

INTRODUCTION

The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians – Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives - stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: “He is good; his love endures forever.” Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God. (2 Chronicles 5:11-14 NIV)

Can you picture it? All those musicians with cymbals, harps and lyres; all those priests with trumpets; the singers giving thanks and praise to the Lord? All this to ceremonially return the Ark of the Covenant to its rightful place in the temple, under Solomon's direction.

And did you notice that the glory of God, in the form of a cloud, so filled the temple that the priests could no longer carry out their services? I'm convinced that this supernatural experience didn't occur simply because of an enormous orchestra (including 120 trumpets!) that accompanied a spectacular, well-prepared choir. I believe the secret behind this phenomenon is found in the little phrase from verse 13: *The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice ...*

In other words, they were all on the same page, aiming in the same direction, focusing on the same goal, united in their praise of the same God.

Still, it didn't *just happen*, you know. Somebody had to organize and train the instrumentalists and singers. And lots of somebodies had to commit to being organized and trained so that all the activity wouldn't highlight musical virtuosity, idolizing individual performers or composers, but would honor God.

That takes preparation, and diligence, and hard work, and investment. It takes excellence.

In an earlier book, *SMALL CHOIR / BIG IMPACT*, I offered some rehearsal and performance ideas to – as the subtitle suggests - “take your choir from puny to powerful.” That book centered on practical applications and strategies that had worked for me through the years directing choirs. This time around, we'll be a little more conceptual. I'm hoping to provide you with a springboard to help you launch your own creativity, and achieve excellence in the process.

By the way, where excellence is concerned, planning, preparation and presentation are only the beginning. We want our choirs to be excellent not so that hearers will be dazzled by a sterling performance, or be awed by the artistry of a composition. Rather, we want our choirs to be excellent so that all musical or technical distractions are removed, and all that remains is a crystal-clear message.

We're going to begin by seeing how we can help our choirs view themselves as worship leaders, examples and role models, thereby becoming encouragers to your congregation. I've also chosen to close each chapter with some diagnostic questions you can ponder yourself, share with a leadership team, or even present to your whole choir.

So, if you're ready to discover why excellence in your choir matters, let's dig in!

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