

If I Couldn't Sing

You might begin by asking children if there is something they're especially good at, and that they like doing. Encourage them to say all kinds of things, from music and drawing to running, math, reading, helping people, whatever. Then say something like, "God has given us all talents and gifts. Our abilities actually belong to Him, and stewardship is taking care of God's gifts in God's way. Today's story is about a boy who is learning to take care of his gift for God."

This story is better suited for school-age children.

One of Kenny's Grandma's friends came to talk to him. "Well hello, Kenny, how old are you?"

Kenny didn't really like it when grown-ups talked to him like this, but he was polite. "Nine, ma'am."

"Nine! Well, aren't you a grown-up little man!"

Yuck, that was even worse. And Kenny knew what was coming next.

"What are you going to do when you grow up?"

He used to say, "I don't know," after which the grown-up would usually say something like, "Do you want to be a fireman, or a cowboy?" Kenny thought that kind of stuff was for kindergarteners. But he had recently decided exactly what he wanted to do, so this time he said, "I'm going to be a famous singer!"

Grandma's friend looked surprised. "Oh, really! So you can sing?"

"Oh, can he sing!" Grandma chimed in. "I've been putting him in front of people to sing since he was three or four years old! He used to be shy, but not anymore. Wait till you hear him sing. Maybe he'll sing for us after supper."

Kenny had made up his own song this time, and he was proud of it. It was about a boy and his dog. After supper, he sang his song for Grandma and her friends, and they clapped and said what a good singer he was. That was the part he liked. He wanted to be like one of the guys he saw on YouTube at his friends' houses, with a band and some girls singing backup. He was also planning on learning the electric guitar.

That evening at bedtime, Grandma sat on the end of Kenny's bed and said, "Kenny, I want to talk to you about something. You know I like your singing and that I think you can do something great with it, right?"

"Yeah, Grandma, and thanks for helping me my whole life. When I'm famous and rich, I'll buy you a new house and a big, fancy car."

Grandma looked troubled. "Well, that's just it, Kenny. Lately, I'm a little worried by the way you talk. I don't think God gave you the gift of singing just so you could get rich and famous."

Kenny frowned. "He gave it to me, right? It's my gift, to do what I want with it."

Grandma looked almost shocked. "Kenny, God gives us gifts to use for Him, not for ourselves!"

"But I'm not going to use it just for myself! Didn't I just say I'm going to get you a new house?"

"I don't need a new house. Jesus will be coming soon, you know. What about singing for His glory?"

Kenny sighed. "Don't worry, Grandma, I'm not going to sing anything bad, or do drugs, or anything like that. I know some of the big singers do some pretty bad things. I'm not going to sing in a hard rock band, you know. Didn't you like my song tonight? It wasn't about God, but it was a good song, right?"

"Sure, it was a nice song. I'm not saying you have to sing only church songs. I'm just saying you need to think about this, and pray about it, and always put God and His will first, before everything else. Riches and fame aren't necessarily bad things, but when you're older you'll understand that they can be dangerous, and those things alone are not a good reason for doing anything."

Kenny was not mad, exactly, but he was kind of annoyed. Grandma was old, he thought, and she just didn't understand. "I do pray about it, Grandma." He said as he lay down on his bed. "I'm kind of tired now."

Grandma kissed his forehead and left his room. He could tell that she was still worried about him.

At school the next day, Kenny talked to his best friend, Donny, about it.

"She just doesn't get it!" said Donny. "Wait till you're big news, then she'll be glad. And I get to be your drummer, right?"

"Sure, I promised, didn't I?" said Kenny. But secretly, he was afraid Donny might not be good enough. His rhythm wasn't always right on. When they got older, maybe Donny would lose interest. Or maybe Kenny would have to break it to him that he needed somebody more—what was that word? More professional? That was it. He did feel a little guilty, thinking this way about his friends and his future. It was like he was being disloyal to his friend. But singing was a business, after all. It wasn't personal.

That night, when he passed Grandma's door, he heard her praying out loud. She was saying, "Please, God, guide Kenny. I know You gave him his beautiful singing voice, and I know You have a plan for him. Please forgive me if I've made him proud. Maybe instead of encouraging him, I've helped him to get a big head and be selfish."

Was that a snuffle he heard? Was Grandma crying?

Kenny went to his room and thought very hard. Was he selfish? It didn't seem fair! People liked to hear him sing! That was okay, wasn't it? Wasn't it good that he wanted to buy his grandma a nice, new house? Still, he knew the gift of singing came from God and also ultimately belonged to God. Standing by his window, looking up at the starry sky, Kenny whispered, "Dear God, I only want to please You. I don't want to be selfish or have a big head. I want to take care of Your gifts Your way. Help me, please."

A few days later, Kenny started working on a new song. It didn't come easily, like the one about the boy and his dog, but even though it took longer, he felt really good about it afterward. It was kind of a prayer song. Kenny found that he talked best through singing, and he wanted to sing a request to God to help him be exactly what God wanted. "If You took away my voice, Lord, I'd still want you in my heart," he sang quietly to himself while he biked to school. Heart, art, part...what would be a good rhyme that would say what he wanted?

Finally he had it.

"If I couldn't sing, God, if I couldn't say a word,

The only thing I'd want is for You to be my Lord."

This new song had three verses. One thanked God for the gift of song. One asked God to help him be true. In the last verse, Kenny gave his heart, his life—and yes, his singing—to Jesus for Him to keep.

He felt shy, for the first time in ages, when he sang it for Grandma. She liked it so much she cried—old ladies were funny that way. “Kenny, I’m going to put this on the church’s website!” said Grandma, hugging him so hard he thought his ribs would crack.

He had to sing it again, into her computer microphone. Then Grandma uploaded it onto the church website and put a notice on the church Facebook page. The next day, the website had seventeen messages.

“Thank you, Kenny! But more than that, thank You, God!”

“Your song blessed me today, Kenny!”

“I am praying for you to always be true to God, Kenny. I know God has a plan for you. Maybe you’ll help other people to love God, too!”

But the best message of all said, “Kenny, you don’t know me. I’ve been watching this church website for a while. I like your preacher’s sermons. I’ve been thinking of coming back to church, but I couldn’t decide. Then I heard your song, and I’m giving my life back to God. Thank you, Kenny, for dedicating your life and your gift to God.”

Grandma cried again, but you could tell she was really happy. And truthfully, Kenny got a little tearful, too!

Thought Question: What gift has God given you, and how are you going to use His gift His way?

Taking Care of God’s Stuff God’s Way by Debbonnaire Kovacs, pp.21-24