

Redirecting Our Passion

By Tony Guerrero

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As a new Christian, the commandment “You shall have no other gods before me” seemed pretty easy to keep. I figured that as long as I didn’t worship Buddha or Krishna I was fine. Later, the realization that anything I loved or cherished in my life had the potential to be a “god” to me left me in somewhat of a constant “false-god-alert” mode. Sadly, that alarm sounds more often than I care to admit.

Few people are forced into becoming musicians. Instead, we do it because we love it. And because we love it, music and being a musician has the potential of achieving god-status in our lives.

Before I became a Christian, music, specifically jazz, and the pursuit of music was my life. Everything revolved around it – my social life, my thought life, my future plans. Then, like many new converts, there was a period of time after I felt God’s call on my life when I began to wonder if perhaps I was going to have to give up the jazz music and life that I loved so much in order to properly serve God. How could I allow anything secular to compete for my attention? Doesn’t following God mean giving up everything else we love?

I believe the answer can be found in the story of Abraham (Genesis 15-22). Abraham’s greatest earthly desire was for a son and he went to great lengths to pursue this end. At a ripe old age, God granted his wish and blessed Abraham and his wife Sarah with the son they had always dreamed of. But, as the story goes, we see God asking Abraham to give up his son by sacrificing his life on an altar. How could God expect any man to lay down his life’s desire this way? But Abraham was obedient - and God was faithful. As Abraham was about to slay his precious son, God sent an angel who interceded and stopped him: *“Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son. (22:12)”*

I realized that God didn’t want so much to take away what I love – He just wants to be sure that I would do what He asked of me. He wants to know that He’s more important to us than anything of this earth. He demands (and deserves) my affection above my love for music.

Of course, sometimes people are called to put aside their previous passions. You may remember the hugely popular rapper and Puff Daddy protégé from a few years ago who went by the name Ma\$e (his real name is Mason Betha). Shortly after his dramatic conversion experience, he not only gave up a multi-million dollar contract, but literally *gave away* his earthly possessions – luxury cars, jewelry, etc. – and states very firmly in his book, *“Revelations - There’s A Light After The Lime,”* that he can no longer see himself rapping. Instead, he is a full time preacher leading his own church and ministry.

Because I believe God hasn't called me to give up my secular career while pursuing ministry, I have had to wrestle with not allowing it to hold the same place in my life that it used to. Now I see that life in a new light – as an opportunity. I am constantly around unbelieving musicians and jazz fans, and I can choose to use that as either an escape from church or as a chance to be a light in a dark place. If I can do this right, with God's help, musicians who may never set foot in a church will be able to see the effect God has had in my life. And God has provided me with ample opportunity to share my faith with non-believers from my 'former' life. I am perfectly happy planting seeds of faith in that sometimes hostile soil, and I know God used my passion for music to put me in that place.

God wants to know where our truest passion lies, but I believe He can and wants to use our earthly passions for His glory. Genesis 22:16-18 shows us how God rewarded Abraham's obedience: *"... I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."*

Nations arose out of Abraham's son and the world was blessed. Imagine the impact our music or any of our earthly passions may have, even long after we're gone, when we give them up as a sacrifice to God instead of placing them in competition with Him.

The music I grew up loving and my ability to play it is God's gift to me, and I hope to spend my life enjoying this gift. But I can imagine my own jealousy if I gave a present to someone I loved dearly only to then watch that person love the present more than me. And I can only guess at how often we hurt our Father's heart when we place our music, our careers, our ambitions above our love for Him and above His plan for us.