

Tips to help you

RESUSCITATE YOUR MUSIC MINISTRY



After a couple of years of stay-at-home orders, quarantines, isolation, face coverings, “pull that mask up over your nose,” physical distancing, no handshakes, no hugs, not to mention warnings from medical professionals that singing is a “high-risk” activity due to the way it spreads aerosol particles, (can I take a breath?!) many Music Ministry leaders feel like Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones! *“Son of man, can these bones live?” I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”* (EZEKIEL 37:3 NIV)

Music Ministry is not dead! Singing is a vital part of how we express our faith in and adoration of our Almighty God. God commanded us to sing. We will sing in heaven. Music still ministers to the soul. Anointed music still has the power to calm evil spirits and refresh the listener. Music still encourages and edifies believers. A choir singing from their heart still engages the congregation, touches and warms their hearts and renews and strengthens their faith. Congregational singing still reinforces the unity of the Spirit and the covenant connection within the body of believers.

So what are a few ways you can revive your Music Ministry and *Prophesy to these bones* as Ezekiel was instructed to do? These thoughts will help you charge up that defibrillator.

1] Request wisdom. What a blessing to serve a God who is omniscient! And He wants to share some wisdom with you. *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* (JAMES 1:5 NIV) He knows the idiosyncrasies of your specific singing group and He promised to guide you as you compel them. [Consider PSALM 127:1]

2] Refocus from what they won't do to what you can do. You've heard the saying “You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.” Rather than trying to make the horse drink, focus on creating an atmosphere that induces his internal craving to quench his thirst. As God gives you wisdom and creativity, act upon what He gives you. Doing nothing cannot be an option. Don't make excuses or settle for would have, could have, should have explanations. As Caleb said in NUMBERS 13:30 ESV, *Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.* [Consider PHILIPPIANS 4:13]

3] Reconnect the tie that binds. There is a tie that binds believer's hearts in Christian love. There is a special fellowship of our kindred minds and shared experiences.

- ▶ Video/Tele-conference or short welcome back video. Discuss how much we miss their smiling faces. Reflect on God's goodness in the Ministry in the past and reminisce with fond memories of pre-shut down days. Use photographs, videos, audio recordings and testimonies from members who were blessed and are anxious to return. Induce their internal craving to quench that thirst.
- ▶ Mail each member a “Thinking About You” card. Don't ask them for anything.
- ▶ Call each member just to pray for them over the phone. Don't wait until they're sick, grieving or struggling with the cares of life. [Consider the *31 Sentence Prayers for the Ministry-Minded Musician* available at www.wtimothybailey.com]
- ▶ E-mail or text a personal prayer to each member.

4] Remind them of the importance of music in worship. Singing isn't an option in Scripture. It's a command: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing*

one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (COLOSSIANS 3:16 NASB) When we sing, we're doing what God asks of us!

Pastor C.J. Mahaney calls church singing "Take Home Theology" because the best songs we sing together serve as a 3-minute, easily memorizable, deeply biblical summary of important truths from scripture. (How many song lyrics were included in the last sermon you heard?) Often times, we think only of singing when we're happy and times are good, but singing bringing strength for trial comes out in Acts 16. Paul and Silas are unjustly imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel, and what do they do while they're in prison? Sing! (ACTS 16:25) [7 BIBLICAL REASONS WHY SINGING MATTERS by Tom Olson, UnlockingTheBible.org, September 22, 2017]

5] Remind them of the blessings they'll receive. Draw attention to the spiritual blessings and physical benefits each singer will experience. Group singing has been scientifically proven to lower stress, relieve anxiety, and elevate endorphins. In one study, singers were found to have lower levels of cortisol, indicating lower stress. A very preliminary investigation suggesting that our heart rates may sync up during group singing could also explain why singing together sometimes feels like a guided group meditation. Study after study has found that singing relieves anxiety and contributes to quality of life. [SINGING CHANGES YOUR BRAIN by Stacy Horn, Time Magazine, August 16, 2013]

6] Refuse to fuss at them! (Fuss at: To scold or find fault with constantly, nag, peck at, pick on. To annoy someone by frequently complaining to them about something that they do.) After all the gloom, despair, and agony we've suffered through, people are thirsty for hope and encouragement. Fussing at them may simply motivate them to go elsewhere or just stay home. Instead, imitate Philemon and refresh the hearts of the saints. *Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (EPHESIANS 4:29 NLT) Let your speech always be with grace. (COLOSSIANS 4:6a KJV)* [Consider PHILEMON 1:7, PHILIPPIANS 4:8 AMP, HEBREWS 10:24-25, JAMES 1:26; 3:1-12]

7] Review a familiar favorite first. As you plan that first in-person rehearsal, what's that oldie but goodie the choir used to beg to sing almost every Sunday? Let's start out with that song. Feel the blending of voices. Feel the vibration of vocal cords. Feel the rhythm in your toes. Feel the head bobbing. Sense the sound waves of sweet harmony resonating in your ear canal. Joy is bubbling up in your soul. (What's that rattling sound I hear? Bones, tendons, flesh, skin, breath coming together - *they came to life and stood up on their feet - a vast army. EZEKIEL 37:7-10*)

8] Rehearse part of a new song. Select a song that does not require too much work. Give them time to ramp up to full speed. Learn the easiest part. Whet their appetite to come back to learn more of that song at the next rehearsal. Give them a foretaste of things to come.

9] Reward their attendance with something tangible. Give them a tangible memento or souvenir to remind them of the special fellowship of kindred minds they just experienced. Let them leave longing for more; feeling edified, encouraged, and uplifted just like the Emmaus Road travelers in LUKE 24:32.

Timothy Bailey is President and CEO of JeFirst Music, LLC and is committed to helping others put Jesus First in music. He shares from his four decades plus of expertise in the field of music and Music Ministry. Bailey earned a Bachelor of Music Degree in Music Theory from the University of Kansas. He is a published author, composer, arranger, recording artist, highly respected workshop clinician, and member of the adjunct faculty of Carver Baptist Bible College, Institute & Theological Seminary. Visit him at www.wtimothybailey.com.