

# Clean the Vocals

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By Branon Dempsey | Worship Team Training Download Copyright 2015

What are some of the vocal mishaps going on in your team?

Common struggles for vocalists are mumbled words, mike technique issues, memorization problems as well as pitch and melody confusion. Sound familiar enough? Two of the main challenges I find in singers is to sing in time and to sing clean.

Timing is just as important as pitch, yet it's often overlooked. When the worship team or leader sings with poor clarity, mumbled words and out of sync rhythms, it will create huge barriers for the band and for the church to follow.

We want each part to be sung well in order to create a greater whole: it's not  $1+1=3$ .

What about singing clean - what's that? When vocalists are out-of-sync with the rest of the singers, the vocal line and melody become dirty. Learning how to clean up the sung passages, will make an overall difference in the vocal clarity. Although, singing clean is something that most singers never hear because they don't know how to hear it. So how do we help them?

Singing clean sounds like one voice. I don't mean a blended sound; I mean a vocal team sound that is tight and on time. It's when all the syllables, phrasing, diction, as well as the entrances and exits are well executed. When a team sings clean, you will have one unified sound; and that sound is unmistakable.

The more or less number of singers you have on a mike, you will find that they all have their relative issues. Once you go beyond four singers, the vocal sound can thicken and each voice will get lost in the mix. Plus, people start doubling parts, which will result in intonation issues. Much like a choir, the vocal sound can become muddy and vocal problems tend to slide around.

When you have three singers or less on a mike, the clarity is better. However, they will need to work hard to keep the vocal line clean. Since the vocal arrangement is tighter, they have to prevent little nuances from sticking out like sore thumbs.

How do you correct this on your own to develop a cleaner vocal sound? Practice first with a metronome or a click; it doesn't lie. Another trick of the

trade is to record yourself and/or the team. I know most singers don't adore this process; but if you want to improve you need to use every tool available. Recorded audio is like holding up a mirror to what you sound like. This is not uncommon for musicians to practice in this manner; yet, it is equally beneficial for the singer.

As far as timing, one of the most hardest, yet basic methods to develop is rhythm. Most singers think more in pitch and tone; we want to also help them think more about time and phrasing.

Why is rhythm so important? Because rhythm is the foundation for delivering a clear melody. If the rhythm is faulty, the melody will be problematic and it will lessen the impact of the lyrics. Ultimately, the song can suffer a major car crash. There's nothing worse in worship, than trying to sing while distractions are preventing you to connect. This runs both ways for people in the worship team and people in the worship service.

Make every word count. Good drummers and musicians alike are always thinking about each note and time. Listen to great-recorded singers. You will hear how they are not lazy with their words. Good singers execute each syllable and rhythm as clearly as possible to stay in tempo. When our facial muscles and lips are slow to move, they simply get in the way of the voice. When this happens, the vocal line drags and makes everything else feel disconnected and obscure.

How can your team fix this? After you practice on your own with that click, recorder and make notes. Next, bring the singers together for a vocal rehearsal. Work out all the timing issues as a team. Have someone help coach and direct the singing. Go over the words and syllables, map out the phrases and sing them all together in time. Don't be afraid of turning on the click, it's like learning how to walk in the light (Ref. #John11.10), you'll see better where you're going.

When you sing clean, you'll be surprised of how many things you missed before. Even more so, you will be amazed of how much better you sound. When your group returns to the band, they will notice too. Not only have you made the music easier for the band, but you also made it easy for the audio team. Each instrumentalist can clearly hear the vocals, follow and contribute their part, while the sound engineer can evenly mix the music.

Overall, you served your band and the church by taking responsibility to clean the vocals. More people can better hear and participate in the

worship of God. As leaders, isn't that what we want? So make great music by making the vocals clean. In worship, make every note you sing count to God.

Wouldn't be great to have your own personalized worship/music conference for your team or for your surrounding church community? Sign up today to host a PowerWorkshop at your church:

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