01 // INTRO TO HARMONY

HARMONY ESSENTIALS FOR WORSHIP

MASTER THE ART OF FINDING YOUR HARMONY PART AND KNOWING WHEN TO SING IT!
I’m so glad you’re here! Are you ready to learn harmony? Have you always wanted to sing harmony on your worship team but it’s always seemed too difficult to grasp? Do you already know how but you want to take your harmony game to a whole NEW LEVEL?! Well... you’re in the right place!

**This course will teach you how to:**

- recognize and sing harmony parts in worship songs
- stick to your harmony part without drifting off of it
- become a versatile background vocalist who can sing multiple harmony parts
- map a song to create a dynamic journey in your worship sets
- master the art of blending your voice in a worship team context
- coach your team members on all of the above!

My goal is to teach you how to sing harmony in the simplest way possible! My hope and prayer is that you would experience breakthrough and feel encouraged as you learn new things!

Make sure to post questions and comments online as you have them so I can help you along this journey!
SELF-ASSESSMENT

Where are you at with singing harmony?

☐ I don’t know the first thing about how to sing harmony... but I wish I did!

☐ I can sometimes find a few harmony notes, but for the most part, I’m lost.

☐ I have a hard time sticking to my own part... I often drift to the melody or to another harmony!

☐ I know how to learn a harmony part (especially if I hear it on a recording) but I wish I was more versatile and could learn how to find multiple harmony parts.

☐ I can sing harmony but I want to learn the best times to use it in a song to create dynamics.

☐ I can sing harmony but I want to be better at blending my voice with my worship leader/team.

☐ I can sing harmony and blend my voice with other singers... but I want to learn some tips on how to coach others on my team how to do these things better!

☐ Other... explain!

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Basically, harmony is any two or more notes played or sung together... that sound good together! According to the dictionary...

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**Harmony: the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions having a pleasing effect.**

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Harmony is an emotional experience that comes from the vibrations created between pitches. The type of emotions we experience when we hear music depends on the harmonic movement of the chords and chord patterns... creating tension and release in a song! Certain chords and sounds create suspense, and others create happy, light-feeling moments.

Think about movies or shows you’ve watched (or pay attention the next time you watch something!)—the emotions you feel have so much to do with the music playing behind the scene! Our ear craves musical movement... whether we’re aware of it or not, we’re constantly hearing harmonic tension and release as we watch movies and listen to songs.
Another way harmony is defined is "agreement or concord". Harmony in worship is a beautiful symbol of the harmony and unity that God calls us to live in with each other as the body of Christ!

How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron’s head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe. Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the Lord has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting. — Psalm 133:1-3 (NLT)

In the Old Testament, when someone was anointed with oil, this signified that the person was set apart for divine service. The oil represented the Holy Spirit coming upon that person and sanctifying them, just as Moses did for Aaron as High Priest in Leviticus 8.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Bring Aaron and his sons, along with their sacred garments, the anointing oil, the bull for the sin offering, the two rams, and the basket of bread made without yeast, and call the entire community of Israel together at the entrance of the Tabernacle.’ So Moses followed the Lord’s instructions, and the whole community assembled at the Tabernacle entrance. Moses announced to them, ‘This is
what the Lord has commanded us to do!’ Then he presented Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. He put the official tunic on Aaron and tied the sash around his waist. He dressed him in the robe, placed the ephod on him, and attached the ephod securely with its decorative sash. Then Moses placed the chestpiece on Aaron and put the Urim and the Thummim inside it. He placed the turban on Aaron’s head and attached the gold medallion—the badge of holiness—to the front of the turban, just as the Lord had commanded him. Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the Tabernacle and everything in it, making them holy. He sprinkled the oil on the altar seven times, anointing it and all its utensils, as well as the washbasin and its stand, making them holy. Then he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head, anointing him and making him holy for his work.” — Leviticus 8:1-12 (NLT)

Jesus is our High Priest, and He has sanctified us as believers! We've been given the Holy Spirit, who’s poured out on the church just like that fragrant oil, and God calls us to keep the unity that the Spirit has given us!

Mount Hermon was the highest mountain in Israel, and in Psalm 133 David writes about how its moisture ran into streams that flowed into the Jordan River. These streams ran through Israel—irrigating and bringing life to the land, refreshing and watering the crops, and making the land productive.

**Unity in the church and in relationships is refreshing.**

Unity reinvigorates.
Unity makes us productive.
Unity restores.

**Disunity and discord is draining.**

Disunity is unproductive.
Disunity causes unnecessary conflict.
Disunity wastes time.
When the harmony in our worship songs is right, it’s beautiful!

Harmony calms, heals, and refreshes.
Harmony builds a song to a whole new level.
Harmony adds depth and dynamic to our worship songs and sets.

When the harmony in our worship songs is wrong, it’s terrible!

Wrong harmony is distracting.
Wrong harmony creates an unpleasant listening experience.

Reflect on a time where you’ve experienced disunity in a relationship. How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

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Reflect on a time where you’ve experienced unity in a relationship. How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

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Can you think of a recorded song or a worship set you’ve heard where the harmony was beautiful? How did it make you feel?

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Have you experienced a worship set where someone’s harmony was off-pitch or stood out awkwardly because it wasn't blending well? How did it make you feel?

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Harmony doesn’t mean we’re all singing the exact same note. We’re actually singing different notes... but ones that work well and sound good together! In the body of Christ, we’re all unique... we have different skills, gifts, callings, ways we do things... but when we’re unified and working together in harmony, it’s an amazing, refreshing experience!

Let’s make harmony our goal in all things—in our churches, in our relationships, in our worship teams, and in our voices!
Harmony is a skill that can be learned!!

Myth #1: You can’t learn harmony. Some people were just “born with it”... and others weren’t.

Not the case! It is true that some people naturally have an easier time hearing harmony, but it’s also true that anyone can learn how... even if it doesn’t come naturally to you!

Myth #2: You need to know how to read sheet music to learn harmony.

Nope! You never need to learn to read music if you don’t want to.

In this course, I’m going to give you the right tools and training techniques... and if you’re willing to take the time and be diligent to do the ear training exercises... you WILL be able to sing harmony! Make sure to approach this training with an open mind and an attitude of “what can I learn... what can I be better at”, and not get stuck in the ditch of how you always do things.
If you’re a background/supporting vocalist on your worship team, the more versatile you are, the more you can do with your voice, the better you can blend, the more harmonies you can find and sing, the more knowledge you have of harmony and how to create dynamics... the more value you will bring as a team member!

We can all be better at something. What are some areas you feel you can improve on to bring more value to your worship team?

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Learning harmony is like learning a language.

Learning a language starts with learning the building blocks. Then, over time, these building blocks start to come together and we feel more comfortable and confident with the language. We can experiment more. We have more choices.

Learning a language is experiential. We learn by doing. We learn by trying and experimenting and experiencing!

Learning a language means making mistakes. Mistakes are part of the process of learning a language... learning to put the building blocks together, and over time it becomes much quicker and easier.

Why can a foreign language be learned? Because it’s not just random sounds... there’s purpose and method behind what at first sounds like gibberish!

Why can harmony be learned? Because it’s not just random notes! Harmony boils down to basic math and science, and once we train our ear to recognize harmony, we can sing any harmony we want!

If you’ve ever learned a new language, what were the difficulties you faced? What were the rewarding aspects of learning that language? (i.e. you could communicate on a mission trip, etc.)
Sound comes in waves (see diagrams below). The human ear can perceive sound waves between 20 - 20,000 hertz. Hertz refers to the unit of frequency that measures how many waves / vibrations / cycles per second.

The smaller the frequency (the smaller that number is), the slower the vibration, resulting in a perceived lower pitch. The larger the frequency (the higher that number is), the faster the vibration, resulting in a perceived higher pitch.

The slower the vibration, the lower the pitch.
The faster the vibration, the higher the pitch.
This concept of speed of vibration is the same for any sound we hear (or don't hear!), whether it's the sound of a note played on an instrument... a telephone ringing... a cat purring... a whale or dolphin sound... a chainsaw... name a sound and it's got a resonant frequency!

If you like to nerd out about stuff like this (I do!)... here are some approximate frequencies for a few different sounds!

For our purposes of learning harmony, it's easiest to understand this concept of frequency in the context of our voices! Our vocal cords are vibrating at different speeds every pitch that we sing. The slower the vocal cords vibrate, the lower the pitch. The faster the vocal cords vibrate, the higher the pitch.
This chart shows the speed (in Hertz) that your vocal cords are vibrating at when you sing certain pitches.

Or, check it out on a music staff if you read sheet music!

Notice how every time we go up an octave, the frequency/speed of vibration is doubled!
Consonance refers to combinations of notes that sound harmonious together. Dissonance refers to combinations of notes that don’t sound harmonious together.

The music note system starts at A and goes to G; then it repeats that pattern. Each time the pattern repeats is an octave.

No matter what notes (A, B, C, etc.) are played or if they are high or low in pitch, the two notes in an octave always sound consonant (harmonious) together because the frequency is exactly doubled each octave higher.
In math, it’s easier to divide numbers that easily go together, and it’s the same with music: simple ratios create harmonious sounds.

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\frac{A3}{A2} \quad \text{octave} = \frac{440}{220} \quad \text{hz} = \text{ratio of 2:1}
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Harmony makes perfect sense to our ear just like simple math makes sense to our mind. When notes sound harmonious, it’s because their frequencies have simple ratios. When notes don’t sound harmonious, it’s because their frequencies don’t mesh well together... they don’t have simple ratios.

This is not a math or physics course... don’t worry! All you need to know to get started is that harmony is so far from RANDOM! God created harmony in such a beautiful, organic way that makes perfect sense to our human ear, which means—like math—even though it can seem difficult... it’s entirely a learnable skill.

The upcoming lessons will train your ear to hear the building blocks of harmony so that soon you’ll be able to start hearing and singing harmony in your songs. Ready... set... Here we go!

I’m excited to help you learn to sing and master harmony! Make sure to post questions and comments online as you have them so I can help you along this journey!