

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN MUSICIAN?

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Mt. 25:14-29

When I say “successful Christian musician,” what names come to mind?

Probably the people at this event – Paul Baloche, Lincoln Brewster, Kathryn Scott, Brian Doerksen, Abe Laboriel, and many more. These are people who are:

- insanely gifted
- known throughout the world
- have sold or played on a gazillion CDs.

But what about the rest of us? Are we successful? Can we be successful? Is our definition of success totally defined by what we see here at CMS? Does God even want us to pursue success?

Here are three characteristics about successful Christian musicians, drawn from this parable in Mt. 25.

1. Successful Christian musicians don't all look the same.

Success looks different on different people.

Mt. 25:15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability.

We have to get away from the idea that success is only about big names or big numbers.

You're successful (or on the way) because you played with...sang with...were on stage with...toured with...co-wrote with....known by...SOMEBODY WHO IS A BIG NAME.

Or we think that NUMBERS determine our success:

The size of my church.	How many CDs I've made.
How many CDs I've sold.	How many people know who I am.
How high I am on the charts.	The number of countries I've been in.

Ministry and fame have become so equated with each other that it is nearly impossible to think of anything but fame if one contemplates a ministry in music. (Harold Best, Music Through the Eyes of Faith).

God isn't against success as names and numbers. He makes a connection between being skillful and becoming successful.

Prov. 22:29 Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

For a time, Jesus was "successful." We're told that great crowds were following him, and the disciples were overjoyed at the numbers he was attracting. He had a big name and was drawing some big numbers.

But names and numbers aren't the only ways God measures success. Both can be deceptive. They can make us think we're really doing God's will, when we're not.

God gives us different abilities, so success will look different.

You can be successful in a small church.

You can be successful and never record a CD!

You can be successful and not know anyone famous!

Some of us get 5 talents. Some get 2. Some get 1. Some of us get .05.

Success doesn't look the same for every Christian musician.

2. Successful Christian musicians are faithful to grow the gifts they've received.

"He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them..."

"he who had the two talents made two talents more..."

The Christian musician who's always seeking to grow and learn is a success.

Defining success only in terms of names and numbers can have two negative effects. First, we can create idols that rule our lives and draw us away from the God we're supposedly trying to honor. Second, we can resist seeking to improve. We'll never get there. So what's the use?

You don't have to be as good a songwriter as Paul Baloche, as good a bass player as Abe Laboriel, or as good a guitarist as Lincoln Brewster to be better than you are now. You don't even have to be as good as someone on your team.

If you're a "B team" vocalist, be the best "B team" vocalist you can be. You don't have to be as good as anyone on the "A team." We need to ask ourselves: How can you be better than you are? What are you doing to improve? Are you waiting to be asked to play more, or are you working at developing your skill, growing in knowledge, and improving your craft?

Or are you the 1 talent servant, living in fear that you have nothing to offer, no resources to work with, and no one to serve? Maybe you're waiting for your big chance! It didn't turn out so well for the one talent servant. Jesus called him wicked and slothful.

Successful Christian musicians are faithful to grow the gifts they **have**, not the ones they don't have.

3. Successful Christian musicians seek to please the audience of One.

Mt. 25:21 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Ultimate success can't be measured by comparing myself to what others are doing or achieving. It doesn't have to do with how many people know my name or how much money I make. It doesn't have to do with my position, whether I'm the leader or assistant or regular or alternate.

In fact, **true** success can't be fully determined in this life.

We won't know how successful we've been until the last day when we hope to hear the Father say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

The problem with our ideas of success is that they're temporary. They're incomplete. They don't go far enough.

We aim and settle for success in this life. We're easily distracted by **statistics that will mean absolutely nothing** in eternity. We limit our ideas of success to the music realm, and fail to see the broad picture of success.

God isn't going to be highlighting names and numbers on the last day!

So where are your eyes directed? What's your ultimate goal? Whose opinion do you value the most? Are you aiming for success only in this life, or do you want to be successful in eternity? How badly do you want to hear the Father say, "Well done..."

Of course, we could never hope to hear "well done" apart from the Savior who bore our sins on the cross, endured the penalty we deserved, suffered the wrath of God in our place, and rose triumphantly from the grave, reconciling us to God through faith in his blood.

His success has now become our success. He is our life! He is our reward! He is our success! So may we lay aside every sin that so easily entangles us – sins of comparison, and bitterness, and pride, and despair, and competition — and pursue what it truly means to be successful.

May we all, every one of us, use the varied musical gifts God has given us to bring honor to the only one worthy of honor, Jesus Christ. So that on that final day we may hear the words we long to hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Brothers and sisters, there is no greater success for the Christian musician.