



M A R G E O L I V E R I

I am not a musician, but, I am quite familiar with the rhythm of life. My prayer is that this short article inspires just one person who may be on the verge of making a decision that could alter their path. All things are possible with God if you believe.

I swear my son's first cry upon entry into this world was in harmony with mine. I say this because today, by the grace of God, he is an accomplished pianist, conductor and vocalist. This is an amazing story of faith, determination, encouragement and the courage to "be true to thine own self."

As parents, it is our job to be aware of our children's talents, hopes and dreams. If we watch closely, we'll be able to give them wings to fly. Music was part of my heritage growing up. We were lucky enough to inherit an antique piano when Anthony was a toddler and he was drawn to it daily.

At the age of 2, he was already showing the signs of a maestro. He would gather his little friends in the cul de sac in front of our house and instruct them to line up their Fisher Price cars, jeeps and tricycles in a perfect row. Anthony would jump in the lead vehicle, raise his hand out the window and lead them in song around and around the circle. It was priceless! Coincidence?

I believe the Lord shows us special glimpses of what "could" be. I think the challenge that we have as parents is to capture and help foster it in their growing years. As he grew, I noticed that certain tones had a dramatic effect on him. For example, he'd become sad when the music was slow. At age 4 he began sounding out tunes on the piano. By age 7, the theme song to Superman was part of his repertoire. When he was nearing 10 years old, he began taking private lessons. After a few weeks, he was mastering songs from start to finish, but he was not reading the notes. His piano teacher encouraged me to search out a Conservatory due to Anthony's perfect pitch which matched or exceeded some of his PhD students. He felt he needed someone with expertise in this area to help develop this gift.

Being a single parent, piano lessons at a Conservatory were hardly affordable. I was crushed to learn of the expense involved, but was determined to find a way. God had given him such a gift. Jesus tells us to pray and never lose hope. To quote scripture, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you" (Lk 11:9-10). Anthony continued in his appetite for discovering the world of music and I continued to pray for the means and opportunity he deserved. Incredibly, he was soon playing Mozart, Bach and Beethoven.

Our cousin Christopher, also musically talented, embraced Anthony and his talent and was determined to secure an audition for him at The Boston Conservatory where he was mentored by an amazingly talented Russian pianist who ran the Special Programs Division.

When It's Running Through Your Veins

The audition was set but we reserved telling Anthony that it was an actual audition. I will never forget the look on his face as we pulled up to the Boston Conservatory and got out of the car. It was so surreal. Picture for a moment standing in the midst of a dream . . . three stories stretching far into the sky, with the sound of music beaming out each window. Floor after floor, piano, voice, violin, saxophone flowing through the air. You take a breath and realize it's reality . . . you are there . . . the place you've only dreamt and prayed about. You say, "Thank you God!" At that moment of realization, he turned toward me with a joyful embrace - no words were needed.

We entered and met our cousin Chris who made the introductions. Anthony was taken to a room where we could only hear the slight murmur of music. His performance of Mozart and Beethoven got him accepted into the program as her private student. What a gift!

That's great you say? Yes, and Praise The Lord for it. But, Anthony was faced with a dilemma. Amidst his love for music, he was also an exceptional athlete. As a high school varsity star pitcher, a team captain and star player of his basketball team, he found himself in the midst of an internal struggle. Studying music would require time, devotion and effort. It was decision time. I knew where his heart was, because music ran through his veins. The question was, would he listen to his heart? Would he take the risk and follow his dream? I could only stay quiet and pray.

Isn't life about choices? I believe that God tests us to see if we trust in Him. Once we take the step out in faith, He never lets us down. I have a favorite saying, "If you want to walk on water, then you have to get out of the boat." Well, he got out of the boat alright, and it took courage! In 4 short years and with a tremendous amount of focus, Anthony was fully prepared to audition for some of the best music schools in the country. He was accepted to his first choice, Ithaca College School of Music in NY. His gifts in performance and music education will continue to spread joy into the hearts of many because he has decided to share the gift God gave him to touch the heart of another. And I think God is smiling.

I asked my son recently what he felt about his journey so far and he replied, "If you've been given a gift then it is your job as a steward of Christ to share it with others, to foster it and ultimately use it as an instrument to bring people closer to the spirit of God. Music expresses things which written language in many instances cannot."

There is heartfelt harmony in the quote by St. Augustine, "To sing is like praying twice."

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