

# The Blank Page

By Tony Guerrero



**T**he blank page. Every creative type fears it. “What if I never come up with another good song?” “What if my best paintings are behind me?” “I have no ideas for the drama this week.” “What am I going to write this article about?” (Don’t let that last one fool you, this was a preconceived idea for this article!)

I’ve never met a creative person who doesn’t experience the blank page at some point in their creative journey. In fact, for most, it’s a recurring issue. We often create in waves, exhilarated by the abundant times and frustrated at the low times. Yet, even though it is such a normal and natural part of the creative process, the blank page still literally instills fear and anxiety in many. However, I believe we’re missing out on something God has for us when we simply dwell in the frustration of a creative rut.

## CREDIT

Ours is an artistic life often inspired by God and His creation, as well as by His work in our lives. As Christians, we try to be careful to give God the glory for our creative nature—“God gave me this song.” “God guided my hand in this sculpture.” Why, then, if we give God the credit for our talents and our output, do we not also give Him credit and then take great joy in the blank page? Perhaps this temporary stall is His doing—a forced pause in our creative efforts that compels us to examine our humility. The blank page is a great reminder that we are not the founts of creative brilliance others (and sometimes we) believe us to be. Too often, as we accumulate creative successes, we tend to leave God out of the process and rely on our own abilities. The blank page is an opportunity, first and foremost, to rely completely on the Lord—and what better posture is there for any believer?

It is also our opportunity to explore. When we create constantly, we often fall into the rut of repeating ourselves. But a dry spell can be a great motivator to change your patterns, to look for new and different ways to be inspired and to create. Perhaps new scenery. New tools of your trade. New sources.

## POUND IT OUT

What I have found in my personal creative journey is that the blank page is, in part, God’s way of reminding me to

practice my craft. For example, as a songwriter, my instincts tell me to write only when inspired. However, “inspiration” often allows creativity to come too easy. I find it is incredibly valuable to compose without any direct inspiration, to simply practice my craft. Technically, I can write a song at any moment. It may not be good, but I have the technical ability needed to put melody, harmony and lyrics together. While I realize there is a big difference between those works that are truly inspired by God and those we do by rote, I also know that I need to keep my skills sharp for those times when God does inspire.

## EXERCISE

Here’s a little blank-page exercise to try the next time you can’t seem to put pen to paper: Look around your room—see anything? A ketchup bottle, a nightstand, a dishwasher, a hand towel. Write a story or poem, compose a song or paint a picture about it. And complete it. Make it the best you can make it. To create “art” about the uninspiring things forces you to dig deep into your technical grab bag. (Have you ever tried to rhyme “ketchup”?) Working this way can only serve to improve your skill, and thus it is sharpened when that true inspiration—the kind you instantly recognize as a gift from God—comes. Ultimately I may want to write songs about God, but it is a great exercise to practice writing every single day about anything.

God loves our creativity. He loves creativity in general. (Remember, the first words in Scripture tell of His own creativity.) But even He rested from His creation. The blank page is our forced rest. It is our reminder of how dependant we are on God, and it can be a compelling impetus to keep us from relying on what we know how to do by rote. God will inspire you time and time again whether through His word, through His people, or through your own creative hands. So, don’t fear the blank page—be thankful for it and embrace what God might want to do in you in the meantime. Embrace the blank page.

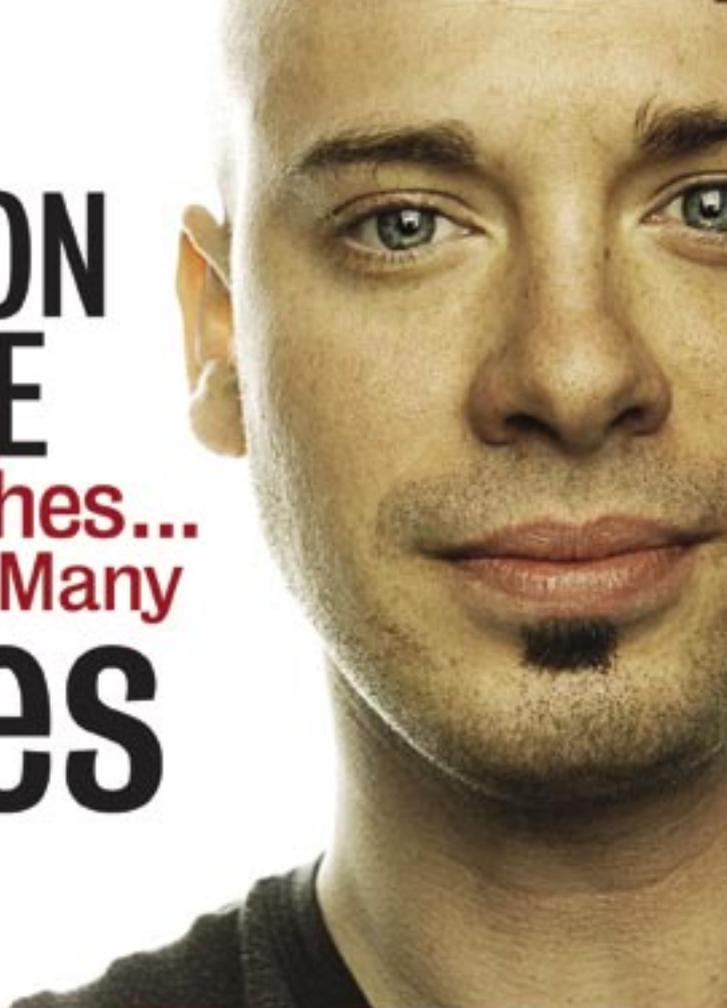
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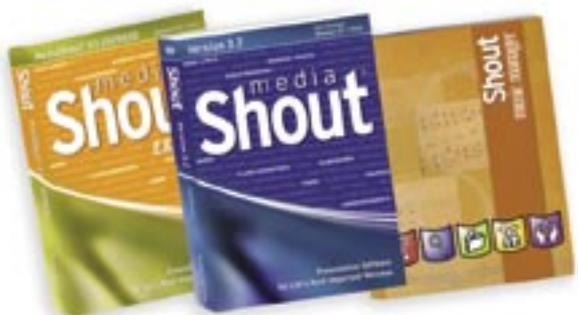
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