

The Master Musician:

Meditations on Jesus

Available June 2015

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By using the metaphors of music this rich devotional writing from Christian musician John Michael Talbot calls the church to greater unity and service under God's authority and power. Talbot explores the richness of God's grace and our response in creating a "symphony orchestra of the church" that will "make a beautiful music bigger than any one musician."

An Interview with John Michael Talbot

What first prompted you to write *The Master Musician*?

John Michael Talbot: I was meditating on the parables of Jesus, and asking the Lord how I could teach in a similar fashion. The parables were simple yet almost endless in depth all at once. It struck me that I am a musician, so I could use the craft I know best to tell stories about our life in Jesus and the church.

How does this idea of the "Master Musician" resonate with you personally, and how has it played out in your life over the years?

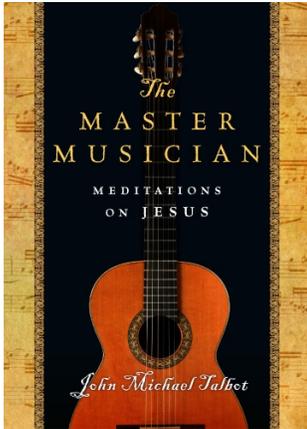
John Michael: Well obviously, I'm a musician, so it is most personal to me. I have found it an ideal vehicle to use some of my own studies in the basic craft of music to relate spiritual lessons in Christ. This is not unlike Jesus using stories about building, farming, or baking from his basic human experience in Nazareth and Galilee in his lifetime to tell stories about eternal spiritual mysteries.

How do you hope readers use *The Master Musician*?

John Michael: It could be used as a devotional, not unlike how we use parables in our Bible reading today. Like Scripture study, it could also be read straight through on a more intellectual level first, and then doubled back on for deeper spiritual meditation. When I have presented this in spiritual conferences and retreats, most folks learn a lot about music as well as their spiritual life in Christ.

What do you hope readers take away from *The Master Musician*?

John Michael: My prayer is that it will enrich their entire spiritual life both personally and corporately within the church. There is a vast Christian tradition that American Christians often are not aware of. Our Christianity in this culture is more modern and novel. That is a gift, but it is enriched when properly placed within the context of a broader and much richer Christian tradition. Then it becomes truly catholic and orthodox. That is my heart as a Catholic Christian, and was the heart of the original Reformers.



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God Himself is the Master Musician

We are only his instruments. We cannot make music without his touch. Without the musician, the instrument's whole purpose is pointless, futile and vain. Without God's touch, we are incomplete and unfulfilled. Furthermore, the more the instrument is played by the hand of God, the more we are actually conformed to his melody and style. We vibrate to his rhythm and resonate to his tone. We *actually mature* and *mold* according to his tone. We are *conformed* to his image.

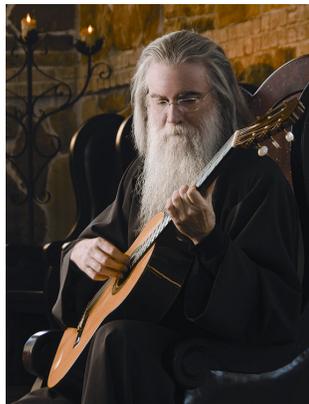
– Taken from chapter two, "Our Response"

The Master Musician is a meditation on Jesus' work in our lives. To gain full benefit, it must be read in the same spirit in which it was written. It must be read as a meditation. It must be read as a sort of prayer. While it contains much teaching about life in Christ and the church, it is not a study. It is a meditation.

The work is divided into three main sections: God's grace, our human response and life in the church. The first is likened unto the crafting of a fine guitar by the Master Musician. The second, unto our learning how to play under the Master's instruction. The third, unto learning how to play with others in the symphony orchestra or band.

It is my prayer that this little book will help to bring the readers into closer union with Jesus and into a more full communion, or "common union," with each other. Perhaps where page upon page of intellectual study has fallen short, this little simile in the parable tradition can open the doors of some of our hearts and minds more simply. After all, it is closer to the tradition in which Jesus himself taught. Perhaps it will help bring us all closer to him.

– Taken from the introduction



John Michael Talbot, author of *The Master Musician: Meditations on Jesus*

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John Michael Talbot

John Michael Talbot is an award-winning Christian musician, writer, motivational speaker and itinerant minister to churches and parishes around the world.

Born in 1954 to a Methodist family with a musical background in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Talbot started learning to play the guitar as a young boy. By age fifteen he dropped out of school and was performing as a guitarist for Mason Proffit, a country folk-rock band formed with his older brother, Terry.

After countless tours and the release of several albums (on multiple labels, including Warner Brothers), Mason Proffit disbanded and Talbot embarked on a spiritual journey that eventually led him to Christianity and the Jesus Movement. Talbot started to use his musical talents to express his faith by joining the newly emerging Christian music scene. As a founding artist for Sparrow Records he delivered two albums, *John Michael Talbot* and *The New Earth*, both produced by Billy Ray Hearn.

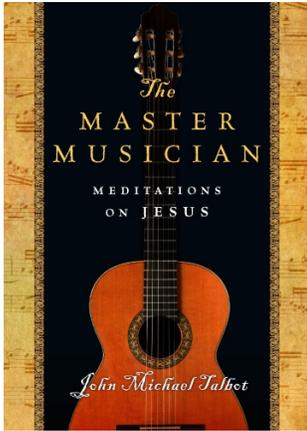
Talbot's spiritual journey continued throughout his early days at Sparrow. Inspired by the life of Saint Francis of Assisi, he began studying at a Franciscan center in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he became a Roman Catholic in 1978. He immersed himself in church history, patristics and monastic/Franciscan sources. It was during this time that he started a house of prayer called The Little Portion. Talbot moved The Little Portion to Eureka Springs, Arkansas, on land he had purchased during his Mason Proffit days. There he founded his own community, the Brothers and Sisters of Charity, at Little Portion Hermitage as an "integrated monastic community" with celibate brothers and sisters, singles and families. By 1989, with permission from the Catholic Church, Talbot had married Viola Pratka.

After a successful career with Sparrow, in 1992 Talbot founded his own label called Troubadour for the Lord. Today he is recognized as Catholic music's most popular artist with over four million sales and compositions published in hymnals throughout the world. His album *Worship and Bow Down* is the fifty-third album in his thirty-seven years in the Christian music ministry.

Talbot's songs were the first by a Catholic artist to cross well-defined boundaries and gain acceptance by Protestant listeners. He was also the recipient of several prestigious awards. He won the Dove Award for Praise and Worship Album of the Year for *Light Eternal* with producer and longtime friend Phil Perkins, and he became one of only nine artists to receive the President's Merit Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. In 1988 he was named the number one Christian artist by *Billboard* magazine.



AUTHOR BIO



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Talbot also began to write books from his wealth of study and personal experience of integrated monastic life. His books include *The Jesus Prayer*, *Reflections of St. Francis*, *The World Is My Cloister* and *The Universal Monk*. Talbot's twenty-fourth book, *Blessings of St. Benedict*, was published in September 2011.

Talbot leads his very active ministry from the Little Portion Hermitage and St. Clare's Monastery in Houston, Texas, where he is the founder and minister general of the Brothers and Sisters of Charity. Along with his many artistic achievements, his humanitarian efforts have been honored with special recognition from Mercy Corps and the Mother Teresa award.