

Bob Kauflin

SKILLED AND SINCERE

The Pursuit of Undistracting Excellence

I. *Introduction*

II. *God's view of skill*

A. *God commends skill.*

"Let every skillful craftsman among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded:" (Exodus 35:10, ESV)

"Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." (1 Samuel 16:16, ESV)

"Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, should direct the music, for he understood it." (1 Chronicles 15:22, ESV)

Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. (Psalm 33:3, ESV)

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. (1 Corinthians 3:10, ESV)

B. *God gives skill for his glory.*

*"Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman **in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence** to know how to do any work in the construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded." (Exodus 36:1, ESV)*

What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (2 Cor. 4:7)

C. *God doesn't accept our worship on the basis of our skill.*

"you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5, ESV)

III. Deliberate Practice: The “Secret” to Growing in Skill

- A. *Designed to improve performance*
- B. *Repetitive*
- C. *Immediate, measurable feedback*
- D. *Mentally challenging*
- E. *Hard work*

IV. When Skill Goes Astray

- A. *We value musical preparation over spiritual preparation.*
- B. *We consider ourselves indispensable.*

God doesn't need our skills to do his work. He changes hearts even when we're unprepared, sing out of tune, and make mistakes.
- C. *We're more affected by musical chops than godly character, in ourselves and others.*
- D. *We look down on those who don't play or sing as well as we do.*
- E. *We rarely think about the lyrics we're singing.*
- F. *We're more concerned about impressing a congregation than serving them.*
- G. *We think more notes, faster riffs, more fills, greater volume equals greater effectiveness.*
- H. *We get bored easily playing music that's not challenging or in a style we prefer.*

V. God's view of sincerity, or heart engagement

“I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them; and the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:21–24, ESV)

“You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (Matthew 15:7–9, ESV)

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:5, ESV)

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (Proverbs 4:23, ESV)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart... (Ephesians 5:18–19, ESV)

The Great God values not the service of men, if the heart be not in it: The Lord sees and judges the heart; he has no regard to outward forms of worship, if there be no inward adoration, if no devout affection be employed therein. It is therefore a matter of infinite importance, to have the whole heart engaged steadfastly for God – Isaac Watts

VI. How to Develop Heart Engagement

A. *Our hearts pursue what we treasure.*

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21, ESV)

B. *What we are meant to treasure is God’s glory in Christ:*

“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6, ESV)

C. *Only being rooted in the gospel produces worship that honors God and puts skill in its proper place.*

All our offerings are “at once humbled and exalted by the strong saving work of Christ.” (Harold Best)

D. *We must be personally more affected by what Christ has done for us than what we can do for him (Phil. 3:7-11).*

VII. When Sincerity Goes Astray

A. *We use our “love for Jesus” as an excuse for regularly messing up or being unprepared.*

B. *We downplay preparing for a meeting and people can tell.*

C. *We assume any band that plays skillfully is shallow.*

D. *We never improve and it doesn’t bother us.*

E. *We can’t remember the last time we learned something on our instrument.*

- F. *We never ask God to make us more effective and fruitful at what we do.*
- G. *We think our leader or pastor should just be grateful we're showing up.*

VIII. *Putting Skill and Heart Together*

- A. *God wants us to develop our skills as much as possible for the purpose of serving others and glorifying God in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4:10-11):*

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:10–11)

- B. *Our passion for God's glory in Christ is to be so great that we don't want to do anything to hinder people seeing it, either lack of preparation or an overdependence on it.*
- C. *The end effect: "Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed." (Psalm 34:5, ESV)*