

MUSIC AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

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What does the Bible say about music and spiritual gifts? In this brief study we want to address the importance of possessing the ability to sing and using our voice or other musical talents as a gift which can minister to the saints. We want to begin by addressing the importance of oversight in a church's music program and possessing skillfulness when ministering musically to God's people.

1 Chronicles 15:16 – 24 says:

“And David spake to the chief of the Levites to **appoint** their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. So the Levites **appointed** Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kushaiah; And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-Edom, and Jeiel, the porters. So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were **appointed** to sound with cymbals of brass; And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth; And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh and Mikneiah, and Obed-Edom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to **excel**. And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: **he instructed** about the song, because he was **skillful**. And Berechiah and Elkanah were doorkeepers for the ark. And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-Edom and Jehiah were doorkeepers for the ark.”

In verses 16 and 17 the Levites were the workers in the temple area. This means Levites were responsible to appoint a certain amount of men who were extremely gifted to lead and train the remaining number. They were to have oversight of the music within the temple.

In other words, there were actually appointed people for the music program within the temple who excelled in their musical abilities and could teach skillfully in the area of music. Also note the word “appoint” as it appears in verses 16, 17, and 19. Not just anyone could sing and do as they please.

THE PEOPLE WERE TO BE TRAINED INDIVIDUALS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF A TRAINED LEADER WHO WAS HIGHLY SKILLED TO EVALUATE AND DIRECT THE MUSIC OF THE TEMPLE (SEE VS. 22, 27). THE **SKILLED LEADERS AND CHIEF SONG DIRECTOR** WERE TO HAVE THE OVERSIGHT.

People who were the musicians were to “excel” (vs. 21) and be “skillful” in all that they did (vs. 22). We see this musical requirement repeated in the Scriptures and it becomes an apparent enduring principle that should be practiced even today within the Church. God takes music seriously and so should we.

Psalm 33:3

“Sing unto him a new song; play **skilfully** with a loud noise.”

2 Chronicles 34:12

And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them *were* Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set *it* forward; and *other of* the Levites, all that could **skill** of instruments of musick.

Music was always to be done with great skill since it was considered to be an important part of worship. God deserves our best. The brother who says that all we must do is “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord” (Ps. 98:4) is missing an important Scriptural principle that we should follow in our musical time of worship. What might be true for the person in the pew, who can’t hold a note, is not necessarily true for those who were to lead in church music. Music was to be done skillfully and with great care. It was never to be done in a flippant manner and without preparation.

THERE IS A HIGH PRIORITY GIVEN TO THE MUSIC WHICH GOD WANTS TO BE USED IN THE TIME OF WORSHIP. THIS IS GOD’S

BLUEPRINT CONCERNING MUSIC IN THE CHURCH. WE SHOULD NOT THINK OF THE MUSIC PROGRAM OF THE CHURCH AS SOMETHING WHICH IS SECONDARY AND AS SOMETHING WHICH SHOULD BE DONE HALF-HEARTEDLY AND WITHOUT SKILL.

Not just anyone was allowed to direct music.

1 Chronicles 15:22 says:

“And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was **skillful**.”

1 Chronicles 15:27

“And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah **the master of the song** with the singers: David also *had* upon him an ephod of linen.”

There was a very skilled director. There were also 3 appointed men who were extremely gifted to help teach and give guidance in the musical training of the people (1 Chronicles 15:17). The reason for all of this training was so all the musicians could be skillful and well prepared for the music ministry. The place of music was regarded as sacred and was to be skillfully mastered by people who were talented and well trained. The result was that the music would always be done skillfully and make good musical sense.

1 Corinthians 14: 7- 8 asks:

“And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds (*distinct, sensible, musical sounds of clarity*), how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound (*an unmusical sound*), who shall prepare himself to the battle?”

Paul is speaking about the way music is to be played. He is saying something very easy for us to understand so none of us can miss the point. If even inanimate musical instruments are expected to make sensible sounds, when they are played by a musician, then how much more should human speech make sense to the one listening, especially when it deals with the things of God? Our point is this. The Bible suggests that all music must be distinct in its sound and made

of sensible musical notes and patterns which are clear and understandable. Music should make sense musically and be played or sung according to a sensible pattern. Those who lead in worship must be skilled to make good sense out of music.

Psalm 33:3

“Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.”

Within the temple ministry people were actually assigned to lead music accordingly. These people were expressed by name (1 Chronicles 16:41-42). Some taught or instructed (1 Chronicles 15:22), others directed, others played and sang skillfully (1 Chronicles 15:16-21), and some were the doorkeepers (15:23). Everyone had their part. The same is true today in the ministry of the local church. Each one of us, who are gifted by God to work in the local church musical ministry, should do this ministry skillfully and for the Lord. This is an important principle that should govern all church music today. It's also a governing principle that should apply to all our spiritual gifts that we use in the local church ministry.

What every believer must do is discover their spiritual gifts and develop them, so that they might skillfully use them for the Lord (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 1 Peter 4:10-11). If we are talented musically then we can use this talent and turn it into a gift within the local church.

1 Peter 4:11 says:

“If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it as of the ability which God giveth*: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

We are told that we can serve the Lord only as God has gifted and enabled us to serve. We should never attempt to work outside our gifted area and try to wear a hat that does not fit us! God gives us all different abilities and gifts us in unique ways so we can serve Him and others (1 Corinthians 14:12).

There are several practical ways we can determine our spiritual gifts.

1. There is the matter of information.

We should familiarize ourselves with the gifts and know what they are. We should know which ones are for today and which ones are not.

2. There is the matter of inclination.

What do you enjoy doing? What can you do well? Do you have the ability to teach in some capacity? Do you have a fine singing voice and enjoy singing? Do you enjoy being merciful and helpful toward others?

3. There is the matter of investigation.

We must explore and ask God for wisdom (James 1: 5). Also, we can seek the council of older and more experienced and discerning Christians who may be able to detect our gift even before we are aware of it. This is seen when Barnabas recognized Mark's gift and never gave up on encouraging him to use that gift.

Acts 15:36 – 39 reveals:

And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus."

EACH ONE OF US MUST BE PREPARED TO FACE THE POSSIBILITY THAT OTHERS MIGHT RECOGNIZE THAT WE DON'T POSSESS A GIFT, WHICH WE THINK WE HAVE.

Proverbs 25:14 says:

"Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain."

Dr. Lehman Strauss once said that he knew a young woman who thought she had the gift of singing, but he didn't know one person who had the gift of listening to her!

Some of you remember Aesop's great fable about an old crow who was out in the wilderness and very thirsty. He had not had anything to drink in a long time. He came to a jug that had a little water in the bottom of it. The old crow reached his beak into the jug to get some of that water, but his beak wouldn't quite touch the water. So what did he do? He started picking up pebbles one at a time and dropping them into the jug. And as more and more pebbles accumulated in the bottom of the jug the water rose in the bottle until finally the old crow was able to drink all that he desired.

This is a parable of the way God has chosen to work out His plan in the local church. Each of us should be dropping in our own little pebble - teaching that Sunday school class, helping in some church activity, encouraging the down-hearted, giving, providing transportation for the youth, or visiting our lonely neighbor. Utilizing the gifts that God gave to us is important. It may not seem all that important at the time, but as the pebbles accumulate in the bottom of the jug, and the water rises, God builds and blesses His church and brings His plan to fruition. You are important and the music ministry of the local church is important.

Our main emphasis in this short study was on the subject of music and musical ability which God can turn into a gift. Skill needs to be applied to all the gifts that we use for the Lord. We must remember to prepare and develop our spiritual gifts for the Lord so that we might truly use them for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31).