

Troubleshooting Guide

Nothing insults my intelligence more than looking at the troubleshooting guide of a new appliance and having it tell me to check and be sure it's plugged in. And nothing proves my intelligence deserved being insulted than the number of times I actually forgot to plug something in.

Sometimes, when things aren't working—appliances, our ministries, our lives—it's the simple things that need fixing. However, it is in our nature to assume that the bigger the problem seems, the bigger the solution needs to be, which often keeps us from even starting—"It's just too big to fix, so why bother?"

So, allow me to offer my own personal *Life & Ministry Troubleshooting and Maintenance Guide*. I'm learning more and more how often I need to check this list of easy fixes before I allow myself to get overwhelmed.

LOOK FOR THE SMALL THINGS

A nail can stop a Hummer. A bird can stop a jumbo jet. A lock of hair can stop a high powered vacuum. A small hole can sink a boat.

So, too, is it in our lives and ministries. Sometimes the small things can get in our way, causing problems that seem bigger than they need to be. A lack of sleep or a bad meal can slow us down physically. Getting caught up in the tasks of a project over the spiritual significance can slow us down spiritually. Avoiding a simple discussion can cause a relationship to deteriorate or a problem to fester. Check for that one small thing that may be causing a big meltdown.

EMPTY THE BAG

The more you use your vacuum, the fuller the bag gets with dirt and junk. The fuller the bag gets, the less effective the vacuum is at doing its job. How much trash is in your bag? How many "dirty" things from your past—guilt, resentments, anger—are you hanging on to? What filth are you allowing in to clog your mind?

These things we carry with us keep us from living our lives as God wants us to and hinder us from performing our ministries well. Just as you don't put new coffee grounds in with the old ones from yesterday and expect the coffee to taste fresh, we can't expect our ministries to be fresh if we just mix new learning with



By Tony Guerrero

old hang-ups. Work to clear your filter, empty your trash, and clear the way for a fresh work of God.

ARE YOU PLUGGED IN?

Like I mentioned earlier, sometimes it's the obvious things we miss. As Christians, we know we're supposed to stay connected to the Source. How often do we see our problems growing and not bring them to His feet before they've grown into unbearable burdens? This, I find, is almost always my downfall. While the problems seem small, I feel I can handle it myself. By the time I take something to God, I have allowed it to become big. If I had a nickel for every one of my prayers that started with, "Well, God, I did it again...."

The seasons where we stay connected to God are when we can find our greatest successes—in life, in our families, in our ministries, in our work. Stay plugged in.

READ THE MANUAL

Okay, I'm one of those guys. When faced with a "Some Assembly Required" item or with a new piece of gear or software, I don't read the manuals like I should. I figure I'll open it when I run into a problem. Oh, but how many problems would I have avoided had I started with the manual?

God gave us the Bible, the ultimate manual for everything we face, experience, long for, need, build, create, imagine...you name it. It's all there. And if our days started with the Manual, we'd likely avoid some of the issues we often face. Or, at least, we would be better equipped to deal with them.

Keeping a check on how we use our personal hardware (our bodies) and our software (our minds) is important. While it may seem elementary, I have found that these simple troubleshooting reminders can help us to avoid so many of the pitfalls we face in our lives. And you certainly can't beat the eternal lifetime guarantee!

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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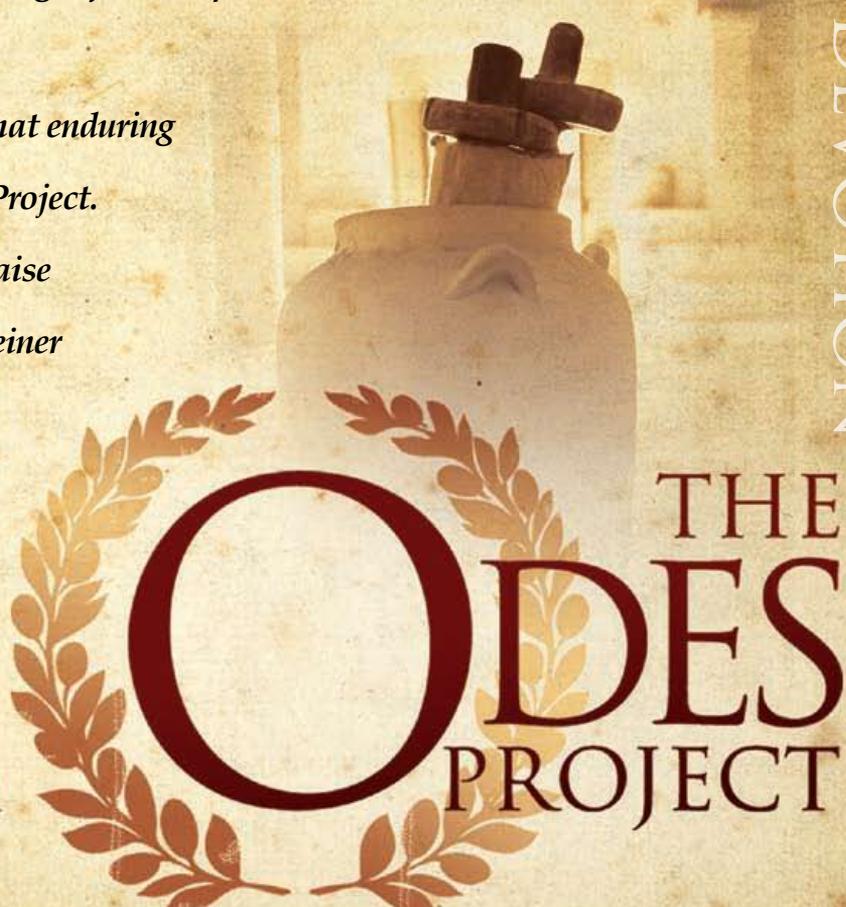
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