

VOCAL MASTER CLASS

Your Gathering and the Gospel | Sovereign Grace Music Conference

WHY DO WE HAVE VOICES? WHY DO WE SING?

Throughout Scripture, the Lord calls us to praise Him. His redeemed people join in the chorus of the angels and the redeemed gone before and praise His holy name.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth! Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100)

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! (Psalm 150.6)

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5.19-21)

We are given a further call to steward our gifts.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4.10)

HOW DO WE CARE FOR OUR VOICES?

Drink water. Keep your body well hydrated.

Eat a healthy diet.

Aim to get consistent, good rest.

Avoid causing damage to or compromising your voice and ears.

Pay attention to everyday things you do with your throat, mouth, etc.

Exercise regularly.

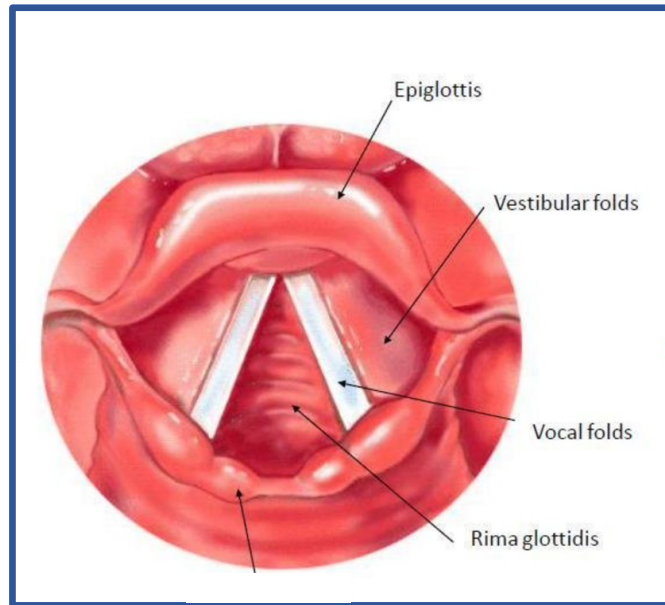
Check your body for tension.

WHAT IS THE VOICE?

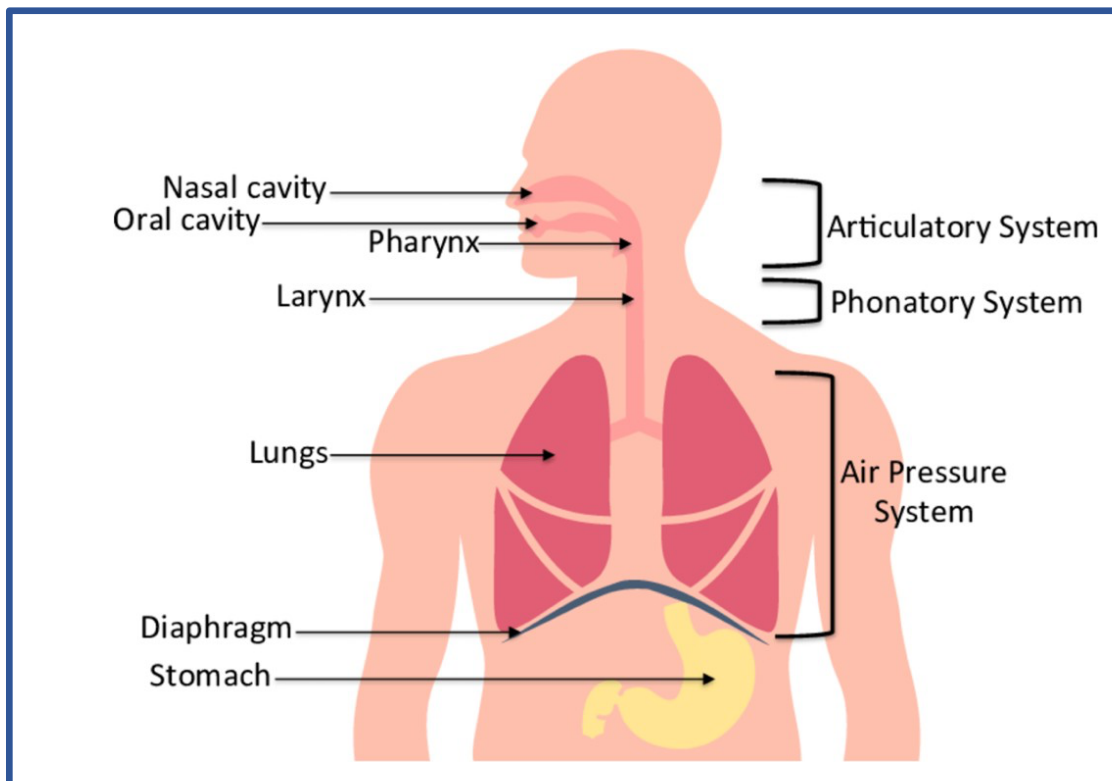
The human voice can be divided into three main parts:

- The lungs: provide and regulate air pressure
- The vocal folds: production of sound
- The articulators: change sound production
 - Tongue, lips, soft palate

See diagrams on next page.



(This diagram was taken from Wikipedia.com.)



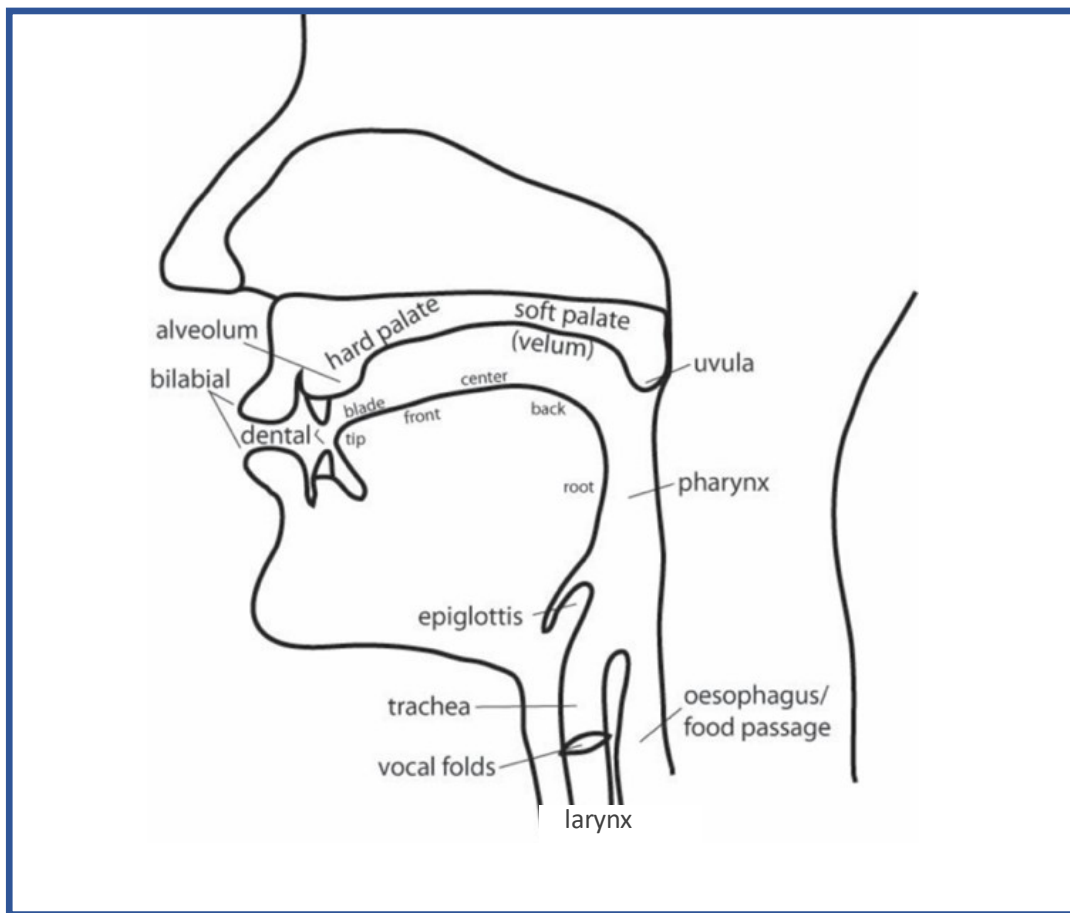
(This diagram was taken from flypaper.soundfly.com.)

HOW DO WE USE OUR VOICES?

There are three main vocal pillars for good, healthy singing.

- Posture
 - Good posture is the foundation for good breathing. And good breathing is the foundation for good singing.
 - First your feet, shoulder-width apart; then your knees, slightly bent; then hips; shoulders; and finally, your head.
- Breathing
 - Breathing for singing is unlike any other breathing we do.
 - Aim for deep and wide, full-bodied breathing.
 - Avoid breathing from your shoulders, chest, or neck.
 - Begin with breathing exercises.
 - Deep breaths in through nose and out through mouth; then vice versa
 - Breathe in for 3 counts and out for 3 counts on "tzzz"
 - "Tzzz" pulses: long
 - "Tzzz" pulses: short, short, short, short, short
 - "Tzzz" pulses: long, short, short
- Placement
 - Aim to sing from the mask of the face.

- Our sound travels through our body in a particular way.
 - There are 6 resonating chambers in your body that should be engaged for optimal sound: upper skull cavity, nasal cavity, mouth (oral cavity), pharynx, larynx, and finally, chest.
- Assess the differences between chest voice versus head voice.



(This diagram was taken from era.library.ca.)

Properly Warming Up the Voice

- Start simple and work your way to harder (i.e., more movement, more skips, longer phrases, harder vowels).
- Here are a few examples:
 - 1-2-3-2-1 on "oo"
 - 1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 on "ee"
 - 1-5-1 on "oh"
 - 1-3-5-3-1-2-3-4-5-4-3-2-1 on "ah"

Noticing the Vowels We Sing

- Vowels sit differently in the mouth.
- Tongue position and lip shape determine the vowel sounds you make.

	front	central	back
high	i ɪ	ɨ	ʊ u
mid	e ɛ	ə	o ɔ
low	æ	a	ɑ

(This chart was taken from ipachart.com.)

HOW DO WE EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE WITH OUR VOICES?

We should think about the **lyrics** we are singing.

- Study the lyrics ahead of time. Meditate on the truths in the songs.
- Aim to sing in phrases.
- Consider the genre. Each genre requires certain techniques, methods, etc.

We should think about the **melodies** we are singing.

- Practice: Know what notes you are singing.
- Range: God-given but can be extended.
- Dynamics: think through what dynamics fit the portion of the song that you are singing.
- Vocal ad-libs: Should be used to enhance the song.
- Harmonies: Should be thoughtfully done.

We should think about our **bodies** when we are singing.

- Our **stance**.
 - Think of good posture.
 - If we sing with a microphone, aim to keep our mouth about 2-3 inches away.

- In a church context: know when there might be times that you back off of your singing and let the congregation carry the song.
- Our **ears**.
 - Always be listening. A good singer is a good listener.
 - If we sing with others, are we blending well?
 - Do our harmonies make sense?
 - Do we use in-ears, a wedge, nothing?
- Our **eyes**.
 - They communicate as well.
 - Where should we look?
 - Do my eyes detract from the message of the song? Or serve it?
- Our **arms and hands**.
 - Nothing that we do when we sing should be forced.
 - Does your movement serve the song? Or detract from it?

So, I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. (Psalm 63.4)

We should think about our **hearts** when we are singing.

- As saved servants, we will still fight with indwelling sin.

OUR VOICES ARE NOT MEANT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO OURSELVES

When we sing, we are using a gift that God has given to us to bring Him glory.

We sing because God has commanded us to sing. We sing because we have unending reasons to sing. We sing because Jesus became a man for us, dying the death we deserved, paying the penalty that we could never pay. We sing because God is worthy of our praise.

What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? (1 Corinthians 4.7)

We're helping people connect with the purpose for which they were created—to glorify the living God. We're pointing their hearts toward the Sovereign One who is greater than their trials and kinder than they could ever imagine. We get to display the matchless Savior who died in our place, conquering sin, death, and hell in the process. (Worship Matters, Bob Kauflin)
