

THE NEW CITY

CURLED UP IN A CHAIR, HUDDLED NEAR THE ONLY light her roommate would let her have on at two in the morning, Adele finished reading the last chapter of Carl's treatise on music. She was tired but her mind seemed awake to the possibilities. She jotted down some ideas of places she might find an inexpensive guitar, and a few of her favorite songs that she wanted to memorize. She let herself imagine playing at a campus coffeehouse with some of her friends. It was almost like she was there — bright lights, the rush of adrenaline, people watching. Before she knew it, she had closed her eyes, and fallen to sleep.



It seemed impossibly dark in the small room. A small glint of metal was all she could see, and yet her surroundings seemed familiar. The faint smell of damp wood, and the sound of wind whistling between planks, reminded her of somewhere she'd been before.

"You have another question, perhaps?" a baritone

**Adele and
bell ringer
overlooking
Paris at night**

voice said out of the darkness. She smiled, recognizing the familiar voice.

“No,” she answered, “just a thank you.”

She felt a strong hand grab her small one and lead her down stairs, out of the belltower. Outside, on the walkway between the towers, she could finally see the bellringer in the moonlight. She looked warmly at him, hesitating to speak for fear the moment would wisk away.

At last she managed to find her voice. “I want to thank you for all your advice,” she told him. “I’m taking up an instrument.”

“Not the bells, I assume,” he said, giving her a lop-sided smile.

“No,” she laughed. “It’s hard to start a band with those.”

Again they fell into silence. Words seemed secondary to just being there. Together, they stood on the walkway and looked over the whole of Paris. The shapes of buildings were difficult to make out, but stretching into the distance were thousands of lights flickering — candles in windows, lanterns in the hands of passersby. The city seemed both invisible and alive.

“This is my favorite time of day,” the bellringer said. The wind rustled his hair. “It’s moments like this that I can almost see the new city.”

“The new city?”

“You’re just one person, right? You can learn music, and you can praise God, and that’s just like a light in God’s eyes. Maybe you get a few friends together and make a band. That’s a few lights. Maybe you even get your whole

church to really sing for God, and that's a few hundred lights. But in your whole life, you're never going to see the whole picture. You're never going to see the millions and millions of lights all together, so many that your eyes can't see the end of them. That's what I think we'll find, at last, in the City of Heaven."

He stretched out his arm and pointed into the distance. "Can't you picture it? Can't you feel the immensity of the crowd? Can't you feel it — so close — just beyond?"

She strained to see as he did, for even a glimpse of it.

"That's what keeps me going up here, when I sometimes wonder why I bother at all with music. Time will pass, and my life will end, but I will still be singing. I'm just rehearsing right now for a concert beyond what I can even imagine."

With that, she began to hear the faint sounds of song. Every flame was a voice, every voice a soul of praise. "Amazing grace," the voices sang, "how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." Adele's heart welled with emotion, feeling the words go straight to God's ears. "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see."

“And, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb ... and cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.’”

— *Revelation 7:9-10, KJV*



AFTERWORD

This book was designed to get you excited about music, and the possibilities it has for the church. It's tried to give you a goal to pursue and a lot of ideas of how to get there. But the most intricate playbook — to borrow Carl's metaphor — can't get the ball game going. It takes someone taking a chance and saying, "Let's do this." And then it takes some prodding and pushing and cheerleading — it takes leadership. The same thing is required in the music game. At every level it takes someone willing to say "play ball."

If you are just Joe Average in an average church, you might feel powerless to start a revolution in church music. But you can start playing the game yourself. If you can't carry a tune, get help. Don't buy into the lie that you were just born a non-singer. If you can sing melody, learn harmony. Join the church choir. Then take up an instrument. Do whatever it takes to grow in music. If help costs money, spend it. Music is the language of the heart.

If you're married, involve your spouse in the learning. If you have children, no matter how young or old your children are, do something with music. Have a family wor-

ship service once a week. Memorize one song a month. Practice in the car on the way to ballgames and other family activities. Let music be something that brings your family together.

Then find another family with kids close to your kids' ages who want to do the same thing in their family. They'll see how much fun you're having, and want to join in. Then you can support each other, and schedule joint times of music — playing instruments and singing together.

Add another family or two. Offer to share in front of the church how music has changed your life with God. More people will want to join in with you. The music director will see all this budding talent and want to know how he can support the learning. The singing in the service will take on a new sheen. New people will be attracted, and other churches will look to yours as an example, and the kingdom of God will grow. Why? Because families will be worshipping God all through the week. Miracles start happening when God's people are filled with worship.



Perhaps you have some level of leadership at your church. You already know something about music already. You have even more resources at hand to change the way your church does music.

If you're a small group leader, teach your group how to sing and play an instrument with worship songs. If it

goes well, have the members move practice into their families and neighborhoods. Talk to other small group leaders about your success and help them get music going in their own groups.

If you're a member of the choir, or play an instrument on the music team, you might not be able to change the whole music program. But you can offer free lessons to a friend. You can write a new song for your church to sing. You can suggest and help organize a talent night. You can start a band with others on your team. You can gather some friends for praise caroling.

If you are the music coordinator of your church, you have a more direct means of getting your on-stage music into people's homes. Sidestep the pitfall of worship wars — fights over styles of music — by getting music into people's homes. Once people start playing and singing music for themselves, you will be surprised how open they become. Shift your focus from the stadium — the Sunday service — to the farm team — homes and small-group settings. This means the quality of the music at the church service may suffer a bit at first, but soon you will reap all sorts of talented and willing players. Your job is not just to help the gifted get better, but the ordinary get started.

If you are a pastor, you have a fundamental decision to make. Do you want your church service to be people's surrogate walk with God — the worship experience designed to carry them through the long draught of a whole week? Or do you want your worship service to be the culmination of all the individual, family, and small-group walks with God, and the culmination of the wor-

shipping that has been going on all week in families, in cars, in small groups? If it is the latter, make it crystal clear to your staff and congregation that you are not as interested in what happens on Sunday morning as you are in what happens Monday through Saturday.

Start by finding out what is really going on in your church. How many of your people have personal devotions? How many have marriage devotions? How many have family devotions? How many families sing during the week? How many play an instrument? What instruments? Do a survey and find out what you are up against.

Then create a strategy. Give everyone who has any music ability and leadership ability a copy of this book. Meet together and talk about what you are going to do. Make sure your strategy covers at least a year — this is not going to happen overnight. If you lack musical talent, start with a small strategy. If you have a lot of great players, come up with a bigger strategy. Give every family a copy of this book, and get people thinking about this language of praise. You will be surprised by what you can accomplish when you focus on something.

If you are a church planter, you have the advantage of starting fresh and not having to change years of habit. Reinforce the importance of music from day one. Get people memorizing a Song of the Month. Have Guitar Sunday every week for a while and identify the best leaders. Use stickers or gift certificates as a reward to those who have practiced their instrument for 30, 90, or 180 days straight, and recognize them in the service.

If you are a denominational executive, you are

uniquely positioned to encourage the development of the inter-league play. Sponsor a song-writing contest. Give awards to churches with the highest percentage of their people involved in music. Sponsor “battle of the bands” events. Realize that the power of the denomination is its ability to honor and recognize growth in the desired direction.



It is time for you to decide what you are going to do about music in your life, in your family life, in the life of your church. It is time to make a plan and get started.

Review the chapters of the book that applied most to you and find ideas. Take a look at your life and see what people and resources can help you. Do this right away, before other distractions come along and you can't quite remember where you put this book. Then get started — play ball!

