

## WHY WE SING

by Celeste Clydesdale

Ever wonder why God tells His followers to sing more than one hundred times in the Bible? It's actually a commandment. Next to praying, it's the most important practice in God's eyes for believers to engage in on a daily basis. In EPH. 5:18–21, Paul tells us that three of the five characteristics of one who is filled with the Spirit involves singing. It says, "Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing, and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Just take a look in the scriptures and see how many of God's people responded to him, in all kinds of situations, with a song! Here are just a few:

- Moses and the Israelites sang after the Red Sea parted. (Ex. 15:1–21)
- Israel's song of praise to God for giving them water in the desert. (Nu. 21:17)
- David's song of thanks and praise to God for rescuing him from Saul and his other enemies. (II SA. 22:2–51)
- Israel's song of praise at the completion of the temple's foundation. (EZR. 3:11)
- Paul and Silas sang in prison. (Ac. 16:25)
- Mary sang when she heard she would be giving birth to our Savior. (Lk. 1:46–55)

I have listened over and over to Dr. Timothy Keller's sermon entitled *Singing*, where he explains beautifully why God says it's so important. First of all, it's because music is powerful. It motivates people. Martin Luther said, "If you want to comfort the sad, terrify the happy, encourage the despairing, humble the proud, pacify the aggressive, there's no more effective way than music." God has always known just how powerful the practice of singing can be in our lives.

Another reason to sing is that music testifies of a loving God. Leonard Bernstein (a secularist), reflecting on Beethoven's 5th Symphony, said, "Beethoven has the real goods... the stuff from Heaven. Beethoven has the power to make us feel, at the finish of his symphony, that there is something right in the universe...something that checks out, something that follows its own laws thoroughly; something we can trust, something that will never let us down."

Good music, as does all of creation, shows God's handiwork and testifies of His goodness.

In JOB 38:4 we begin to understand why music is so meaningful to us. I believe it shows us God's redeeming love. Since God created the earth we've had the gift of music. We know this to be true because God answers Job with a question, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundations? When the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" Also, in PR. 8, we see that when God was creating the world in wisdom, the angels danced and sang for joy. Music speaks into our souls that our God is full of joy and peace, and most of all love.

Ps. 96:12 tells us that God is going to restore our songs when he returns. "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad, let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy; they will sing before the Lord, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth."

Scripture also shows us that music is a witness to God. (I love this part!) In Deuteronomy, when God made a covenant with Israel, God told Moses to write down the song He was giving to him. God told Moses to have the people sing it, to be a witness for Him against them. Did you catch that? God, the great Composer, knew His song would be a powerful reminder to His people of who He is and what He had done for His people.

My prayer is that God will use our music ministries to speak life into our children's lives. I pray that our songs will truly be music to the Lord's ears, and in return, that our songs would remind us over and over again of all the great and mighty things our God has done for us through the gift of His Son, Jesus.

## DRAMA WORKSHEET

by Celeste Clydesdale

At your first drama rehearsal, congratulate everyone on having been cast. Next, have them all sit around a table and introduce themselves. Give every cast member a script, pencil and a highlighter. As you do your first read-through, determine if you need to redistribute a few lines. (For example, if you think an important line is not going to be delivered strongly enough, now is the time to give it to one of your stronger actors.) Have everyone highlight his or her lines. To help them understand the character they will be playing, pass out the drama worksheet available at [www.wordmusic.com/justaddkids](http://www.wordmusic.com/justaddkids). Ask them to work on and complete it at home.

### To prepare for your role in the musical:

1. **Repeatedly listen to your CD at home.**
2. **Remember that every line is important.** Say it clearly and not too fast.
3. **At home, read your lines out loud in front of a mirror and/or in front of your parents.** Pay special attention to your voice, facial expressions, and body language.
4. **Remember, it is just as important to work on what your character will be doing when he or she is *not* saying a line.** You'll still want to "stay in character."
5. **At home, make a chart for yourself.** List all the songs in the musical, in the order they occur. Then write *where* you have a line (*before* or *after* which songs). Also note *who* says a line right before you say yours. This will be your cue that your line is next!
6. **To prepare, it is helpful to make flash cards.** On one side of the card write down the line and character who speaks right before your line. On the other side, write your line. Have someone at home quiz you for fun.
7. **Remember to thank God for giving you this opportunity.** Pray each week that He will use you to reach people with Christ's great love!

## KEEPING THE EXCITEMENT ALIVE

by Maureen Rickman

It is an awesome opportunity to work with a children's choir! The natural energy and enthusiasm of children inspire me to become a better leader all the time. But with all the other activities kids have to choose from today, keeping that energy and enthusiasm up from week to week can be quite a challenge.

Teaching in a church music program is very different than a school setting, where coming to class is required. Our children must **want** to show up voluntarily each week and give of their time and talent. In order to be successful, our challenge as children's choir leaders is to maintain a committed and exciting program. After all, a strong performance, done with excellence, edifies our Lord Jesus Christ!

### Keep the Ministry Mindset Before Them

*That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel...* RO. 1:15

It is a great honor and a privilege to minister “on stage”—emphasize this to your choir. Let your children know that they are working towards delivering the sermon in song through your production. I tell my kids that they are Pastor Rick (our Lead Pastor) on performance day. Have your Lead Pastor pop in to rehearsal from time to time. (The kids LOVE that!) Let him tell the choir how excited he is about their musical and pray for them. They have the wonderful opportunity to be “in the pulpit” when they are performing. God can use their singing and acting presentations to help change lives forever... for His glory! Broken families may be mended because of their heartfelt performance and God's anointing. Remind them that you and the whole pastoral staff trust and believe in them enough to have their own service on the day(s) of the performance. This “builds them up” from the inside out, and gives them a solid purpose for wanting to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

### Keep Attendance a Priority

*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things;* MT. 25:21

Consistent attendance is integral to a successful children's program and an effective outcome for your musical production. Start your rehearsals off by letting the children know that they won't want to miss a single practice! Offer a reward for perfect attendance. Develop an attendance policy that works for you and your group. For example, I implement a policy that says if a student has 3 unexcused absences he/she will not be able to perform in the musical. (An unexcused absence basically means a “no show”—no phone call, no note or e-mail). This is important because you are setting a precedent that being faithful to God's work has its rewards. Take the time to collect each child's contact information, including their name, address, phone number, e-mail address and shirt size, etc., and keep an updated roll sheet for every rehearsal. (I have one of my assistants send weekly reminder e-mails to all students' families. This keeps them informed, updated, and excited about what we're working on. I offer different rewards for each program. Most recently, I announced that we were all going bowling for our “After Party.” Everyone was invited, but those who had PERFECT attendance got their bowling paid for (our lanes gives us a flat group rate for two hours of bowling). Let me tell you... that worked, and everyone had a blast. But it doesn't have to be something that costs money. Those with perfect attendance could be recognized in your church service and presented with certificates; their names could be listed in your music program or church newsletter; or you could have a special day at the park for them... anything you can follow through on to reward and motivate those who remain faithful!

### Keep Striving for Excellence

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.* COL. 3:23

Serving the Lord with excellence is also something we want to instill in our children's choir. To help accomplish this, I buy or make each child a sticker card... usually something that goes along with the theme of the musical we are working on. (Once we were working on *Acorns to Oaks*, so each child had a card in the shape of a different farm animal.) Each card has the student's name on it and is given out to them each week as they arrive for practice.

Stickers are also given out during rehearsals for reasons like... doing something right! They love it! Even my eighth graders enjoy it, (the oldest in the choir), and seem to be among the most competitive. “Quietest rows” get stickers; “best row for choreography” gets stickers; “who can sing verse two by memory without any mistakes?” gets three stickers, etc. “Getting caught being good”

works, and soon other kids want to improve their skills. The ten students with the most stickers also get recognized on performance day. Stickers can be costly, so another option is to invest in several rubber stamps and ink pads. (They work just as well, and kids love the fruit-smelling kind.) You may come up with something completely different, but the strategy of rewarding excellent behavior benefits everyone and raises the bar for your rehearsal time. It doesn't have to be stickers or stamp pads...think outside the box. It really doesn't matter what they receive, just that they are being thought of. Remember, a little goes a long way. Just make sure you always bring the students back to this question: "Who are we doing this musical for?" When they respond "God" or "Jesus," remind them that He deserves nothing less than our very best, and applaud their efforts.

### **Keep Your Rehearsals Organized**

*Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.*  
I Co. 9:24-25

Keeping your rehearsals organized and well-paced is another vital part of keeping students focused and enthusiastic. Have a plan for practice. Know what songs you want to work on, what solos you want to have tryouts for, and what choreography you want to sharpen. Have your CDs marked and Power Points (with song lyrics) ready to roll ahead of time. Children know when you are not prepared, and it will show in their behavior. In my years of being in ministry, I have witnessed a lackadaisical attitude that comes across like "I'll just wing it" when it comes to working with children. That infuriates me. My students know that I put the same love, time and passion into their musicals as I do with my adult choir. If we expect children to bring their best each week, then we as leaders must do the same. "Down time" during rehearsals affects momentum, and chaos can break out pretty quickly. Valuable time is then wasted trying to regain control and bring everyone's focus back on track. So it is important for your choir to know that you have a plan and intend to stick with it.

To help attain productive rehearsals you really need a team of adult assistants... people who are proactive—see a need and fix it. I am blessed with a tremendous group of helpers (thank you, Lord!). Some are giving out stickers to those who are sitting quietly; some are helping children with the choreography; others are singing along, helping singers learn their parts; another sees a behavior problem and moves children apart. Those assistants are my eyes, arms, and legs, and that is why we accomplish a lot during practice. Everyone has a job to do and they do it to the best of their ability. If you are doing this ministry alone, start praying for God to help you put a "dream team" together to help carry out the vision He has for your choir. He will provide the people you desire. It is true that:

- T** – Together
- E** – Everyone
- A** – Accomplishes
- M** – More

### **Keep your Choir and Team Covered in Prayer**

*Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.* PR. 16:3

What a powerful verse! We all want our children's choir ministry to thrive and succeed, but we must do our part. We need to exude excitement every week. This begins with us, but is contagious. Each rehearsal we must bring our best. Remember to take time to bathe your choir and leaders in prayer. As leaders, we must maintain a delicate balance—trusting God as if everything depends on Him, while working as if everything depends on us. We are a rare commodity. It takes a special person to appeal to ages 5 and up. It takes someone with a heart for God, a love of children, a passion for music, and a deep desire to ultimately see young lives be shaped and transformed into followers of Christ. The songs they sing will never leave them, and the biblical truths they learn will be embedded in their hearts and minds forever. Our goal is to plant God's love and truth in these little lives through our choir ministry, and to watch them grow in the ways of the Lord, developing and using their God-given talents for His glory for **many** years to come!

## TEACH CHILDREN WELL

by Kathleen Chapman

“Teach your children well. Teach them what you believe in.” Recognize this concept from the popular ’60s song? The premise is accurate enough. Everyone has the potential ability to teach his or her children well. In fact, children—whatever their circumstances—*have* to be taught. And **WHAT** they are taught will certainly be reflected in tomorrow’s world.

So how serious are you about the children God has put in your care, under your influence? The plan is spelled out for us in God’s Word. The steps are clear, precise, and non-negotiable. Simply put, we are to **KNOW GOD** and teach Him to our children. Scripture is full of promises of success if we follow God’s plan.

### 1. Know Him intimately.

“[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death.” PHP. 3:10 (AMPLIFIED)

“...That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death. PHP. 3:10 (NKJV)

### 2. Teach Him to your children.

“You shall love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. **YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN**, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Dt. 6:5–7

“Place these words on your hearts. Get them deep inside you. Tie them on your hands and foreheads as a reminder. **TEACH THEM TO YOUR CHILDREN**. Talk about them wherever you are, sitting at home or walking in the street; talk about them from the time you get up in the morning until you fall into bed at night. Inscribe them on the doorposts and gates of your cities so that you’ll live a long time, and your children with you.” Dt. 11:18 (THE MESSAGE)

“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. **TEACH THEM TO YOUR CHILDREN** and to their children after them. Dt. 4:9 (NIV)

### 3. Do this FIRST!

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He’s the one who will keep you on track. Don’t assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health; your very bones will vibrate with life! Honor God with everything you own; give him the first and the best. Your barns will burst, your wine vats will brim over.” PR. 3:5 (THE MESSAGE)

Give Him the **FIRST** and best of your rehearsal time—first in priority, first in preparation, first in passion!



Every church has a schedule allowing enough rehearsals for each production. If there is no way to include 10 to 15 extra minutes per class to focus on God, then you might as well cancel the musical.

I know it’s easy to lose perspective when faced with the daunting task of putting kids on stage for a production for the entire church (world) to view. I’ve been doing it for 35 years and am fully aware of the pressure involved. “So, my son, throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me... to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others. When the going gets rough, take it on the chin with the rest of us, the way Jesus did.” II Ti. 2:1–3 (THE MESSAGE)

My first few years as a director I was doing well to find time to open and close rehearsals in prayer. I figured a Christian musical was message enough. I’m not sure just when the Lord hit me over the head with one of His familiar bricks, but I am certain it was around the time one of my kids asked—on opening night—what our musical was really about.

Kids don't automatically absorb spiritual content by osmosis. Do you realize they can memorize six songs and an entire script without understanding a word spiritually? Sadly, I've seen this happen firsthand.

It's up to us to explain the truths of the musical, then have the kids explain them back to us. I'm suggesting you find a plan, a way to make each musical message become engraved into their hearts and lives forever. It doesn't have to be exactly like mine. Start when the kids first arrive at rehearsal, while all of you have energy and fresh focus.

During the first couple of rehearsals, begin telling the story and message of the work and how God can use it for His glory. In each rehearsal, try to find another hidden tidbit within the script and lyrics that could minister to your audience. Make a game of it! Find scripture to parallel the message.

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification... for whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be likeminded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ro. 15:2-6 (NKJV)

When Christmas rehearsals began last fall, we asked each of our kids to think of a person in their life who needed to know Jesus. They could keep the name to themselves, or share with everyone. (One girl did not "know anyone who needed to meet Jesus," so another child loaned her a cousin!) They were to pray daily/weekly for this person during the months of rehearsal, then invite them to our performance. I shared my "name" with the group—a nephew of mine who, now in his twenties, has never given his heart to Christ.

Talk about motivational! I did not expect immediate results; but within two weeks, kids were confiding in each other about who they were praying for (all of them were praying for my nephew!). By showtime, evangelism was in the air. Their prayers before the performance on opening night had all of us in tears. God worked in each child's life—a total surprise, because they thought the musical was only for reaching others. (My nephew didn't show up and our kids actually cried, promising to continue praying for him anyway). In reality, those who performed would never be the same because of a fresh, new walk with God. "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Ro. 12:2 (NKJV)

We have approximately an hour and a half each week (some of us less) to impact kids' lives for eternity. Let's make it our priority, and teach them well.



## **THE BAND FACTOR: Mentoring the Next Generation**

by Misty Jones

Many youth choir directors feel a rise in blood pressure at the thought of incorporating a live band into their programs! They dream of a band full of younger students that can run alongside and support everything they have on the calendar. In talking with most choir directors, the idea is not dismissed because of scheduling, equipment, or other logistics. The idea of using a student-based band is usually thrown out quickly because it sounds like a scary monster to tackle.

Here are some things I have learned from building student bands for our worship services, and seeing how bands can also benefit our choir programs.

### **Start Small, Start Smart**

Start with just a few core instruments from the rhythm section—drums, bass, electric guitar. These are interchangeable, depending on your needs or what you have available. The more instruments you add before you are ready, the less control you'll have. By starting small, you have more quality control simply because there are fewer elements to go awry. Your best bet is to start with older players, either in high school or college. Pick one song you want them to work on; have them work for what benefits your program.

### **Don't Wait to Train**

It is important that the younger choir members see your band of older students; this will be key if you want to train up younger students to take their place. As quickly as possible, have younger students who have a desire to play “shadow” one of the older students. They don't even have to “plug in”! They can stand next to an older counterpart and get one-on-one coaching right there in rehearsal. They can rotate in and out, playing “live” with the other band members. By doing this, you have immediately empowered your older students which gives them “buy in,” and you've also multiplied yourself! Now you have more time to direct, be a pastor, and be fully present.

### **Don't Worry If You Don't Know What You're Doing**

The first time I tried having our elementary and middle school students shadow our high school players, I had no idea if it was going to work. Then I found myself discovering little things that succeeded during rehearsal, and noticing what didn't. I learned to adjust “on the fly” and make necessary changes week to week as needed.

One of my middle school students has been shadowing our high school players for a few months, and in that time we've gotten to know his heart, his skill level, and his dedication. He's also learned our repertoire in the process. (I recently asked him to play guitar for our elementary camp, and you'd think he'd won the lottery!)

If it is a dream of yours to add a band to your program, don't wait until you think you've got it figured out. Jump in with both feet and focus on the simple principles above. Youth choirs are a big machine with many cogs and gears, and it can seem daunting to add one more thing to the works (especially when it will require more investment and energy). But the payoff is huge. You're building more than a program... you're building the Kingdom of God.

## ENDORSEMENTS

I have to confess, up until sixteen years ago, I did not pay much attention to children's choir music. It's amazing how the birth of our first child changed all that. As a songwriter, I became fascinated how the great writers kept the songs and story lines so clever. But even more importantly, as a father, I loved watching the concepts of God's Word come alive in my little girl. With this book, Celeste Clydesdale (one of the great writers), draws from her own experience as well as the best of the best in a comprehensive resource. This book delivers, and is truly a must-read—whether you are a songwriter, a children's choir director, or like me... a parent.

***Dave Clark***

Writer/Producer

Growing up, some of my earliest memories of being drawn to the power of music came from my experiences in church. Children's choir was something I always looked forward to, and being a part of our annual programs were some of my earliest chances to develop not only my singing voice, but my journey of faith. Celeste is the absolute best in crafting musicals that challenge, engage, and enrich the lives of young people. This book will no doubt help to guide you in doing the same.

***Matthew West***

EMI Recording Artist

Some of my first memories are of singing in church. That was more than 35 years ago, and I can still remember every word of almost every children's musical I ever sang! We cannot overemphasize the importance of putting God's Word in children's hearts at a young age. And we can't ignore the fact that there is essentially no more effective way to do it than through music. Those seeds planted in my heart as a bratty little kid in children's choir at Perkinsville Baptist Church in Boone, NC grew to shape not only the man of God I am, but also the music God has called me to lead and create today. And the same is true with our kids in this generation. We are growing the worshippers of tomorrow. We can't let up in our training efforts.

Celeste Clydesdale has long been a trailblazer in children's music. And her great efforts continue with this resource, **Just Add Kids: The Complete Recipe Book For a Successful Kids Choir**. Good children's training doesn't just happen; we as leaders must continue to learn and grow and be open to new ways to reach, teach and bless the kids we lead. Celeste has compiled so much here that would help children's choirs of any size. Please don't miss it.

Let's utilize any opportunity or resource we have to shape these little disciples of tomorrow, using one of God's most powerful tools: music.

***Travis Cottrell***

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