

The Called Musician

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In 1 Samuel 16:14-18, David plays for the king. David has the following characteristics. He is:

1. Skillful
2. Attractive
3. Articulate
4. Brave
5. Anointed

Do you possess these characteristics?

Skillful

Do you play fluently in all keys? Are you up to date on your instrument? Do you practice regularly?

Are you seeking continuous education? Too many musicians end their formal training after college or after obtaining a major position with a church or other entity. Much has changed in music over the past decade. Make sure that you are keeping up with the basic changes, especially those in theory and those that have occurred because of technological advances. You owe it to those who employ you, to yourself, and most of all to God to strive continuously for excellence as a musician. Being a skilled musician demands that you constantly seek to improve yourself personally and professionally.

Skillfulness also suggests growth. This will require that you work with others who have skills that you desire. Collaboration is required for all skillful musicians.

Make sure that you avail yourself of all the resources you can. Some will be offered through denominations, some through music societies, some through groups established especially for musicians and some (such as The African American Lectionary) via the Internet.

Attractive

Do you carry yourself like a godly musician?

If you carry yourself as one who knows that he or she is fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 149:14), this is what is meant by being attractive. Attractiveness concerns outside presentation too. Whenever you are in public look presentable (hair properly cut or coiffed, clothes ironed, wear properly fitting clothing, avoid excessive jewelry and excessive make-up, etc.). Being a godly musician is not a Sunday gig or a quick way to pick up the opposite sex. It's a lifestyle.

Attractiveness also signifies that one has a godly demeanor. The musician, no matter how talented or lauded, who is viewed as arrogant, a diva, or ungrateful is not attractive! To serve God and God's people requires a spirit of humility. In addition, working well with a variety of people requires a personality that is amiable, shows flexibility, and is mature. The angry "my way or the highway" constantly whining/complaining (signs of immaturity) musician is never a welcomed sight.

Articulate

Can you communicate well with all people and in all relevant arenas?

Knowing how to play in every key is great. Knowing how to use pro-tools is great too. Knowing how to communicate with persons of all generations is necessary. However, can you also converse with people when it comes to business matters?

As musicians, we have to operate in two realms, the spiritual and the earthly. Being an articulate businessperson is a big part of your job. Consider the following:

- If you have an issue with your paycheck, can you handle that without making the matter negative or overblown? Do you know when and how to ask for a raise?
- When you're wrong, are you able to humble yourself and quickly admit it?
- Are you nice to your church family? They pay your salary. Do not forget that.
- When you're getting booked for an engagement, do you know how to properly negotiate a contract? It's time out for writing your number down on a piece of paper and telling someone "call me." You should have the following:
 - (a) Business Cards (a set for your church position and a set for your personal services);
 - (b) Proper representation when needed (and be sure to ask the proper people when you do not know what you need to know); and
 - (c) Invoices (You must take all steps to satisfy IRS requirements).

As an aside, be aware that there are many ways to assist your tax position if you are a musician. A part of communicating (articulating) that you are a professional is properly handling your business and financial affairs.

- Open a small business account (most banks offer this account).
- Use [legalzoom.com](https://www.legalzoom.com) or a similar service to set up an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation).
- Get your company branded (logos, colors, legally, etc.).
- Talk to your pastor about ways the church can protect you financially and legally.

- Keep a good reputation at your bank. Keep money in your checking and savings.

Don't just use your account to cash your check. Deposit it.

- Set up a retirement account. The same companies that do this for pastors do it for musicians. This is especially important from ages 21–30 when you may not be a staff member of a church where social security and other federal withdrawals are regularly made from your check by church(es) that pay you.
- Tithe. This is very important. Are you tithing? I hope that the answer is yes. I will not get into whether one should tithe their net vs. their gross. However, when you tithe, you unlock blessings for yourself. Giving God a percentage of what He's given you makes common sense and keeps you in good standing with your church.

Here is a familiar Scripture we all know: Malachi 3:10: Bring the whole tithe (10%) into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. "Test me in this says the Lord Almighty and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour you out so much that you will not have room enough for it." As you can see, God has made a promise (covenant) with us. "Test me and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour you out a blessing." That's an awesome promise. Your tithe activates this promise.

Below is an easy plan if you're having an issue with tithing and/or need to learn how to tithe. I've also added 2 columns labeled checking and savings. The amounts in those columns indicate how much you need to deposit in each account after you've paid your tithes. If you follow the savings column, you will see how much you can save on a monthly basis. "DNT" is the abbreviation for do-not-touch; this is money for retirement or a serious emergency.

This is just a sample. Feel free to adjust this to fit your budget and salary. If you're a beginner, this will really help you. I can testify that tithing works. I fell off the wagon many times growing up, but when you know better, you must do better.

Sample Easy Plan:

Per Sunday	Tithes (MUST)	Checking	Savings (DNT)
200.00	20.00	160.00	20.00 (80-100)
250.00	25.00	200.00	25.00 (100-125)
300.00	30.00	240.00	30.00 (120-150)
400.00	40.00	325.00	35.00 (140-175)
500.00	50.00	410.00	40.00 (160-200)

This needs to be done consistently as often as you are paid. Pay your bills out of your checking account and then always pay yourself (meaning save something for retirement and emergencies).

However, this plan will fail if you do not TITHE. When you tithe, you rebuke the devourer of your finances (Malachi 3:10-11). When you tithe, you're not only obeying God's word, but you're also showing the pastor and the church that you support the vision and programs of the church.

Brave

Be strong and courageous. "Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

Everything you do must be done intentionally and with courage. God is backing you.

Serve to please God. Never serve as a musician to please people but rather to please God. There comes a time when you must take a stand. Jesus will speak/act and confirm that He's with you (Chronicles 5:14).

When you are right, stand up for yourself and your craft. Too often musicians cave in to the wishes of churches, pastors, theater owners, show operators, etc. to obtain financial remuneration. Being brave or having Godly courage requires that you always live your life with integrity and refuse to harm others as you climb. It will not profit you to gain the whole world (fame and fortune) and lose your soul. However, also know that your soul can be lost due to cowardice.

Anointed

Is it clear that you are operating under the direction of God's Spirit?

You can sound good to the ear of people all day. However, if you are not operating under the anointing of God your skill level will not matter in the end. Hearing "you play so well" is good.

Hearing “I was so lost today, I was about to give up BUT when I heard you play, God came and touched me” is the ultimate compliment. Why? Because the praise went to God and you obtained God’s attention on someone else’s behalf by simply being a yielded vessel.

It does not take a college degree in music to be anointed. It takes a clean heart, a right spirit, and a posture that allows you to be used of God (Psalm 51:10). Are you chord-and-riff-driven or ministry-driven? The importance of operating under God’s anointing is not something that is taught in most music programs. In fact, it is not even a regular topic in church and denominational music workshops/training. However, it is the most important thing that a musician can do.

Being a church musician, as with many professions, has extreme highs and lows. One moment your choir is being nominated for a Dove, Stellar, or Grammy Award, and the next moment your pastor has made front-page headlines for sexual or financial immorality or both! In all of this, if you are not anchored in God, operating under the direction of God’s Spirit, you can lose your footing and even your faith! Stay close to God and the Word of God and God will abide with you. Long for the presence of God in your work, as you create, as you prepare, as you lead others in worship, as you lead others in rehearsals, in every moment of your life. Although David was certainly not a perfect man, his heart’s desire was “don’t take your spirit from me.” He knew that without God’s anointing, his ministry was worthless. This will aid all you do as you seek to faithfully live into your calling as a musician.