

Profile of a Great Choir Member

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One of my fine choir members took me to lunch recently and asked a question I hear so rarely it caught me off guard. He said, "I love being in the choir, and I want to be the best choir member I can be. What can I do to be better?" He had picked up a few hints through my weekly comments that let him know we held a fairly significant standard and expected a strong commitment to the music ministry. It was his quest to find out how that was more specifically defined.

Before I tell you how I responded to him, let me say that I firmly believe what this gentleman did was a very healthy thing. When was the last time you went to your music pastor, or your senior pastor, or your boss and asked them, "What can I do to be better?" This posturing seems to clarify that you want to be properly aligned to your authority, and that you want your contribution to be maximized. When you give them the right to speak into your life with appropriate boundaries, you are functioning well according to 1 Peter 5:5, which tell us to "submit to one another, and to be clothed with humility."

I left that lunch not impressed with his desire for excellence, but with a determination to clearly articulate to all in our music ministry what goals we should be shooting for as we give ourselves wholly to the work of the Kingdom. After all, who of us wants to be measured by some standard when we don't know what that standard is? It's my job as the music pastor to set the boundaries and engage the singers and musicians in the vision God has established for us.

So here's my list of ten characteristics of a great choir member. Not all of us "bat a thousand" on every point, but nonetheless they remain treat goals to set before us.

1. *A great choir member loves the Lord and loves to sing.* These are the two basic requirements to sing in our choir. There is simply a joy about the choir member who possesses these two passions. They have fallen in love with the One Who has placed the song in their heart.
2. *A great choir member is faithful.* It's no secret that we can't build a music ministry on people who aren't there! Many people with the best of intentions just can't make it to choir rehearsal, but I remind them that "people vote with their feet." You make it clear where your commitment is by where your feet take you.
3. *A great choir member is prompt.* Ouch! The old adage is still true: "Early is on time; on time is late."
4. *A great choir member gets along well with others.* You may not like the perfume of the lady sitting next to you or the shoes she wears, but you can still find a way to graciously accept those in the choir who can be challenging. The great choir member knows how to get beyond themselves and reach out to others. We have a little policy in our place that goes like this: You are allowed to criticize *only* if you have a better idea or plan.
5. *A great choir member cooperates well with group efforts.* Not everyone understands all the necessary dynamics of being part of a group. It therefore becomes the responsibility of the leader to explain it. Being part of a group requires often laying down your individualistic ideas and agendas...for the sake of the group at large. Some people can do this easily, some can't. But the *great* choir members can at least recognize the importance of cooperating well with group efforts, whether it's fund-raisers or special events.
6. *A great choir member is committed to learning the music well.* Excellence is valued. Great choir members want to get it right and want the musical presentation to be the best it can possibly be. They will go the extra mile.
7. *A great choir member is committed to prayer.* Devotional living is a priority and is evidenced by the fruit in their lives.
8. *A great choir member is expressive and effective in communicating.* No longer is it good enough to just stand there and sing. This is the day of powerful communication. For the audience to fully grasp the impact of your presentation, you need great choir members who will pour their heart into effectively communicating the lyric with sincerity. Just think about the lyric you are singing and sing like you mean it...because you do!
9. *A great choir member is diligent in the rehearsal process.* They are teachable and can focus. The hardest part of any choir director's job in a rehearsal is not teaching or conducting the music. It's getting and maintaining the focus of attention of the choir members. Sometimes that is easier than at other times. When it's explained to the choir how some actions can totally break the focus of rehearsal, they can develop a greater sensitivity as to when that is acceptable and when it's not. Occasionally, we all need a little break in the atmosphere, but when it's time to 'knuckle down' and get the job done, you need choir members who are ready to focus with you and work.
10. *A great choir member is accountable.* I know of no organization of quality that does not demand some appropriate measure of accountability. In this day of voice mail and email, it's easy to let the leadership know if you need to be absent from a rehearsal or service. The ultimate point to this is: *Never leave the leadership questioning your level of commitment.* To me, that is the full responsibility of the individual choir member. We all have situations and circumstances that take us away from time to time, but there's really no excuse for not letting the leadership know why you are not at your post of duty. Don't forget that the leader is counting on you.

So there you have it...characteristics that define great choir members.

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