

Sandi Patty Warns Against This Deceptive Thought Process

Whether I was singing in my bedroom by myself with my little 45 rpm record player, using my hairbrush as a microphone, or I was singing to 18,000 people in a concert with a real microphone, it has all come from the same place. In music, I hear the voice of God and respond to Him.

Singing was always so natural to me that when I had to begin to talk in school, with teachers or with friends, I didn't know how. I probably presented a more confident affect than I actually felt. Every time I had to put things into words, I cringed inside. Although I liked to read, I was a slow reader. And my comprehension of what I read was slower still. But I liked to understand what I was reading. Whenever the teacher asked each student to take a section and read out loud, I froze inside. Are you kidding me? This was one of my worst fears. I would stumble through the words, and when I sat down, the teacher would say, "So, Sandy, can you tell us what those words mean?"

Inside I was thinking, "Actually, no. No, I cannot. I have no idea. I have no idea who Jane and Dick are, and I have no idea why they are washing a dog." But I stumbled and bumbled my way through a somewhat plausible explanation until, thankfully, it was the next student's turn. There were kids in my class who read so fast I realized if I read as fast as they, I could never understand the meaning.

On the other hand, when it came to the principal or the music teacher asking the students whether anyone would volunteer to sing the national anthem for the parent assembly, my hand was up in a shot with an "oh yes" on my tongue. Finally, something

I could do. I never said it in an arrogant way. I thought, I hope if I volunteer for this, I don't have to volunteer to make some stupid volcano for the science fair or read to some of the younger students.

I suppose you could say that music has always been my voice. Music let me sing songs, like the one from *The Sound of Music* (when I was feeling a great lack of confidence), "I Have Confidence." I remember thinking, "If I can sing it, I can feel it. And if I can feel it, I can be it." Even though I had an incredible shyness with spoken words, music helped me speak. Music and lyrics were the voice of my emotions. They expressed my heart's desires, longings, hurts and questions I could not speak in words. Now all these years later, I've finally uncovered my real, authentic voice. The voice that can also speak words when needed.

The truth is not everyone can sing and understand music. For some, it is hard. But that's okay. You don't have to sing or understand music. I believe that God draws our hearts to the gift He has given us. For me, it's the language of music. To those who love to do detail work, God has gifted you with that. And I can assure you, He has not gifted me that way. So I applaud you. And I'm slightly envious of your gift. Those of you who are athletically inclined or who have an empathetic nature, those are God's gifts to you. Become better skilled in your gift. Persevere in it just as Hebrews 12:1 says: "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." God put the joy in our hearts for certain things. And He made us to use the gifts He's given us. Don't back away. Lean in. Become the best you that God always intended you to be.

I understand something today about the shy girl and the song. It was really OK for me to be shy with words. No one has every gift. And I've been able to understand that having music and singing as my first voice wasn't a defective setting. They weren't a less-than setting because I couldn't do other things. Music and singing are my setting. It's how God made

me. He put the song in my heart. He gave me the voice to sing. I used to think that because singing came more easily to me than other things, it really wasn't important.

I want to encourage you not to overlook the things you are drawn to or the things that come more easily than others. Popular "wisdom" says if something brings you joy, you are not serving God. It's almost as though we are serving God only when we are miserable. So not true! I think many things that bring us joy are gifts God gives us to joyfully share with others. They aren't defects. They are divine! They are foundational parts of the voice God put within us. May we never overlook the divine in the simplicities that come our way each day.

One of my favorite Scriptures is Psalm 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Some people take that to mean He will give you the things you desire. I take it to mean He will plant within you the desires He designed you to have. As we delight in Him, He shapes the desires of our hearts, the very desires and dreams He put there—He sang there—in the first place. {eoa}

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