

## About John Leon Lewis

It's easy to enumerate a person's gifts and the work he has performed. The list here is long because John Lewis' gifts are numerous. He is comfortable using many styles of music in ministry and introduced new things while retaining the old. He is able to combine the classics with the contemporary and bring an understanding to people that God was not limited in the way we express our worship to Him. Because of his training and his love for all kinds of music, he is not tied to any one style. He understands how instruments could enhance worship. He is able to lead orchestras and bands and utilize them in the services, as well as a professional use of accompaniment tracks. He is a gifted pianist and leads singing from the bench when necessary but usually drew on the gifts of others who surrounded him in ministry. He is a wonderful vocal soloist, but never showcased his gifts, often standing where he could barely be seen behind the piano.

A number of things makes John Lewis unique as a Minister of Music. One is his desire to reach beyond the walls of the church to draw in other churches to unite in worship. He deliberately seeks to make friends of other directors in the city and shows appreciation for the work of others in the Kingdom. He invites the musicians and singers he's working with to walk with him and learn to give themselves for the blessing of others even outside the church.

Another quality about John that was notable is that he feels called to minister to the whole church, not just those involved in the church Music Ministries. So he gives of himself unstintingly to the congregation, whether for weddings, funerals, births, deaths, or ill people in the hospital.

One other unique characteristic of John is the way he listened to people and all their suggestions as to how he should do his job. He listens, but he doesn't allow that to sway him from doing what the Spirit is directing him to do. Worship is not congregation led, but Spirit led. The result was that people were given an opportunity to grow in their outlook and experience.

John had tremendous skills as a conductor, bringing out inspiring, worshipful music from the singers that had never been heard from them previously. The choirs responds to his direction gladly, and the congregation is blessed time and again as they listened, not just to skilled musicians, but to a message from the hearts of the singers. The love shared between director and choirs is expressed often and bridged the gap between doing the familiar music in the old way and being willing to grow and change. The congregation got very involved in singing to the Lord as John led because he is able to teach them the importance of their offering to God. He didn't ask for perfection from them, just willing hearts that would give their best to the Lord. People wanted to do that.

But all the above information does not "explain" who John Lewis is. His ministry comes from a heart totally devoted to God. He loves Jesus and so the message that flowed from his mouth is reflective of his relationship with God. All the music he selects for choirs, congregation and his daily concert audiences is bathed in prayer even weeks in advance as he seeks to know the Lord's mind. He helps people remember the difficulties of life and encourages singers to know that the God they were singing about is really who he said he is. He brings people to Jesus and leads them to celebrate God who is above all and able to meet their needs.

John's interest in people goes beyond church services. He takes his position as a minister very seriously. He is involved with his choirs on a weekly basis helping them to know God and to be able to sing a message from their hearts. He instructs the choirs to become worship leaders and ministers to the congregation. He is a true pastor who looked out for the needs of his flock. He often calls out people with particular needs in front of the choir to be prayed for. He notices people and goes out of his way to meet their needs. His primary emphasis to the choirs is to be in prayer about everything and everybody. He prays, and he expected the choir members to be prayer warriors if they want to see any effective spiritual outcome in the music ministry.

He honors those who work along side him, noting their great contribution to the ministry. He continually pointed out to the choirs that if they were given any praise for anything that pleased people, that praise belonged only to God and they were not to rob God of that praise. And he never takes the credit for any success himself.

John is a consummate musician and appreciates excellence. But that does not make him shy away from calling on people with lesser skills to have a part in ministry. He often chooses people to sing who had little or no experience. He encourages them along the way and allows them opportunities to grow. He is able to bring out the best in people even when they said they couldn't do something. He allows the Holy Spirit room to take weak vessels and make them strong for giving out a message.

Because of John's walk with God, he is constantly listening for what the Spirit had to say. If there needed to be changes in a worship service, he will quickly make the adjustment and move that way. If the pastor's message is heading toward a certain response, John is able to move with him and select the kind of music that would enable the congregation to say, "Yes, I will do as the Lord says." John is not afraid to invite people to a commitment to God even while they sang a certain worship song. He is marching to the beat of the Spirit.

The words that capture John's ministry are: "He came among us as prophet and priest." As a prophet he gives us God's message in his music and through his life. As a priest he represents us before God and reveals God to us.