

My Creative Mess

The second Law of Thermodynamics states that things naturally progress from order to disorder. This is known as “entropy,” and nowhere does this scientific principle get proven more than in my personal workspace.

In my mind, my recording studio is my oasis—a place where I can hide from the clutter and busyness of the world and my responsibilities and just be creative. Riiiiight. The truth is, it is often a cluttered environment full of remnants of past projects, unfinished ideas, unorganized wires, and, well, trash. In the midst of the creative process, manuscript paper, guitar picks, instrument cables, CDs and pens all go flying around the room—as my organizational skills simultaneously go flying out the window. When the process is over, I tend to just walk away, figuring I’ll straighten up later. Instead, the piles keep growing to the point that when I enter the room, sometimes, I find I *can’t* be creative—there is too much clutter. I often have to clean my studio before I can get any truly creative momentum going.

NEXT TO GODLINESS

My church office isn’t much different. There are days I spend multiple hours at my desk (how in the world did I end up at a desk? That’s another article!), and I recently realized that I was leaving my office everyday exhausted, although it wasn’t always because of the amount of work I had done. Sometimes, it was just trying to function in a cluttered environment that wore me out. A couple of weeks ago, I emptied my office, had it repainted a warm, relaxing color and got rid of a ton of unnecessary stuff. Since then, I have worked hard to keep it clean and organized, and suddenly, everything feels better in there. I’m more relaxed, and I’m more productive.

When I was a teenager, my room was constantly messy (yes, this is a pattern with me). I had a sign hanging in my room that read: “A Creative Mess Is Better Than Tidy Idleness.” It was my attempt at showing my mom that the messy room was okay, because, hey, I’m an artist! She didn’t buy it. Sure enough, I still had to clean my room. And, the truth is, it always felt better cleaned up. To this day, my habits belie my desires—while I find I have the need for clean environments and organization, my tendency is to let things fall to disorder.



By Tony Guerrero

RECIPE FOR LIFE

Now, this may not be a problem for you. Perhaps you are an organized person—free from an excess of clutter. Or perhaps you actually function better amidst the chaos. Artists come in all shapes and sizes. But for me, I realize that there is a parallel between how the clutter of my work space affects my creativity (and I see creativity as a very spiritual act) and how the clutter of my busy life affects my spiritual walk.

It seems like it’s always time to clean house.

You and I may not share the same activities, but I would bet that if you’re like most people in our culture, you find yourself overextended between your responsibilities and your passions. If so, you probably know how easy it is to find yourself getting cluttered.

STOP

One of the most inviting verses in Scripture is, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). What a wonderful invitation from the Creator of the universe to just lay all our clutter aside and bask in His peace. This should seem so attractive to us, and yet, how often do we put it low on our list of things to do? For me, just as my studio needs to be clean to feel productive, so too do I feel the need to unclutter my life before I can focus on the Lord. But He invites us *in the midst* of the clutter. He doesn’t say, “Go finish your business, clean up your mess, then come spend some time with me.” But, I must admit, that’s how I often do it. Or try to.

I’m learning that, just like cleaning my room, being still with God requires discipline. It’s simply something I *must* do. Certainly, it’s something I *want* to do, but my habits often keep me from it. But there really is no excuse. The Creator of the universe has extended an invitation. My projects can wait. My job can wait. My busyness can wait. I can wait.

Tony Guerrero is Director of Creative Arts at Saddleback Church and a noted jazz recording artist. You can learn more about his work at tonyguerrero.com, and you can contribute to his new worship anecdote book at funnyworshipstories.com.

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