

SINGING

MADE

SIMPLE

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SINGING MADE SIMPLE:

How to Discover and Develop Your Natural, God-given Voice

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ISBN: 978-1-0983283-8-2

Course Overview

Singing Made Simple is unique in its approach. The author's approach is simple. The most beautiful musical instrument ever made is the human voice. Each person must learn how to play their unique, one-of-a-kind instrument. No one else can play it for you. God has given everyone, including you, a beautiful voice!

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Lesson Descriptions

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Why Do I Want To Sing?

Description: Development of the singing voice requires motivation. Learning to sing properly will require much practice, patience, and persistence. Motivation is achieved by understanding an intended goal. It is answering the question, “Why do I want to sing?” Setting high goals, coupled with strong, sincere desire, will motivate the voice student to achieve the goals set.

LESSON 2 | PERCEPTION OF PLACEMENT

Discovering My Voice

Description: This session is designed to help the voice student determine the natural, God-given range of their voice whether Soprano, Alto, Tenor, or Bass. Voice training requires a starting point for progress to be achieved. The voice student will discover the starting point of their voice range and quality of voice, and then improve both range and quality. This course is designed to begin at the starting point of where the voice student is and take them to where they need to be.

LESSON 3 | PICTURE PERFECT POSTURE

Developing Correct Posture for Singing

Description: This session is designed to teach the voice student how to develop and maintain the correct posture for good singing and breath support. It will also train the student to maintain good posture for a healthy lifestyle. It will become a habitual way of life until no thought must be given when singing.

LESSON 4 | POWER

Developing the Diaphragm

Description: This session will teach the voice student to understand the foundational and fundamental basis of the diaphragm in singing. The voice student will begin to realize the connection the diaphragm has with every aspect of singing. Instructions, techniques, and exercises will be life-changing to the student as they develop the diaphragm.

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LESSON 1 | PURPOSE OF SINGING

Why Do I Want to Sing?

Most modern entertainers would answer that question, “I want to sing for myself!” That might mean that they want to sing to entertain themselves or others for self-glory. Either way the motive is a selfish one and totally misguided for the Christian.

Recently, a movie was made of a singer who was born in obscurity and poverty yet has become one of the most wealthy, successful, and popular entertainers of all time. She made the statement, “I was born to sing!” That statement is true perhaps, but the purpose and cause for which anyone was born, especially the Christian, is not for selfish reasons.

I have chosen for my life verse Exodus 15:2, “The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him.” The verse is taken from the Song of Moses and clearly states the theme of the life of Moses. It should be the theme of every life, especially the believer who knows that they owe their very existence to the LORD GOD, their Creator.

This verse is the theme for our study in voice, but consider it to be the theme of your life. Consider each phrase.

- The LORD is my strength -- The LORD gives me the ability and power to sing.
- The LORD is my ... song -- The LORD gives me the song to sing, and I will sing HIS song. My song is HIS song and my song will always be from HIM, about HIM, for HIM, and to HIM.
- He is become my salvation – Salvation is by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon the cross of Calvary. He saved me from destruction and a life of sin. I owe my life to Jesus Christ, and He has become my cause, purpose for singing, my everything.
- He is my God -- I will worship God with my song and depend upon

God for my song.

- I will prepare him an habitation -- I will keep my life clean so that my body is a dedicated instrument for the songs of the LORD.
- My father's God -- There is only one God who is eternal, and His song is eternal. My father's song is my song and is all about Jesus, and it will never change. I will sing of Him.
- I will exalt him – There is no other purpose to sing than to exalt Jesus. I must never make the purpose to sing about me. It is Jesus and Jesus alone. In this study there must be a commitment to sing for HIM.

Where Do I Begin?

The Bible says much about singing to the Lord. One of the things that is emphasized is to sing joyfully. It is my desire for this instruction manual be a joyful experience and not a monotonous one. You want to learn to sing expressively to convey the message of the song. David, the Sweet Psalmist of Israel, said in Psalm 95:1, “ O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.” Unless you enjoy singing, you will not improve very much.

The method of study used is to discover and develop the natural singing voice that God has given to you. The most beautiful instrument that God has made is the human voice. Just like different instruments show different qualities of sound, so does the human voice. Each is unique, distinct, and beautiful. As you discover the God-given voice you have, you will allow the sound, rather than make the sound, to come out naturally.

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. What is your purpose in learning to sing or improve your voice?

2. What is your goal in singing -- to improve, to sing in church, or even on a professional level?
3. What is the theme Bible verse given for taking this singing course?
4. Name the most beautiful instrument that God has made.
5. What will the method of study that is used in this course be used to discover and develop?
6. God made each voice, including yours, unique, distinct, and beautiful, and it must be developed. Do you agree? Y/N
7. Do you enjoy singing? Y/N

LESSON 2 | PERCEPTION OF PLACEMENT

Discovering Your Voice

The singing voice can be separated into five basic classifications -- two for females and three for males. The two divisions for females are Soprano and Alto. The three divisions for males are Tenor, Baritone, and Bass. Most church or choir music is written for four basic parts: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass



Soprano - In a musical score or a typical church hymn, the Soprano part is written in the treble cleft and is the top note on a musical score. The soprano part is usually the melody or lead part of a song. The comfortable range of a soprano will be from G above Middle C to G an octave higher.

Alto - The Alto part is written also in the treble cleft and is the bottom note on the treble cleft. The Alto will sing a harmony part just below the Soprano. The comfortable range of an Alto will be from Middle C to an octave above Middle C.

Tenor - The Tenor part is the top note on the bass cleft of a musical score. Tenor is usually a harmony part in the comfortable range of F below Middle C to F above Middle C.

Bass - The Bass part is the lower note on the bass cleft of a musical score. The Bass is also a lower harmony part. The comfortable range for a Bass is from lower B-flat in the bass cleft to B-flat below Middle C.

Discover Your Voice

Sitting at a piano, begin on Middle C and sing “Ahh.” Pretend you are in a doctor’s office, and the doctor is examining your tonsils. He tells you to open your mouth wide, places a tongue depressor on the back of your tongue, tucking it slightly down and says, “Say Ahh!”

Now place an imaginary tongue depressor on the back of your tongue, tucking it down and keeping the tip of the tongue at the bottom of the teeth, sing “Ahh”. Sing “Ahh” going up the scale to C one octave above. Do your best to sing each note on pitch as you go up the scale. This should be a comfortable singing range for you. If the top note feels a little uncomfortable, you are probably an Alto if you are a female or a Baritone if you are a male. However, do not conclude or limit yourself to think that you will never increase your range.

In this course of study I intend to increase your range considerably so that you can sing more than just one part. For now, though, stay within the comfortable range of singing. Do not do anything that strains, stresses, or feels uncomfortable in the throat area. Right now, you are discovering the beautiful voice that God has given you. Try not to make the sound, but allow the sound to come out.

Now, repeat the same exercise beginning at middle C with the “Ahh” sound. This time, go four notes higher and stop on the note “F.” Take a deep breath and begin. Okay! If that was comfortable and without stress, then you are a Soprano if you are a female or a Tenor if you are a male. In normal church music or choir music, you will rarely ever have to exceed that range. Again, let me assure you, by taking this course and with much practice you will certainly increase your range.

Now, do the exercise again beginning at Middle C. This time, we will go down the scale with a good, open “Ahh” sound. Go as low as is comfortable without a growling or gravelly sound. If you can go down to G or lower, then you are an Alto if you are a female or a Bass if you are a male. Rarely, in normal choir or church music will you ever need to go lower than the low G.

The next thing you need to consider is making a good sound. A good sound is an open sound! The biggest problem in making a good, open sound is learning how to keep the tongue tucked and the throat open. Keep in mind the feeling of the imaginary tongue depressor keeping the tongue down. Do not arch the tongue!

You will do the same exercise as before, beginning at middle C. This time make the “O” sound. To help you keep the throat as open as possible, use your imagination and put an imaginary egg in your mouth and make the “O” sound. Go up the scale, hitting each note while singing the “O” sound and concentrating matching the pitch. Stop when it feels uncomfortable or straining. Remember, do not tighten the throat, stay relaxed, and produce an open, free, natural sound.

Keeping the imaginary egg in your mouth, you will do the “A” sound. Do not put an “Ee” sound on the end of the “A” sound; keep it open. Beginning on C, go up the scale staying relaxed with an open throat.

We will discuss it later, but begin to notice where you feel resonance. You should feel when you sing lower notes that your chest cavity resonates. As you go higher up the scale, you should begin to feel the high chest cavity and cheek bones resonate, and then when you reach the higher range you should feel primarily the sinus cavities resonating. Keeping the sound open will help with resonance which produces a more pleasant sound. Start practicing those good sounds.

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. Name the 5 basic classifications of the singing voice.
2. Name the two clefs for musical notations on a musical score.
3. Which clef is written for the female voice?
4. Which clef is written for the male voice?
5. What are two imaginary objects used in this lesson to produce an open, natural sound, to keep the back of the tongue tucked and the throat open?
6. Using the “Ahh” sound and beginning at Middle C and going up a note at a time. What is the highest, comfortable note that you reached without straining or causing any discomfort?
7. Using the same procedure, beginning at Middle C and this time going down the scale a note at a time, what is the lowest note that you reached comfortably without growling or using a gravelly voice?
8. In discovering your voice, singing “Ahh” up and then down the scale, what is your natural range?

Soprano Alto Tenor Baritone Bass

9. Name the two areas in which you should be able to feel resonance.
10. Will you limit yourself to only singing in the range that you presently are singing? Y/N
11. Will you be willing to practice and apply the methods of singing in this course to increase your range? Y/N

LESSON 3 | PICTURE PERFECT POSTURE

Developing Correct Posture for Singing

Today's lesson is going to be about Picture Perfect Posture. Good posture is so important. It is one of the foundational principles of singing. Though you are not going to be singing in this lesson, please pay close attention. Do not skip this lesson! Trust me! It is going to help you with singing.

Have you ever had your picture taken with a group of people? The photographer said, "Okay, ready on three. One, two, three, click."

What did you do? Maybe, just by some natural instinct, you stretched upward a little bit. Why did you do that? Perhaps, subconsciously, you wanted to appear taller. Most people do not want to appear to be the shortest person in the picture. Even if you are a Zacchaeus, it seems to be a natural inclination for everyone to appear taller. Seriously however, when you do stretch a little taller, you have your best posture!

Posture is so important in life! Good posture is healthy and needs to become a habit of life -- a lifestyle! You must incorporate proper posture as you practice each day. You will discover that as you practice you will perform. Having good posture will help you in many ways: good breath support, resonance, confidence and a better sounding voice. You must seriously practice good posture every day in your voice exercises. This must be practiced every day until it becomes a habit -- a healthy lifestyle!

What is good posture? Good posture is "from your head to your toes." You will begin your good posture, however, with your feet and upward to your head.

Start with the feet. Have your feet squarely beneath the shoulders, slightly apart (not too far apart or too close together), enough to give you good balance. You want to feel the weight of your body evenly

distributed on the balls of your feet. It is good to have one foot slightly forward, to help with better balance and movement if necessary. If you are singing in a group, you would favor either the left or right foot depending on which side you were standing.

The second consideration for good posture is to consider the knees. The most important thing to remember concerning the knees is, DO NOT LOCK the knees. You may have heard this advice emphasized to those in a wedding party as they are standing through a ceremony. The purpose of this is to prevent loss of blood supply to the brain, causing fainting, which has happened in ceremonies before. It happened once in a Christmas cantata in my church. One young man locked his knees and passed out falling backwards into the baptistry, head first. Thankfully, the two men beside him quickly pulled him out, soaked and embarrassed, but no real harm done!

You want the knees to be slightly bent. Again, in singing, there should never be anything stressed or rigid. In fact, you should feel a little “bounce” in your knees. This is not to say that you will actually be bouncing, but you could!

The third thing to consider is the hips. The hips should be free of motion, yet able to move. The hips should not be tilted forward nor backward, but slightly tucked, making yourself feel taller. This will keep you straight and tall.

Fourthly, I will talk about the sternum. This is so important in singing! It concerns the diaphragm. The sternum or the rib cage, must be kept high. The rib cage houses the largest muscle in your body -- the diaphragm. This muscle is dome shaped. When you breathe, the diaphragm goes down not up. That is why it is important that the rib cage be high enough so the diaphragm can freely function. If you place your thumbs on your rib cage and then slouch over, you will notice when you breathe that the diaphragm has to push everything upward. However, if the rib cage is

up, then the diaphragm does not have to do extra work. If you will keep your rib cage held comfortably high, you will have more capacity for air to sustain notes or sing long phrases. You will also discover this will enhance your ability for expressive singing.

One way to describe how to achieve this is to interlock the fingers and bring the arms up over the head, then let the arms relax and float down to the sides while keeping the rib cage up.

Next, consider the shoulders. The shoulders, like the rib cage, should be up but relaxed. It should not be as if you are at attention like a soldier, but relaxed. One way to do this is to roll your shoulders from front to back. You do not have to do this every time you sing, but, if you will practice, doing this every day, you will begin to do it subconsciously. When I stand to sing, I never think about how I am going to hold my shoulders because it has become a way of life for me. I want it to be a way of life for you as well.

With good posture, rib cage high, shoulders back and relaxed, you will be able to sing with much more confidence and breath control.

Topping the list of creating good posture, the neck and the head must be considered. The neck is important because it encloses your vocal cords and supports your head. All heads are big heads! An average head weighs 20 lbs. and is dependent upon the neck to support it. So, you want to make sure that you have good posture, keep everything straight and in line, support the head, and keep it high.

One little side note to add is that the head holds the brain which must be used at all times! Do not let your mind wander carelessly; think! If you will practice faithfully, these lessons will become habitual, and you can use your brain to concentrate on singing and delivering the message in song.

A point must be made about the chin. No pun intended, you must not

make a point with your chin! Tuck it slightly down; never thrust it outward or upward regardless of what part you are singing. Some people when singing bass may tuck their chin down thinking it will make the voice lower, but it does not. Some may tilt their head back thinking it will help them to reach a high note. This does not work. This puts pressure on the vocal cords. You must think of everything being straight and aligned so the throat has an open cavity. If everything is straight as it should be, the sound will seem as if it were coming out, the crown of your head.

Completing your picture perfect posture, you must consider your spine. If you could put a rubber band in your spine and think of stretching that rubber band, you would feel a sensation as if a rubber band were being stretched upward in your spine.

Remember, your body must be straight and tall with your arms hanging loosely at your side. Think of it as a straight line starting at the tip of the ear coming all the way down to the ankle. If you are doing this, you have Picture Perfect Posture! Think of yourself as being ready for a picture to be taken.

Correct posture must be considered if you are seated while practicing or singing in a choir. Again, think of being in a group picture, seated and not standing. When the photographer says to stand tall, then you should also, sit up straight and tall.

You have two options if you are singing while seated in a chair. One is to sit forward in the chair, so you will not be in a slouched position. You must not allow yourself to slouch to sing! Again, the rib cage must be back and relaxed, the chin slightly tucked. That is good posture!

The second option is to sit all the way back. If you are going to do this, then sit with the backside against the back of the chair. You should be able to hold yourself up without relying on leaning back. Do this by

staying tall, sliding all the way back in the chair, and keeping a feeling of being stretched upward.

Another helpful suggestion is to keep your feet flat on the floor with your weight evenly distributed. If you as a student extend your feet in front of the chair in which you are seated into a relaxed position, you will slouch causing the rib cage to press down on the diaphragm keeping the diaphragm from having room to operate with the air that is needed. Posture is so important!

If you understand and know how to put into practice the things discussed in this lesson, then you will understand Picture Perfect Posture!

LESSON 4 | POWER

Developing the Diaphragm

In this lesson, I am going to give you another illustration about the importance of making sure the diaphragm is the control center. When you are trying to sustain a note or project and increase your volume, the pressure should be on the abdomen area -- never on the throat. You should never try to force any pressure in or around the throat. Learn to control the power from the diaphragm. When taking that deep breath of air, you should feel somewhat tense in the abdomen/diaphragm area. Holding the tension in that abdomen area, slowly release with control the amount of air that is needed to sustain a note or complete a phrase in singing. This is done with the diaphragm.

When making a strong emphasis in speaking, there will be a noticeable difference in the projection of the abdomen/diaphragm area. For instance, hold the edge of a book against your abdomen and speak emphatically, “Hey!” You should feel, as well as see, the book push away from your abdomen. Again, all the tension and pressure will be felt from the abdomen /diaphragm area, but never from the throat! To speak louder correctly, learn to create more force from the diaphragm without putting any pressure on the vocal cords. Holding the book’s end against your tummy, say strongly, “Hey! Hey! Hey!” Each time the book should quickly move outward by the force of the tummy pushing against the book. Practice that exercise a few times, and you will realize the diaphragm, not your throat, is controlling the force and volume of your voice.

The benefits of building a strong, firm diaphragm are so many: learning to sustain notes, ability to sing through long phrases, learning to project, and achieving expression. It will actually give you much liberty in expression. The expression of a song really relies upon a strong diaphragm. A strong diaphragm will also give you energy and confidence! I promise, it will improve your singing!

Now, with all the above having been said, I will add that teaching voice students to understand how to properly use the diaphragm is not easy. There is one final exercise that, perhaps, will make it clearer and easier to understand.

Lie flat on your back on the floor with no pillow under your head. This will allow the shoulders to be comfortably back and the rib cage to be high. Relax, place your hand on your abdomen and breathe, so that you feel the abdomen rising and falling with each breath you take. Visualize a sleeping baby in a crib, tummy rising and falling with each breath. The baby's tummy will rise when their breath is inhaled, and it will fall each time a breath is exhaled. This is breathing naturally as God designed you to breathe.

Now, while you are lying flat on the floor, place some heavy books, perhaps encyclopedias or dictionaries, on your abdomen. Then, take a deep breath and force the books to rise, merely by breathing deeply, using the diaphragm to push up the books. Be sure you are not merely tightening the stomach muscles rather than inhaling and pushing the books upward with your diaphragm. If you do this exercise several times, two things will happen. First of all, you will begin to realize, and it will click with you, the proper use of the diaphragm. Secondly, this exercise will begin strengthening your diaphragm.

This lesson needs to become a habit of life. You must implement the conscious use of the diaphragm into your practice, or it will never become a habit. If it does not become a habit, you will never improve significantly and reach your full potential as a singer!

I guarantee, if you will consciously practice using the diaphragm properly, you will develop an unconscious habit of breathing that will not only benefit the singing voice, but also, your well-being for the rest of your life.

We will be covering much more later concerning the control center of singing -- the diaphragm. Also, important exercises will be covered to produce a powerful diaphragm. Put each into practice and keep on singing!

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. Name the Control Center of Singing.
2. The only tension or tightness you should ever feel in singing, should be in what area?
3. What are some benefits gained from building a strong diaphragm to improve your singing?
4. While lying on the floor, inhale and take a deep breath. Does the abdomen rise or fall?
5. While lying on the floor, exhale and release the breath of air. Does the abdomen rise or fall?
6. What must the conscious use of the diaphragm in practice become?

LESSON 5 | PRODUCING A PLEASANT SOUND

Developing a Natural, Open Sound

In this lesson, you will learn about phrasing, pronunciation, and how to make good sounds. It is very important when you sing that it is not just a beautiful sound, but that your message or words are understood as well. You might want to ask yourself, “Did they understand what I was singing?” What you want to consider today is how to sing the song with every word being understood. You definitely do not want to be misunderstood. The Bible in 1 Corinthians 14:15 says, “What is it then? ... I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

Consider how to produce an open sound verses a closed sound. There is a considerable difference between the two. In an open sound, you will have good resonance. All of the mechanics used in singing are open. Your mouth and throat are as open as possible. There are some exercises to practice that will help you to understand this better.

Once I read of an ancient orator who would practice speaking with pebbles in his mouth to learn to speak distinctly. Use some imaginary objects to place in your mouth to learn to sing clearly. First of all, put an imaginary egg in your mouth, and while the imaginary egg is in your mouth practice making some sounds.

Another imaginary tool to use is an imaginary tongue depressor. You probably have had that experience when you went to the doctor with a sore throat. If the doctor wanted to see down your throat, he put a tongue depressor in your mouth to hold your tongue down (probably gagging you) so he could look down your throat. I have learned instead of having the doctor do that, I can do it for him! I can pull my tongue down, and as I do, it will cause a little thing at the back of my throat that looks like an imaginary punching bag, to raise.

Now with your imaginary tongue depressor holding the back of your

tongue down and the imaginary egg keeping your mouth open, practice making some common vowel sounds that perhaps you learned in phonics at school. Make the following sounds while keeping the formation of your imaginary tools in place.

Short A - ahh

Long A - a-e, ai, ei, ay

Long E - ee

Long I - i-e, igh, y, ie

Long O - oe

Long U - u, ue, ew

Note: Refer to the demonstration of this exercise in the corresponding video for this lesson.

The biggest problem to creating an open sound is the singer's tongue. You must learn to get the tongue down and out of the way to produce a larger opening in the back of your throat. This will result in a good sound. God has given you a beautiful voice, but you may say, "That's not what others say!" That may be why you are taking this course! Yes, God gave you a beautiful voice. You must learn how to let it out. You will not have to make the sound, but you must learn to allow that beautiful sound to come out.

To achieve that beautiful sound, think of your mouth and throat being like a cave. Have you ever sung in a cave? I've had that experience a few times. Singing in a cave resonates well and produces a really beautiful sound. Singing in the shower has the same results. It resonates the voice, and it is true that this does improve the sound. If you can do that without being in a cave or in the shower, you can do it before an audience, perhaps at the church where you attend.

Think about how to make that big, cave-like opening. Begin with the tongue. Here is a little tip concerning the tongue in singing: think of

keeping the tip of the tongue at the bottom of the teeth. Now, lower the backside of the tongue with that imaginary tongue depressor. Do as the doctor would say and open the mouth saying, “Ahh!” You do the same thing whenever you are sleepy and you yawn. I have noticed whenever I am teaching this lesson in a classroom after lunch students cannot stop yawning! If you start doing some of the things I am telling you, you might find yourself having that same sensation of the need to yawn. What you are doing when you yawn is lowering the tongue. Also, you are unhinging the jaw.

Place two fingers at the bottom of each ear and yawn, allowing your fingers to sink into the depression created as your jaw unhinges. This will help you understand how yawning unhinges the jaw. You can feel your fingers go in. This is called unhinging the jaw.

When I sing, I try to sing as much as possible with an unhinged jaw. So again, put those two fingers there and unhinge the jaw. Bring the tongue down as flat and low as possible, keeping the imaginary tongue depressor on the backside of the tongue. Now say the vowels with your jaw unhinged. If you are able to keep the jaw unhinged, I promise, you will have a better quality of sound come forth.

The tongue can be likened to a mute that is placed in the trumpet in an orchestra. The trumpet is such a loud instrument. To mute the loud sound of the trumpet, a cone shaped object called a trumpet mute is placed in the bell of the trumpet. Not only is the volume and projection muffled considerably, but the clear quality of sound is lowered as well.

You have a built in mute, the tongue, and if you are not careful you will mute and change the quality of your natural voice. When the back of the tongue arches high, it shuts the passageway and closes the large, cave-like opening. You must keep the tongue as low as possible.

Everyday you must practice and review these principles in order to break

your old habits. Most people do not naturally sing or speak correctly. However, in order to articulate and enunciate words properly and making sure the vowel sounds are correct, you need to learn to lower the tongue to keep that large opening in the back of your mouth.

I was born in South Carolina and grew up in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky. As a result, yes, I have a southern accent. When I am in the North speaking and singing in meetings, I am sometimes asked about my accent or the lack thereof when I sing. Once a pastor's wife asked me, "How do you speak so Southern and yet sing so Northern?" Now, I have never considered my singing to be Northern, but I think what she meant was she could understand me better when I sang than when I spoke! I had to learn to change the way I made and formed the sounds when I sang. So remember, in singing, learn to lower the back of the tongue, and in so doing, remove the mute of the voice.

The other thing to do to increase the opening in the back of the throat is to raise the small, punching-bag-like membrane hanging from the soft pallet in the back of the throat. This membrane is called the uvula and is part of the soft pallet of the mouth. You can raise or lower the uvula. When you yawn, you are actually raising the soft pallet. Next is an exercise to help accomplish this.

Using a mirror in good lighting or a cell phone in camera mode, open your mouth as if in the doctor's office, and look at your uvula. Now, raise the uvula as if yawning. Raise and lower it several times while watching in the mirror. Think about how it feels when raised and how it feels when lowered in the relaxed position. See if you can raise and lower the little, punching-bag-like instrument! Again you must practice doing this everyday until you can incorporate it into singing. It needs to become natural until you do not think about it. It will take time. Be patient and keep practicing!

One of the keys to increasing your range, especially when singing the high notes, is to get the cave-like opening in the mouth and the soft

palate at the back of the tongue raised. The tendency of people when trying to sing higher notes is to tighten everything. You want to open your mouth wide, relax the tongue, and raise the soft pallet. This needs to become habitual. This allows the cavities to resonate the sound. Just think of creating a little cave.

Now, consider resonating the sound of your voice to fill an auditorium. You have two, God-given, built-in resonators in your body. One is in the chest's rib cage and the other is in the sinus cavities.

A stereo-speaker system explains this. Perhaps, you have seen speakers on a stereo. Usually, there is a large speaker on the bottom and a smaller speaker on the top. The large speaker on the bottom is for the deep, base sounds. The top, smaller speaker is for the higher pitch sounds. God has made you with a natural stereo-speaker system which you need to learn how to use.

Now, when you open up the throat, lower the tongue, raise the soft palate, and create that large, cave-like opening. You are creating a good area to resonate. Notice in this resonating process that the rib cage begins to vibrate. If you put your hands on your rib cage and begin to talk, you can feel the resonation and vibration. Also, place your hands on the cheek bones and begin to sing up a music scale. You will notice that the higher the pitch, the more resonation in the sinus area. So, you must open up and refrain from arching the tongue, causing a distorted sound.

You will notice a marked difference in the resonation and the quality of sound when having an arched and raised tongue in contrast to a flattened and lowered tongue. Do this simple exercise. Arch the tongue in the back of your throat reducing the opening and sing "Ahh." You should notice that the quality of tone is distorted. You are forcing the sound to come out the nasal passages rather than the large mouth opening, causing a nasal sound. It can also cause a breathy sound. Neither of these are the sound that you are trying to achieve. You will be distorting the

natural sound that God has given you. Now, while singing “Ahh”, lower or flatten the tongue at the back of the throat and notice the good change of the quality of tone. You must practice until singing with the open sound becomes natural. Learn how to use the natural, God-given instrument -- your voice -- to produce a beautiful, open, free sound.

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. Making a beautiful sound in singing is important, but perhaps, more important is that the message or words are.
2. What does 1 Corinthians 14:15 say that we should sing with?
3. What were the two types of sounds discussed in this lesson?
4. What mutes and distorts the quality and projection of the voice?
5. To learn to sing with a natural, open sound, what are two imaginary objects used in this lesson to keep the tongue down?

LESSON 6 | PITCH

Developing Accuracy in Vocal Tone

After clarifying your vocal range or placement (Soprano, Alto, Tenor or Bass), it is important that you develop an accuracy in pitch. Accuracy of pitch is important in singing. Singing is not a game of horseshoes! Being in the range or even close to being on pitch is not okay. If you are not exactly on pitch, no one will enjoy your singing.

If you are a beginner or have been told that you cannot sing, like my mother told me as a boy of ten or twelve, do not give up. You can learn to sing. Maybe you have been told you are a monotone singer or even a “foghorn”; this lesson will help you learn to sing. If you are just beginning, you will need someone to help you who can listen and be your assistant in this lesson. If you believe that you can match tones fairly well, you still will benefit from a listening ear to help tune your tone.

The best method of teaching is to begin where you are and progress to where you need to be. You must discover where you are with your ability to match tones or pitch with your voice.

To get started, try to match tones on a piano with your voice. At a piano, play Middle C. Sing “ahh” matching the piano as closely as you can.

If you have difficulty matching the tone, have your listening ear find your tone on the piano by ascending or descending the scale from Middle C until your voice and piano match.

For instance, if your tone is below Middle C and is at note A below Middle C, find your singing tone by playing Middle C and singing “ahh.” Descend the scale a half-step at a time until you reach your tone on the piano at A. After successfully finding and matching your tone on the piano, play the note several times and match it while singing “ahh.”

For the next exercise, with your voice, move up and down the scale in small increments. If your tone is on A, sing “ahh” starting at A and move upward to A sharp and back down to A natural. Repeat this a few times until it is comfortable to do so. Then try descending a half-step. Starting at A, sing “ahh” and go down a half-step to A flat and then back up to A natural. Repeat that exercise a few times until it becomes easier.

The next step is to move up and down the scale with your voice. Starting again at your comfortable tone, A as an example, sing a sustaining “ahh.” Move up a half-step and back down to A and then down a half-step and back up to the starting note A. You have now successfully sung three tones! You have graduated from “Monotone class” and are ready to be promoted.

To progress further, practice adding notes a half-step up and down until you can sing at least four notes above and four notes below your comfort tone. If you accomplish this feat, you will soon be able to sing a part in a choir.

When you have reached the level of matching tones with your voice, you can begin to improve your pitch. If when singing, your notes are slightly beneath the pitch, you are singing flat. If you are slightly above pitch, you are singing sharp. To improve your pitch you must improve your ear to discern a good pitch and also learn to sing with an open sound. The more open the throat and mouth, the easier it is to hear your pitch.

Create a visual aid and do a vocal exercise to help with pitch. This will be called a pitch meter. Have you seen an old meter that looked like a speedometer? It has a needle that when there is perfect balance the needle is vertical. If the needle of the meter is tilted left or right it is off balance.

Place one of your hands pointing upwards in front of your mouth with your thumb nearest the mouth. Play F above Middle C on the piano.

Sing “ahh” and flatten the pitch slightly while bending your hand to the left in accord with the flattened pitch. While still singing “ahh”, bring the pitch back up to vertical with your hand and voice being exactly on pitch. Next, sing “ahh” again and this time sharpen the pitch slightly while bending the hand to the right in accord with the sharpened pitch. While still singing “ahh”, bring the pitch back down to vertical with your hand and voice being exactly on pitch. You need to practice bending the pitch several times to train your ear and voice. This creates good ear and voice coordination. The more you do this simple exercise, the more you will improve your pitch. Someday you may be accused of having perfect pitch!

A good question to consider is, “What causes my voice to go flat or sharp?” Many singers struggle with good, clear tone and pitch when going up to higher notes. Some of the struggle may be mental. Allow me to give you a clear mental picture of reaching higher notes. When going up to a high note, do not think of reaching the note way up there! Just think of the note being over there.

When singing do not think of getting up to the note. You may almost get there and arrive a little flat. Think of it as clearing a barbed wire fence. You want to get over the top and not almost over the top. You might leave a little behind! Learn to clear the note. Think of coming down upon the note rather than reaching up to the note.

When singing intervals or an upward phrase, perhaps think of hopping on rocks to cross a stream. You must lightly land on each stone until you reach the other side.

Mistakes made in singing which often cause distortions in pitch are forcing the sound and bearing down on the note. Pushing the sound out when reaching for a high note may make you over-reach the goal and be sharp of pitch. If you bear down upon the note it will cause you to distort the pitch or go flat. Remember, singing should never be forced or

stressful. Do not make the sound, but allow the beautiful sound God has given you to flow out naturally.

Producing The Open Sound

We will now discuss how to be open and let out your beautiful sound. You must learn to open all of the vocal passages to achieve good pitch and sound. The throat, soft palate, sinuses, and mouth must be trained to open and allow your natural, God-given sound to come out. The ears will open as well to tune your pitch. You must sing with an open throat.

Two primary keys are used in keeping an open throat. One is lowering the tongue, and the other is raising the soft palate. As mentioned in a previous lesson, think of a doctor putting a tongue depressor on the back of your tongue and pressing it down. The natural response is to gag which raises the soft palate. To avoid that negative experience, I always open my mouth wide and lower my tongue and raise my soft palate, the uvula, to allow the doctor a good view of my throat. When I sing, I do the same thing. I keep the back of the tongue down and raise the soft palate and sing with an open sound.

Look in a mirror and open your mouth wide, as if for a doctor. Lower the back of your tongue and raise the uvula (it looks like a miniature punching bag). Raise it and lower it several times while singing “ahh.” Notice the transformation of sound when you lower the tongue and raise the uvula. Be sure that the tongue is lowered or it will mute the sound. Your sound improves greatly, your ears hear clearly, and your pitch improves.

Use a recording device, such as your cell phone, to view and listen to yourself in order to determine if you are correctly producing an open sound. With a piano, practice singing a simple scale while staying within your range. Sing “ahh”, keeping everything as open as possible. Concentrate on hitting each note squarely on pitch. Sing songs that are

comfortable for you and within your range. Begin putting into practice the open sound.

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. Can voice lessons help a monotone singer or even a “foghorn” learn to sing? Y/N
2. A listening ear to assist you, can help you do what?
3. It is important to know where you are and begin there, in order to progress to where you need to be. True / False
4. What is it called if your tone is slightly below pitch?
5. What is it called if your tone is slightly above pitch?
6. When singing a high note, it is better to go over the top rather than reaching for the high note. It is better to clear the fence than almost get over! What is it like jumping over?
7. Never force, stress, push, or bear down in singing. It can distort the pitch. True/False
8. The ear is not important in singing. True/False
9. What should the throat, soft palate, sinuses, and mouth must be trained to do to allow your natural, God-given sound to come out?
10. What are the two primary keys to keeping an open throat while singing?
11. What is name of the “miniature punching bag” in the back of your throat?

LESSON 7 | PRACTICING AND VOCALIZING

Vocal Exercises

This lesson will focus on vocalizing. If you expect much improvement, you must vocalize as you practice everyday. When it comes to improvement in singing, vocalizing equals improvement.

Dr. Lee Roberson, a great pastor who built the largest church in the world in his time, was also a singer in his younger days. However, in his sixties, he lost his voice and was told he would never be able to preach again. Knowing that I was a pastor and a singer, he told me that I must vocalize everyday. He knew that if I did not everyday, my voice would not become strong, developed, and consistent. Thankfully, he did get his voice back and continued many years in his ministry. I have taken seriously his advice and practiced vocalizing to keep my voice strong. I am thankful that at sixty plus years, my voice is still strong. I pastor a church, do evangelistic work and a lot of singing. Now, I encourage you to do the same -- vocalize everyday! Think of it as a workout!

Voice Exercise 1 - Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah

I have named this warm up “Ugga!” Ugga is the bulldog mascot for the University of Georgia football team. So, you can think of Ugga as you are doing your warm ups! It is going to look and sound hilarious and someone may laugh, but that is okay! Just enjoy your practice knowing you are working to improve.

You will be repeating, “blah, blah, blah,” as you allow the jowls to do what they want to! Remember, to relax while doing this warm up. Actually, the purpose is to get everything in your mouth, jaw, and throat to relax and loosen to help with your voice. Have fun with this one and do not allow those who might laugh to intimidate you! You will soon begin seeing some improvement in singing. Begin at Middle C and ascend up the scale to G and then descend down the scale back to Middle C and then repeat. Next, raise the scale 1/2 step to D-flat and

repeat the exercise. Then raise the vocal 1/2 step again and repeat. Only go up the scale as is comfortable. Do not strain or stress your voice. In the weeks and months ahead, you will notice an increase in your vocal range.

Voice Exercise 2 - E, A, AH

Another vocalizing technique is learning how to keep an open sound using the vowel sounds “E”, “A”, and “Ahh.” We will start the vocal at Middle C and raise the vocal a half-step and repeat. A rule to keep in mind with this is not to go any higher than is comfortable right now. As you continue to practice this vocalizing technique, you will learn how to go into an upper range. Always stop, before you feel any tension discomfort on your vocal cords.

Here are some additional tips to keep in mind as you practice this technique: keep the chin tilted down rather than jutting upwards; if you wear glasses, it helps to even look over the top of them; stand tall and keep shoulders back and relaxed; keep the rib cage high.

Voice Exercise 3 - Moo, AH

The third vocalizing technique we will do is repeating the phrases “moo” and “ahh” as you raise the key a half-step at a time with each repeat. Again, this is to help with keeping open sounds and to keep the voice moving.

As you do these techniques, be very aware that you do not cheat any note as you are moving up and down the scale. Think of the scale as going up and down a set of stairs. Make sure you step firmly on every step as you ascend the stairs and descend. Do not skip any! Do not make the stairs or vocal scale a musical slide. Save the slide for the park!

Vocal Exercise 4 - Note Scale E, A, Ahh - Legato

For the next vocal exercise, pick up the pace a little. You will use a five-note scale and the vowel sounds “E”, “A”, “Ahh.” Be sure once again that you sing each sound and note as you ascend and descend the scale. We will begin at middle C. As you continue to practice vocalizing the “E”, “A”, “Ahh” technique, sing each of the vowel sounds and raise the key a half-step each time and repeat the vocal scale.

You will need a piano to be able to do so. If you do not play the piano, then record someone playing the scales for you. Then, you can have your vocal exercise with you at all times and can practice throughout the day. In the car while traveling is a great place to vocalize. Much of my own vocalizing when I was taking voice lessons was done in the car as I traveled to work. Have the pianist record the key changes much higher than you are able to do at the present, because, as was said earlier, you will soon be able to go higher.

You should also practice lowering the vocal a half-step each vocal. The vocal scale would be played on the piano beginning at Middle C. Then, repeat, the vocal a half-step lower in the key of B. Repeat, lowering each vocal a half-step at a time. Practice going as low as you are comfortable and no further.

Each of the previous vocal exercises, can be and should be practiced, beginning at Middle C and lowering a half-step at a time. Remember, vocalizing should be comfortable with no stress or tension. Vocalizing is used as a warm up, as well as training and strengthening your voice. Be patient. Improvement and advancement will be achieved with consistent, serious practice.

Vocal Exercise 5 - MEE, LAH, RAY, FAH

Now, I will talk about a vocalizing technique that will help with tone in our singing. You will use these blends, “mee”, “lah”, “ray”, “fah.” Just as before, begin the vocal exercise at Middle C. Repeat these blends as

you move up the scale, changing the key change a half-step each vocal. One thing that helps to be able to go higher in these scales, is to think of going over the top of a waterfall. Think of jumping over a barbed wire fence. You want to clear the top wire or you may leave a “little behind” on the barbed wire (spoken from experience). Make sure you are clearly over the top note.

Vocal Exercise 6 - Ahh, A, E, I, O, OO

The next vocal exercise we will use vowel sounds “Ahh”, “A”, “E”, “I”, “O”, “OO.” Now concentrate on moving through your lower and upper voice ranges. Sometimes when singing, perhaps you have noticed that at certain places in the song you have weak spots in your voice. What is actually happening is you are in between two voice ranges. There are three ranges in our voices that you feel resonance. The lower (from the abdomen to the throat), the middle range (from mid-chest to the mouth), and the third range (the head). The ability to move from one range to another may be difficult. You might think of it as having to shift gears. Also, think of building a strong bridge to connect the ranges.

The following exercise will help build that bridge. The only way to build a strong bridge is by vocal exercising. Using the vowel sounds, “Ahh”, “A”, “E”, “I”, “O”, “OO”, sing them as you move up and down the scale, raising the vocal a half-step each time as in the previous exercises. Sing the vowels, while thinking of unhinging the jaw using a good, open sound; go back and forth across those weak spots in your voice, building a strong bridge across those weak spots. Expect it to get more difficult as you move higher in your range.

Usually, for males it is especially difficult to go from the middle range to the upper range. However, once you reach the upper range, it becomes easy to keep going higher. The biggest problem is going from one range to another. That is why it is important to build a strong bridge between the ranges. Remember, keep the rib cage up and the diaphragm firm.

A word of advice here is not to make the sound with your throat. You must learn to allow the sound, not “make the sound”.

Remember, these vocal exercises will need to be continued everyday!

In conclusion, just continue practicing your vocalizations. The more you do so, the sooner you will be surprised at the notes you are able to sing. You may even be surprised at the places or events at which you find yourself singing!

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. When it comes to improvement in singing what equals improvement?
2. How frequent should a singer vocalize?
3. What is the purpose for the “UGGA” vocal exercise?
4. It is important when vocalizing vowel sounds to learn to make what kind of sounds?
5. When vocalizing higher up the scale, you must be sure to go over the top note rather than reaching for the top. What must you clear?
6. What should you never feel when vocalizing?
7. How does vocalizing build a bridge between vocalizing ranges?
8. Describe the three vocal ranges where you feel resonance.

LESSON 8 | POWERFUL PROJECTION

Developing Vocal Projection and Sustains

Today's lesson is one of the most important ones that we will cover, even if you do not become a singer! It would have been very good for me had my mother's prophecy come true. She said to me, "Lonnie, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you can't sing! You are messing up your brothers and sisters! Maybe the Lord will call you to preach!" Well, the Lord did call me to preach, but I am so glad that I learned to sing! Today's lesson would have helped me tremendously as a preacher. So, even if you do not become a singer, you may be a speaker. This lesson is going to help you! This lesson is about learning to project and how to have a powerful voice -- at least when needed!

Sometimes I am asked, "How do you sustain those long phrases and notes?" One fellow told me that he thought I had a scuba tank somewhere! Consider, there may be a time when you need to project even if there is no microphone. Once when singing the national anthem at a baseball stadium, I was given a dead microphone! Yet, when I began to sing, I filled that stadium with my voice. How did I do that? The secret is the diaphragm!

I am going to give you some tips on how to use your diaphragm. You will learn to build and train your diaphragm -- just like body building -- to have a better singing voice.

The diaphragm is the foundation of singing. It is a thin, skeletal muscle beneath the rib cage and has the largest area of any muscle in your body. It is somewhat dome shaped, and when you take a deep breath it goes downward. A lot of people are confused on how to breathe. They do not know if they should breathe up or down. The key is learning to take a deep breathe downward.

A key to proper use of the diaphragm is good posture. Again, think of standing tall as if you are having your picture taken. In order to get the

rib cage high, stand tall, roll the shoulders back, and relax. In proper breathing, there should be no movement of the shoulders or the rib cage. All the movement will be below the rib cage. To illustrate, put your hands on either side of your waist-line with fingers spread apart and breathe in and out; inhale..... and then exhale. You should have felt your hands expanding. Your thumb, on your back, should have felt like your back expanding, and your fingers should have felt like they spread apart. Your waistline should have expanded, too.

Keeping the rib cage high is important. The lungs have no power. They are two membrane sacs like plastic bags that are within the rib cage. When the diaphragm bottoms out it leaves a void in the rib cage for the lungs to fill. The larger that capacity of the rib cage, the more the lungs will be filled with air. To illustrate, place your two thumbs on the highest extended part of the rib cage and notice what happens when you slouch downward. With every breath you will have to push the rib cage upward; however, if you get the rib cage high and put your thumbs on the same place as before, the thumbs will not move when you breathe.

Another helpful illustration is to stand with your side facing a mirror, hold a book on its end against your tummy and notice what happens when you take a deep breath and let it out. You will notice the book moving in and out against your tummy as you breathe in and out. You will notice, you are taking deep breaths from the diaphragm instead of high, shallow breaths. You must train yourself to use the diaphragm to breathe deeply with every breath you take. Proper, diaphragmatic breathing will benefit you the rest of your life by raising your oxygen levels and giving you more energy. Learn to breathe downward, and learn to breathe deeply!

An exercise to use is to put your hand on your tummy and pretend you are panting like a dog. Maybe you have a puppy that you have watched whenever it was overheated, or you have noticed how the dog pants for breath. Copy your puppy and do as he does; pant like he does several

times in a row.

Another exercise is to blow up a balloon, real or imaginary, in five deep breaths as big as you can. These breaths need to be controlled from the diaphragm -- the control center. You might see some stars or floaters go past your eyes. This is okay; just do not pass out! This is a great exercise for building a strong diaphragm. You can do this exercise, along with the “panting like a dog”, several times throughout the day. The more you do them the stronger the diaphragm will become.

One more exercise to help you learn how to control the diaphragm is to pretend you are a snake! Hiss like a snake as you hold your breath and slowly exhale. Stand tall, take a deep breath, get the rib cage high, and fill the lungs by breathing downward. Hold that breath and hiss as you let the air out through your teeth; faintly let out the hiss of air. Time yourself on this, and see how long you can do this. The first time you do this, it may take you twenty seconds which is the average time of my students. Your goal should be to do this every day, several times a day until you are able to go past thirty seconds. Once you have reached thirty seconds, set a new goal for perhaps one minute. This is the goal that I had, and I worked at it day after day and month after month until I was able to do it for a minute.

The advantage of this is that it will enable you to hold out phrases in singing and give expression and interpretation to a song without having to stop for air. It will also give you confidence. One of the things that makes most singers nervous is the fear that they will run out of air. The confidence comes in knowing that you have a strong diaphragm.

A strong diaphragm is important in singing and speaking or making strong emphasis because it is what pushes your words out.

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. What is the foundation of singing?
2. What will developing a strong diaphragm help you to improve?
3. When taking a deep breath, does the diaphragm move upward or downward?
4. What is the key to singing from the diaphragm?
5. When breathing properly, should your shoulders and rib cage move up and down or in and out?
6. When taking a deep breath, should the waistline expand or contract?
7. Give three exercises you should do each day to train and strengthen the diaphragm.
8. In the hissing exercise, what would be the ultimate goal of time to reach for a strong, controlling diaphragm?
Choose one: A. 20 seconds B. 40 seconds C. 1 minute
9. How does developing a strong diaphragm improve expression and interpretation in singing a song?

LESSON 9 | PRONUNCIATION

Producing the Open Sound

Learning to sing is not merely acquiring good posture, pitch, projection or ability to carry a good tune. A good singer must be able to deliver a clear, understandable message to the listener or audience. This lesson will help you with pronunciation and phrasing. You will learn how to make an open sound which will not only make the message of a song more understandable, but also, will enhance a clearer, natural tone of voice.

In this lesson, you will be given a series of simple speaking exercises, which will be contrasting two ways of making sounds. The first in each series, we will call a negative or closed sound.

The second, we will call a positive or open sound. You will discover that the open, positive sounds are more distinct and pleasant to the listening ear than the closed or negative sounds. The open sound is a good sound that you need to learn to consistently do. The closed sound is the sound that most singers make and if you can learn to overcome making the closed sound, you will greatly enhance your singing voice.

During this lesson, it will help you understand the full concept, if you will do these exercises while watching yourself in a mirror. An even better tool is the cell phone that you can both watch your facial expressions and record to hear the contrast in the two different styles of sound.

There are two things you need to observe and think about while doing these contrasting, vocal exercises. Think of how it feels as well as how it looks.

1. Notice the facial expression in making the sound.
2. Notice the mechanical changes of the throat and mouth and where the sound is produced and resonates.

The following vowel sounds are the sounds that we will use for this exercise for both the closed and open sounds. (Ahh - Aye - EE - I - Oh - Ooh) Though the vowel sounds are the same for both, the mechanics used to produce the sounds are different which changes the quality of voice dramatically.

It is very important to view the video of “Pronunciation” with this exercise.

Make the negative or closed sound Ahh. Keep the tongue arched high in the back of the throat, tighten the throat and facial muscles and say Ahh, as you would say it in disgust. Repeat this phrase, “Ahh! I failed the test!” Notice the face and throat are tight and you have shut down or muted the sound.

Change the same vowel sound Ahh into a positive and open sound. Say Ahh as if surprised, with the throat open, the back of the tongue flattened, the jaw lowered and the mouth open. Repeat this phrase, “Ahh! That’s a good idea!” Notice not only the difference in sound but also the appearance in facial expression. We have opened the throat, lowered the tongue and relaxed the facial muscles.

Do the following speaking exercises in the same manner. For the negative sounds, tighten the jaw, throat and facial muscles with the back of the tongue high. Open the mouth only slightly. Think of making negative statements.

For the open, positive sound, keep the throat open, the back of the tongue flattened, the jaw lowered and the mouth open. Think of saying each phrase in a positive, happy manner.

(-) Aye - “Aye! Watch it buddy!”

(+) Aye - “Aye! It’s good to see you!”

(-) Eee - “Eeek! A Mouse!”

(+) Eee - “Whee! I am sliding down the slide!”

(-) I - “I don’t care!”

(+) I - “I do! I do! I do want some ice cream!”

(-) Oh - “Oh! That was painful!”

(+) Oh - “Oh! What a nice surprise!”

(-) ooh - “Ooh! She stepped in the pooh!”

(+) ooh - “ooh! oowy, goowy, chewy chocolate!”

To distinguish between the open and closed sounds as well as understanding the vocal mechanics in making the sounds, do the following exercise. Begin with the negative, closed sound of each of the vowel sounds (ahh - aye - eee - i - oh - ooh) and transform each, one at a time into the open, positive sound.

Closed, Negative Sound

Open, Positive Sound

Transform to

Ahh	_____	Ahh
Aye	_____	Aye
Eee	_____	Eee
I	_____	I
Oh	_____	Oh
Ooh	_____	Ooh

After you have transformed each of the closed sounds into open sounds, several times, practice singing the song, Amazing Grace using the open vowel sounds. Concentrate on keeping the jaw lowered, throat open, back of the tongue down, and the soft palate high. Your voice will transform into a pleasant, natural sound.

A good vocal exercise to do, to solidify this lesson is to connect each of the open vowel sounds (Ahh-Aye-Eee-I-Oh-Ooh). Take a deep breath,

beginning at Middle C, sing the open vowel sounds in succession. Go up the scale in $\frac{1}{2}$ step increments, singing and connecting the vowel sounds each step up the scale. Concentrate on keeping all of the vowels as open as possible.

While doing this exercise, put one hand on your chest and one hand on your cheek bone. If your sound is open, you will feel the resonance in both your cheek and chest. It is also helpful to not only feel the resonance but watch in a mirror to see if you are keeping the jaw unhinged, the vowels open, going from one vowel sound to another. The more the opening, the more resonance you feel the better sound you will have.

Review Questions

Write your answers on a sheet of paper.

1. Explain why it is equally important to deliver a clear, understandable message and carry a good quality tune.
2. What are the two ways of making vocal sounds?
3. How is watching in a mirror or cell phone while doing these exercises so important?
4. It is important in this lesson to observe facial expressions and mechanical changes of what?
5. What is the sound, which is poor in quality, that most singers make?
6. How should a singer achieve the open, positive sound?
7. To transform your voice into a pleasant natural tone, it is necessary to transition your sound from the closed to the open. True / False
8. If you are producing an open sound, what two places should you

feel resonance?

LESSON 10 | PERFECTING

Practice Makes Perfect

Today's lesson is very important for the voice student who is serious about improving their God-given voice. Regardless of talent level, there will be little improvement or development without practice.

The most beautiful instrument ever created is the human voice. It is God-given and made after His likeness. It far surpasses any instrument man has ever created such as a Stradivarius violin. The Stradivarius violin, in the hands of an amateur, would not please any audience, unless the audience were the amateur's mother. The performance is mostly affected by the countless hours of practice and not the quality of the instrument.

Your voice is a Stradivarius instrument. You must learn how to use it. How quickly you improve and advance will be determined by the amount of time you spend in practice. It is true that practice makes perfect. You may say, "The perfect voice is impossible to achieve!" That may be true. But one thing is for sure that without practice you will never get any closer to the perfect voice.

Sometimes after I have sung a song, people will say to me, "The Lord sure has given you a beautiful voice." I then say to them, "Praise the Lord! Thank you!" Sometimes, I chuckle and say, "You should have heard my voice when God first gave it to me!"

When I was a boy of ten or twelve years of age, my mother said to me one day, "Son, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but you can't sing. You are messing up your brothers and sister when they sing. Maybe the Lord will call you to preach. Just let your brothers and sister do the singing." Well, needless to say, it did hurt my feelings; however, I knew that if I were to become a singer, I would have to learn to sing. That statement by my dear mother did more to encourage me to learn to sing than perhaps telling me that I was a good singer.

I promised the Lord that if He would help me to learn to sing, then I would sing for Him. I knew that if I ever learned to sing, I would have to work at it. The Lord gave me some good voice teachers and in the years to come I would practice every principle that I had learned in singing. I did everything my voice teachers told me to do. Very few people have natural talent that allows them to never have to practice. Most people, like myself, have to practice to improve. There are very few prodigies. Even prodigies have to practice to improve.

The following document is a practice sheet to help you become accountable every day to practicing. This practice sheet helped me to develop consistent habits and became my accountability in my early years of vocal development. You need to have a consistent record of your practice every day. Each day you will mark the time spent in practice. In just a few months of doing it daily, you will begin to notice great improvement in singing.

Practicing every day is like shooting free-throws in practice. It will pay great dividends when the game is on the line. The same is true of any sport or profession. There is no progress without practice.

Now, take a look at the practice sheet and then consider some things that you need to include in every day's practice time. It is very important that you practice at least twenty minutes per day as a minimum. If you will demand more of yourself and practice thirty minutes a day, you will find that you will progress much more rapidly. It was practice that was the key to my development as a singer. I practiced thirty minutes per day for five years. By consistently doing so, I developed a strong diaphragm and increased my range, agility, and flexibility in my voice. If you choose to do the same, you also will begin to recognize your progress.

Most of your practice each day should be in the development of your singing voice. At least fifteen to twenty minutes should be spent in

strengthening the diaphragm with breathing exercises and vocalizing. Practicing is not merely singing for twenty to thirty minutes. Think of it as a vocal work out. Endeavor not to endure but to enjoy the vocal workout. I read about a very famous, world-renowned tenor singer who was only allowed to do fundamental vocal and diaphragmatic exercises for four years of his development rather than singing the classics for which he later became famous.

Though the diaphragm exercises will be physical in nature -- and you may feel it as a true workout -- you must not put any stress or strain upon the delicate vocal cords. Do not do anything that is uncomfortable to the voice. Be patient! You cannot expect a transformation over night or in one or weeks of practice. Your practice must become a lifestyle.

Each lesson of instruction you will be given new principles that you must incorporate into your practice each day. For instance, the lesson on perfect posture must be part of your practice each day until it becomes a lifestyle. The lesson on proper breathing must become habitual not merely in practice, but it must become the way that you breathe for the rest of your life. However, if you do not make it part of your practice each day, it will never become a lifestyle. Vocalizing must be a major part of your practice time every day. I assure you that without applying these simple exercises each day you will never become more than an average singer.

Daily, Simple Routine of Practicing

It would be good to, first, began with prayer asking the Lord to help you to achieve your goals and make the most of the practice of today.

Then, make sure that you are using good posture. Do the routines to make sure your posture is correct. Do this every day until it is automatic.

Thirdly, go through all of your breathing exercises. It is good to feel it as a work out. This will give you good energy to finish the day's practice.

Last of all, but certainly not least of all, you must spend a good deal of time vocalizing. You will have several vocal exercises given later to help increase range, enhance quality of voice, enhance tone and pitch, and add flexibility and agility in your singing.

PRIVATE VOICE LESSONS PRACTICE TIME SHEET

INSTRUCTOR: DR. LONNIE MOORE

Student must practice at least 140 minutes per week.

Dates	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Endeavor to practice every day in at least some form. Vocalizing is important to strengthen the voice, and the breathing exercises strengthen the diaphragm. Try to do both every day. You do not have to be in a practice room to do either. If you have recorded the piano vocal exercise,

you can do those and the breathing exercises while in a car or, perhaps, doing some chore. These excises are the foundation of singing. **DO IT EACH DAY!** Use fifteen minutes of your practice time each day to vocalize and build the diaphragm.