory of God. Meditate on why you have been given this gift, and seek to use it in ways you believe fulfill its purpose in you.
4. Listen to the recorded voices of well-known spiritual singers, not to emulate them, but to witness what they bring forth from their hearts. Read autobiographies of these people.
5. There are many references to song and singing in scripture, especially in the Psalms. Spend time internalizing the Psalms so that they become etched in your heart and a ready source for inspiration to sing always to the Lord in praise.
6. Begin gathering a music library of spiritual songs that you know and can sing from memory. Use this repertoire as a source to inspire others to sing in praise to God. Organize evening “sings” at church or at home where fellow members of the congregation can gather to sing favorite songs of praise.

General ways to use the gift of music/vocal:

- Personally: help family and friends lift their voices in song
- Within the church: join the choir; be a music leader (see more specific church service opportunities in the Booklet *Channels for Using the Gifts*).
- Within the wider community: sing in area vocal group for performances of religious works.

For reflection:

Clearly music pleases God for he gave the ability to sing to many of his creatures, each in unique ways. He gave us many soothing sounds - surf, crackling fire, gentle breezes whistling through treetops, and raindrops in all manner of delivery. Evenings filled with chords of crickets or frogs across the lake offer a serenade of perfect harmony to suggest a peaceful order in nature. To the many birds he gave the joy of song from their perches high above. Higher still angel choirs sing unending praise to God. God's creation is one filled with music - he designed it that way. It is said that “he who sings, prays twice.”

It is true that a prayer lifted in song seems to fly off heavenward in a way that touches the heart more deeply than mere utterance. When we sing, we cannot harbor anger, malice, or hatred - the act of singing so fills the heart that it is sanctified, with no room left for anything made out of darkness. When we sing together, a sense of community begins immediately to be felt. It is easy to see why God gave us song in our lives. Your spiritual gift of singing is surely related to the gift given to members of God's angel choirs. Their singing is pure and sacred and full of joy. Your singing, too, when delivered in praise from the heart will approach that quality. When you sing, you are in the company of angels. God gave you the beauty in your voice, but lovelier still for those of us that listen, is the presence of God we feel when you sing.

*Be joyful in God, all you lands;
Sing the glory of his Name;
Sing the glory of his praise.
From Jubilate Deo (Psalm 66)*