

## My Music Testimony

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Every Christian has a testimony. The primary testimony is a re-counting of how one's soul was transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light. Without question this is the most important story a Christian has to tell. But once this transfer has taken place, God begins transforming various areas of a Christian's life. So, other testimonies are created. This is my *music testimony*. God has challenged and changed this area of my life.

### Pre-Christian Calamaio

My Dad played the guitar. He was an excellent rhythm guitar player. But there was a point in time I made a decision. I did not want to be like my Dad. So when it was suggested I take up the guitar, my excuse was ready. Years earlier I had broken the ring finger on my left hand. Even though it was only a hair line fracture, I made that the bedrock reason for why I *could not* play the guitar. This lasted until my first year in college. That is where I met Harold J. Davis and Jim Messman.

Harold, or Hal, was a lead guitar player. He would walk around our dorm room playing along to songs from Jethro Tull, Yes, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, etc. I was infatuated with Hal's playing ability, but he had no desire, or patience, in teaching me how to play. However, down the hall was a fellow named Jim Messman. He played an acoustic guitar and was quite skilled at finger picking. I started taking Hal's guitar and would sit across from Jim and imitate his chords and picking patterns. That got me started. I immediately began creating little tunes. Very soon after this I began putting some words to those little tunes. This became *my world* - a world I fully controlled, a world where I could express myself - free of anyone else's opinions, correction, or censorship. After a year or so, I had 15 or 20 songs under my belt and crossed paths with another guitar player named Steve Kahler. Musically, this was a very positive development.

Steve was a solid guitar player and I learned several new finger pick patterns from him. This challenged me, kept me growing, and gave me new, creative outlets for song writing. Steve had a very good tenor voice and he loved creating harmonies to my songs. He also enjoyed being able to work up little lead licks, so he also prospered from our time together. We played in various public places and were well received. But Steve received an ultimatum from a young lady named Burnadette. Steve had to choose me - or her. I lost, Steve and Burn got married, and that was that.

A short time later, I left Kansas (my home state) and moved to Florida. By this time I had about 40 original songs. I ran an ad in the Fort Lauderdale newspaper to start a music group. The response was interesting to say the least. But the most interesting was a 35-year-old lead guitar player named Daniel Joseph Coleangelo, Jr. He went by Danny Cole, Jr. To this day I have never heard a more versatile or skilled guitarist. Danny's father was a guitar instructor. He had taught his son many music styles. Danny could play classical, blues, jazz, country, and all kinds of rock lead work. We would play at "open mics" in the area and Danny would turn his back to the audience so other lead guitarists would not be able to steal his licks (these open mic's were attended primarily by musicians). I still remember them flocking the stage after a performance and getting around Danny to try to find out what he had been doing. I'm sure they did not find out too much. Danny's attraction to me was quite simple - I had original songs and that gave him creative outlets for all kinds of rhythm and lead work. To give you an idea how good this guy was I have to relate this story.

Each time we would get together I would set up my reel-to-reel tape player so I could record our sessions. One evening, after arriving, he asked me if I had a pair of tweezers. He needed to remove

a splinter from the tip of his left *index* finger. We couldn't find any tweezers in our medicine chest, but he did find a razor blade. Danny proceeded to cut off the tip of his index finger. I said, "*Danny! What the heck did you just do? I've got everything set up to record and now you cut off the tip of your finger!*" Danny calmly told me not to worry. He bandaged himself up and proceeded to play *with the other three fingers*. On tape, I couldn't even tell the difference. He would often tell me that if I wanted to be a really good guitarist, I would have to learn to use my pinky (little finger). That night I looked at his hands more closely. His pinky was almost as long as his ring finger. My pinky is exactly even with the crease of the last knuckle of my ring finger. But even with my physical limitations, our music chemistry was such that we began planning great music adventures. But Someone else had other plans.

My songs were becoming more and more intense as I was searching for meaning and purpose in life. I hope to record some of them. Here are a few song titles to give you an idea: "*The Harder I Look the Less That I See*", "*Dead End*", "*Even Even Seems Odd*", "*Fightin' For Life*", "*Runnin' Fool*", "*How Can I Change?*", "*Feelin' Bitterness*", "*Blue's Blue*", "*Played Out*". If anyone can relate to my quest for life purpose, the listener may be more open to where the search took me.

In an act of mercy, the Lord Jesus Christ interrupted and reversed my descent into death. This proved to be a wedge that separated Danny and I. It is my great hope this wedge proves to be a temporary measure by the Lord. You see, Danny stuck with me through the labor of the new birthing process. He never ridiculed or discouraged me on my search, but when conversion came, we both instinctively knew we were going down different roads. The last evening we played together, as he was getting in his car, he said, "*I'll call you next week.*" I replied, "*Sounds good to me.*" As he took off, our eyes locked for a second - we knew we were saying goodbye. If I don't see Danny again on this side, it is my great hope the Lord orders that he and I make music to Him on the other side of the Jordan.

### **New things have come! Like ... New Music!**

My conversion was one of those dramatic darkness-to-light affairs. I immediately began writing Christians songs. I had quite a flurry early on. To this day, some of these early songs are my favorites. They include, "*Thank You Lord Jesus*", "*Living Water or Die*", "*Jesus and the Woman Caught in Adultery*", "*Lord Jesus*", "*My Father*", "*Seek Ye First*", "*Grace and Peace to You*", "*I Feel So Free*", "*Let Them Come*", and "*The Simple Fact.*" There was a lot of joy and purity as God had opened (and continues to open 42+ years later) a new world to me.

I ran across a quote from Martin Luther within a few weeks of my conversion. This is not the exact quote, so if you find it, please forward it. If you listen to my songs, you'll know this quote has greatly influenced my song writing. It went something like this: "*The gift of language has been given to man along with the gift of music in order that man might proclaim the word of God through music.*" I hope my music's style and feel compliment the word of God.

### **Trouble**

But not all was well with my music life those first couple of years. There were some thorns. One big thorn was named, "*Jealousy.*" Another big thorn was named, "*Idolatry.*" There were many other thorns, but these were the two biggest.

In those days, I was attending a Bible study a couple of evenings a week. Before the studies, a fellow named Bruce Danna would play his songs for the group. Guess which thorn drew blood. It starts with a "*J.*" But, I also began to see other things about myself. If I was in someone's home and saw a guitar sitting in the corner, internal calculations immediately began and continued until that guitar found its way into my hands. The conversation at hand did not really matter much. In fact, I probably didn't hear much of it - *because I was thinking about getting that guitar.* My conscience did begin

bothering me enough that I started telling people about this “*struggle*” I was having. One night, I was recounting these “*woes*” to a Christian sister. After patiently listening, she innocently asked, “*Why don’t you just play your songs at home by yourself to the Lord? That would solve the problem.*” I totally recoiled upon hearing these words. In fact, *my entire being revolted* against this “*solution.*” After all, the whole reason I played *was for people*. I wanted them to hear *me*, see *me*, listen to *me*, be influenced by *me ... me, me, me*, (Incidentally, I have a song entitled, “*Me, Me, Me*”).

When I laid down that night, and all was quiet, I could see something right in the middle of my heart. It was my music. But, it was not enthroned by itself. There *it was*, and there *I was* right with it - and there wasn’t much room for anything else on that throne. My relatively new faith and my relatively new relationship with God was now fuel to give life and animation to - an idol. And it was deep - fused into the core of my soul.

Others might be able to “*reform*” themselves. I’m glad for them, but I have never found success in that. This malady was too powerful to even attempt controlling. I was *entangled* in a besetting sin. There was only one way to get untangled. I had to *set aside* this plague - set down that stupid guitar. Not for a season, but for the rest of my life. I could wait until heaven to pick up music again.

At that same time, the Bible teaching I was under played a role in that decision. Those teaching made a sharp distinction between “*natural*” and “*spiritual*” gifts. Natural gifts are common gifts that even unsaved people possess. But spiritual gifts are only possessed by Christians. Therefore, spiritual gifts are special and obviously superior to natural gifts. This teaching stressed that God may, or may not, want to use the natural gifts we have, *but we know for sure* that He wants us to discover and use our spiritual gift(s). Guitar playing ability, song writing, and singing obviously fell into the realm of natural, hence lesser, gifts. While I no longer believe this is correct teaching (see Endnote 1), *at that time* it seemed reasonable enough. Since I had no idea what spiritual gift(s) I had, and these natural gifts had me all twisted up, there was one thing to do - cast aside these natural abilities, and ask God to illumine me to whatever spiritual gift(s) I had been given. And that is what I did. I pawned my guitar and shelved my music. I am of the persuasion that God used this “*crooked stick*” of teaching to draw a straight line in my soul.

### **Relief**

Interesting things began happening inside and outside of me. For starters, an immediate weight was lifted. Then God opened doors to fully occupy my time and energies, particularly in teaching. Within months, I went on staff at a Christian drug rehabilitation program (Turning Point) where demands on my time and energy were quite intense. I also took up another “*hobby*” of great benefit. I wrote out favorite passages, pinned them on the walls of my room, and began memorizing them (a brother once said the more Scripture I had in me, the more God could use me. And that is correct. But other great, and unexpected, miracles occurred. One of the best was - *I began to enjoy the music of my brothers!* Just as the callouses on my fingertips quickly disappeared, so also the callouses of envy and jealousy that had plagued my soul, evaporated into thin air. This became a season of tremendous spiritual freedom. You know, I can’t remember who the blessed sister was who suggested how I solve my “*problem.*” She has no idea how she impacted my life. Without her, I surely would have shipwrecked in the area of music.

So, even though I was finished with my music ... God wasn’t.

### **Unwelcome Stirrings**

God’s primary tool for communicating to His children is the Bible. After about a year of this freedom, various passages I came across began stirring in my soul. Verses like Psalm 98:1, “*O sing to*

*the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things.*” Or Psalm 33:3, *“Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy.”* While some say these passages are dogmatic commands (as they are in the imperative mood), in this context these statements function as exhortations - more a strong, benevolent appeal. While designed to challenge those who have the ability to create new songs, they are also designed to encourage, validate and liberate *new music creativity*. But, at that time, I did not see these directives in that light. I resisted this material because I had no desire to go back into slavery. I loved my freedom. But it seemed like every time I opened the Bible, I kept running across passages relating to music. It was causing enough pressure in me that I remember telling the Lord I did not want to start playing again. But the pressure continued. Then entered Rev. Singh.

While working at Turning Point, the drug rehabilitation center, I received a call from a blind preacher named Rev. Singh. He asked questions about the drug program, and after an interesting conversation, we decided we would like to meet in person. Diabetes had taken his vision, and after our initial visit, we decided to keep getting together. I began going over on my day off, picked him up, and we would run various errands - and go for long drives. We would sing hymns together and just talk. Sometimes, I would accompany him in the evenings to his fiery Pentecostal evangelist meetings. Even though I am not of the Pentecostal persuasion, we had a lot of good times together.

One day, when I stopped by to pick him up, he said he wanted to talk for a minute. I sat down, and he told me that while he was waiting for me, he felt burdened to pray about our relationship. He told the Lord that although he enjoyed our times together, was there was some deeper reason why God had brought us together? So, he asked, *“Is there something bothering you?”* I sighed, and after a deep breath, I said, *“Yeah, Rev. Singh, there is something that has been bothering me lately.”* I had never said anything about my music before, so I told him the whole story. When finished, he leaned very close, and as I looked into his blind eyes, he quietly said, *“I think you might be holding back on something that would be good for you.”* I sat back on the sofa, reflected for a moment, and said within myself, *“Hmmm.”* After that, we went on our errands.

On those days off, I had different brothers that would let me spend the night at their place. This would get me away from the residential facility for a full day. So that night, as I was on a pallet on Mike Green's apartment floor, I reflected on Rev. Singh's comment. So, this is what I decided. *“Okay Lord, if you really want me to start playing again ... I am willing. But I am not going to run out and buy a guitar. You own every guitar on the planet, so if You really want me to start playing again, then I ask You for a guitar. I have to know it's You. That's it.”* Looking back on this *“deal”* I made, it now seems a bit audacious. But, I was so happy with my freedom that I cringed at the possibility of falling back into the music trap. I had *to know - absolutely know* - that God Almighty Himself wanted me to start playing again. That deal was between me and Him. Nobody was going to know anything about any of this. Period. I then went to sleep.

### **Wham!**

The next morning I got up and went to work at Turning Point, the drug rehab. As I was passing the Director's office, I stuck my head in and waved. Without even saying hello, he looked up and said, *“Hey Robin, I just got a call from a lady and I need you to go pick up some donated items. There's a guitar and ....”* I didn't really even hear the rest. I just chuckled and said, *“I think that guitar is for me.”* As I walked toward the van, I laughed and said, *“I bet it's a Martin; maybe a Guild.”* Well, it turned out to be a beat up little no-name classical nylon string guitar with only four strings on it. That really brought out a belly laugh. When I got back to my room, I scrounged around and found a couple of stings and slapped them on. So, what next?

Every evening I would sit in my room and just play before the Lord. Just me and Him. At one point I had twenty some evenings in a row that I made up a new tune. And the Scripture I had pinned

up on the walls - well, passage after passage found its way into these new songs. Some of the songs of that season included, *“Thru Wisdom This He’s Done”*, *“The Prophet’s Dream”*, *“Judah’s Lion”*, *“We Do Not Know”*, *“Sing Praises”*, *“Give Ear O Heavens”*, *“The Rejected Stone”*, *“We Thank Thee and Praise Thy Glorious Name”*, *“Well Pleasing in Thy Sight”*, *“How Can We Grow Weary”*, *“Psalm 19 - Praise God”*, *“Except in the Cross”*, *“Liberty”*, *“Declaring Things That are Upright”*, *“The Mighty One”*, *“Seek Her as Silver”*, and *“You Weren’t Even on the List.”* I also did several other songs during that period that were not totally scripture to music. Some of these included, *“Give Me the Jesus of the Bible”*, *“Prayer”*, *“Hallelujah Jesus My King”*, *“Altogether Lovely”*, *“Living Water the Whole World Douse”*, *“I Found My Work -To Proclaim Another’s”*, and *“No Other Road.”* There were others that I finished later on, but for those interested in my music, this gives you a flavor of what happened right after I was given that guitar. It was a good season.

By the way, the entire time I worked at Turning Point (over a year and a half), there was only one guitar ever donated there.

After a few months of playing on that little no name guitar, a young lady named Claire Birmingham insisted on giving me a guitar she never played. Claire, I have written over 100 songs on that instrument, and played before a good number of people in a lot of settings. If God has used any of my efforts to expand His Kingdom, you will share in those rewards. I hope you will be pleasantly surprised on Judgment Day (Since this 2002 writing, Claire has since died. I think an ovarian cancer). About the time Claire gave me her guitar, I began to *get asked* to play. The first place was The Greenhouse where I first heard the gospel. After playing there several times, one of the main teachers said, *“You’re songs are not ‘pop music’ but they do attract a certain type of listener, and those who get into it will really get into it.”* I know that is correct. It is niche music, specialty music, whether my pre-Christian or Christian songs. For me, the satisfaction of music has been to get out some message that has been stirring around inside of me. When they come out, I find relief and satisfaction. It does not really matter if someone likes the song or not. It is just something I have needed to get out. Then ...

### **The Fort Lauderdale Beach Christian Center**

A Christian named Jack Fontaine was preparing to open a street gospel mission off the Fort Lauderdale Beach strip. This was his third time doing this. He was remodeling a three-story hotel and I visited regularly as the work progressed. I thought that God was going to use me as a bridge between this street mission and Turning Point, the drug rehab where I was working. The idea was that I would get to know those who might make a profession of faith and see if a more stable, long term residence might be appropriate, i.e., Turning Point. By the time the street mission opened, several musicians were lined up to play. I was not one of them, but I felt my music would fit the place quite well. So, what about the jealousies and the idolatry I struggled with before I quit playing the guitar? Did those plagues come back? To my amazement and pleasure, I felt *no* jealousy toward anyone who did play there, and this internal freedom has never been lost. Now, 40 years later, none of those locusts have ever returned. I don’t think any of those chewing, gnawing, stripping destroyers have even hatched. I still had a very strong desire to play at this street mission, but the internal dynamics were totally different. But, I did not say anything to anyone about this ... except the Lord.

One night, after the mission opened, as I was going there, I put my guitar in my car’s trunk and made this *“deal”* with the Lord. *“If Jack asks me to play, then I will. Otherwise, the guitar stays in the trunk.”* Jack had known me since conversion, so he was aware I played. As I stepped through the front door, I stood and looked over a packed house. Jack was walking on the far side of the lobby with a group of people all around him, clamoring for his attention. He immediately spotted me and bellowed over the crowd, *“Hey Robin, How you doin’? Did you bring your guitar?”* I said, *“Yeah, it’s in my car.”* He said, *“Well, go get it and come play some songs for us!”* I am not sure my feet touched the

ground as I went out to my car. I came in and played my heart out with no doubt it was God's will. When you *know* you have not exalted yourself, you know God is going to use your efforts.

The next day I took a group of my Turning Point guys to a local park. I was on my bike, but at a standstill, when this young, burly, drunk fella came up from behind me. He said, "*Hey, you're the \*\*\*\*\* who played that guitar last night.*" I was somewhat trapped on the bike and he started circling around me intensifying the exchange. He threatened to smash that guitar over my head if I ever showed up at the mission again. I kept direct eye contact with this Satanic directed messenger, and although I did not want to escalate the situation, I also had no intention of cowering before him. Several times I said, "*You do what you need to do, and I will do what I need to do.*" After several rounds, he began backing off, and left breathing threats and violence. My rehab guys then came up and said, "*If he'd have jumped you, we were ready to come help.*" I said, "*Yeah, I bet.*" That night I went back to the mission with one goal - to play long and loud. The destroyer never showed up. Not long after this, the Lord transferred me from working at Turning Point - *to going on staff at the mission as Director of the Family Division!* As part of my duties, I played *four nights per week!* So much for having Claire's guitar wrapped around my neck. God had other plans for that guitar. But more was in store. More songs - and a singing partner.

After I had been playing for a couple of months, Jack's wife, Jane, said, "*Robin, you played a song last night that I think I have a harmony for. Would you like to hear it?*" I said, "*Yeah, that would be okay.*" Inside myself, I said, "*Oh brother. Just what I need, a female singer.*" A year and a half later, she had put harmonies to twenty-three of my songs plus I put one of her poems to music ("*Paths*"). We also did remakes of six hymns. We developed quite a following at that time. Her strong soprano, feminine harmonies contrasted quite interestingly with my gruffer baritone voice. It was a good season. By the time the mission closed, I had 64 completed original songs (23 now with harmonies) plus Jane's song, "*Paths.*" That brought me to the fall of 1981.

### **Time Passes – Swiftly**

About this time, I came up with a name for my music endeavors. As my life was unfolding as a series of Missions - a Drug Rehab Mission, Street Gospel Mission, etc., it seemed reasonable to think of my music as yet another mission - a mission to expound the creation of sound. "*So, how about The-Music-Mission?*" From the beginning, I committed, *The-Music-Mission* to the Lord. Many songs I have set before Him making requests line by line, phrase by phrase. "*Lord, do more than I can ask, or think, with The-Music-Mission.*"

1983 was a year of "*rest.*" I had a regular 40 hr per week job, but my evenings and weekends were relatively free. That year I completed 60 songs - exactly 30 were old ones, and 30 were new ones. I also drew pictures to go with several of my songs. I eventually drew 13, exactly twice the size of an album cover. I also wrote an article for each one called, "*Explanation of the Picture.*" I had no idea what I might do with my songs, or art (and later, many articles), but, that was not my primary concern. I just needed to keep getting them out as I learned and experienced more things – positive or negative.

### **Some Self Evaluation of My Style, etc.**

For starters, I play by ear. While some express amazement at this, *to me it is amazing that anybody can play anything by reading notes off a page.* Second, I am not pliable. I call myself "*a wooden artist.*" I do what I do, and if anyone comes alongside what I am doing, then the song is expanded and enhanced. Some genuine musicians "*turn on*" to what I am doing (at least to particular songs), as my music gives them new avenues to express *their* music creativity. They hear harmonies, lead licks, etc. that energizes them. Examples are Steve Kahler, Danny Cole, Jr., Jane Fontaine, and my

daughters, Staci and Claire. I create the skeletal structure, but they add flesh. Third, any vocal accompaniment must be a better voice than mine.

Along with standard tuning, I also use open E (17 songs) and open C (29 songs). I have no idea what chords I am playing. In my view, a *musician* would know these things. So, I am a *song* writer? I *write* song lyrics, but just make up songs. I have developed my own notations for the music along with cassette tape recordings. On my lyrics page I write all this, including where versions, or parts, of the songs can be found on cassette (or reel-to-reel tapes). I can then review when desired.

While music has always been an important part of my life, that is what it has been - *a part* of my life. In 1982, I started my trek toward various educational degrees at Whitworth Bible College in Brookhaven, MS. It closed after my first year there. I had transferred previous college credits and would have secured my undergraduate if it had stayed open one more year. Then from 1984 -1986, I earned an Associate of Divinity Degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Tx (as a non-denominational student). It was a program for individuals over 30 years old who did not have an undergraduate degree. Later, in 1990, I did finish my undergraduate degree in Business Administration with a Minor in New Testament Greek from Milligan College, in Milligan College, TN. Then in the spring of 1992, I completed a Master of Divinity degree at Emanuel School of Religion in Johnson City, TN and was also elected to Theta Phi, an international, academic, theological honors society. I have pastored a couple of churches (3 1/2 years), and have worked many regular jobs with the last 20 plus years in commission sales.

During this time, I have played my songs in many different venues. But, I have also known that my music would never be able to move through any traditional outlet. So, for the reasons listed below, the dream of extended exposure to my music died. Along with my music not being "*pop*," it also does not neatly fit into a particular genre (I don't think). But, many, most, almost all, of my songs are too long for the music industry. Many top five minutes, and if I could really do what I wanted, some would have lengthy introductions, some long narratives, and some with major instrumental breaks – becoming over 10 minutes long!

But there has been one other great and chronic barrier for me and any of my work. I have always wanted my music (and writings) available *for free*. And here are two reasons why. First, I ask myself, "*Who is my audience anyway?*" The answer is simple. They are either brothers and sisters in the Lord, or brothers and sisters *to be*, or individuals who will never enter into this eternal family. Second, so, ... I want their money? Really? Which group? My songs are *message* songs. I have written them because I have had something I wanted to say. If I have anything worth saying, it is because *God* has taught me. So, how much has He charged me for His information?

So, bottom line; the traditional Christian music industry and I were, and are, on different tracks. Music for free?

Then along came The Internet. Soon, things like GarageBand, iMovie as well as the YouTube website were invented. The creators of all this have made it possible for me to record my songs and give them freely *all around the world!* This is stunning technology on a host of levels. I just uploaded my 90<sup>th</sup> song with accompanying video commentaries where I explain the history of the song and expound on its lyrics. This is more than I ever dreamed possible. Lord willing, I will do another 60 or 70 more before I am done. At the end of this article, I have a list of some of my songs with YouTube links. Additionally, I have an idea for a website devoted only to original Christian music (Endnote 3 explains the basic idea). And what about all my writings? I have been able to construct a website (through GoDaddy) and all that material is available worldwide for free! Ebooks and articles. As of early 2020, five ebooks and at least sixty-seven articles. This is marvelous for a guy like me.

This prose poem on my website at <https://freelygive-n.com> says it best.

*Freely I Give Because Freely I Have Been Given!*

*On April 17, 1977, I became a Christian.*

*In the ensuing days, weeks, months and years, God has never charged me a penny -  
For his knowledge ...  
For His wisdom ...  
For His understanding ...  
or for His comfort, encouragement, guidance, hope, joy, promises, present actions - or ongoing pardon.*

*He is never going to charge me a penny -  
for eternal life ...  
an immortal body ...  
a place in an incorruptible new heavens and new earth ...  
or for all the immeasurable riches He has decided to lavish upon me - for all eternity.*

*Anything I know that has any true value - has been freely given to me.*

*There are many ways I am not like God.  
Very often, I do not act like Him ...  
react like Him ...  
talk like Him ...  
or think like Him.  
But, this is one time I have decided to be like God.*

*To me - He has freely given, so, to you - I freely give! But ...*

*Do not mistake "free" - with "cheap."  
Do not assume this material is simple.  
Do not assume it is shallow.  
Do not be deceived into thinking it is naive ... or narrow in breadth.*

*I will challenge you - time and time again.  
I will measure you - and expose your shallowness and inconsistency of thought ... and errors.  
I will change how you view some things - maybe how you view a lot of things.  
Things like love, death, and money.  
Things like abortion, evolution, sex, and government ... just to name a few.*

*If you are a mental adventurer - I will not disappoint you.  
I will make you think ... and rethink.  
Assess ... and reassess.  
Examine ... and reexamine.  
You will come away from my work ... different.*

*So now that you're here - come on in!  
The only cost is your time and energy of thought.  
I do not intend on wasting either.*

*Robin Calamaio*

Nothing would please me more than to hear that some little ten-year-old sister in the Lord sang one of my songs to her church. *I want her to have it for free.* Nothing would give me more joy than to find out that one of my songs gave direction to a brother or sister in some dilemma. *I want them to have it for free.* And nothing could energize my soul more than discovering one of my songs brought someone back from the brink of despair. *I want that song there for free.* For example, ...

A few years into my Christian life, I went through a grief experience. I had no idea the degree of pain and darkness that could engulf a person. For twenty-one days, I could not control my emotions. That flood was almost overpowering. Only those who have suffered through a genuine grief experience know. During one of my darkest moments I said, “*Lord, now I know why people commit suicide.*” I had never really understood that type of action before. When the pain seems like it will never abate, I could see why someone might think suicide is an option. As for me, I knew there was light at the end of the tunnel. At that moment, I asked God to move me into people’s lives when they were right at that point and use me to bring them back from that brink. If He wants to use just one phrase from just one song – all this work will have been worth it. *I want my music to be there for free – and all my written work as well.* And if that individual is not yet saved, I want my songs (or articles) to be some of the first drops of free living water ... before God opens His free floodgate to them.

### **Conclusion**

Since 1984, I have completed 35 new songs (it’s 2020 as of this writing). I still have messages to get out, including some partials I hope to complete. We will see. So now, you have read *my* music testimony from start to present. But, this is just the beginning of an eternity of music making as best as I can tell. Read Matthew 25:14-29 and Luke 19:11-27. Any talents we truly use for Him will never be surrendered. So, act wisely with yours. Let Him clean each talent up ... and make your testimonies!

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Do you like to learn? God has great depths to explore!  
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### **Endnote 1**

At first glance, the teaching of “*spiritual gifts versus natural gifts*” seems quite reasonable. But it is based upon a couple assumptions. First, it assumes the lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament are exhaustive. Second, it assumes the abilities one possesses outside of these New Testament lists should be labeled, “*natural gifts.*” I am not at all sure either assumption is correct. Any ability one possesses has been bestowed by the Creator. While it may not be proper to insist that unbelievers possess “*spiritual gifts,*” it is proper to maintain that any human ability or aptitude is divinely granted and is not merely “*natural.*” In fact, this is much of what The Judgment on the final day will be about. Individuals will account to God for how they used, neglected, and/or abused, divinely granted abilities - gifts, you might say. As a Christian, every talent or ability should be presented to God. We should ask Him to clean it up and employ it in a God honoring way. For example, the ability to play an instrument, write songs or sing can be totally redirected as has happened in my case. We are told in Colossians

3:16, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and **spiritual songs**, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." There is no question that songs build up the body of Christ. It is a stretch that the body of Christ can be *spiritually* built up by "natural" gifts. And some songs in this passage are called "*spiritual songs*." So, is a *natural gift* creating *spiritual work*? Also, "*singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God*," is a spiritual exercise. Is singing just a natural gift? If the production of music is simply a natural ability, how can spiritual productivity be accomplished by it? I will answer that. Nothing "*natural*" can create spiritual progression.

So, here is the way I see it. The lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament are indeed lists of abilities through which spiritual materials flow. Many of the abilities (teaching, prophesy, administrations, helps, etc.) are platforms, or conduits, for this flow. But, these same abilities can be conduits for *non-spiritual* material as well. There are *false teachers* everywhere - very effective ones - even teaching doctrines of demons (1Tim 4:1). *False prophets* are regularly discussed in the Bible. Hitler had many effective *administrators*. And many humanitarians have *helped* all kinds of people while wanting nothing to do with Christianity. On the other hand, I have been spiritually impacted by music, skits, movies, poetry, and prose when these "*natural*" abilities have been used to forward spiritual materials. Think on this! Even one who has the talent to make money can have that ability redirected after conversion. My main point is that I am not at all convinced that divinely granted aptitudes and abilities should be summarily relegated to some inferior category of "*natural gifts*."

## Endnote 2

I have been a commission salesman for over the last 20 years. But, the Bible materials I traffic in are above and beyond money. Money has its place in our sojourn, but, I have always wanted to remove it from any spiritual transaction. Money can cause suspicion on the part of a hearer, creating a barrier. And in my culture, God is often made to look like a beggar. His agenda is chronically short of cash. Before I became a Christian, I always knew when the radio dial landed on a Christian station. Within a minute, there would be a plea for my cash. Every Bible presentation had a hand stuck out asking for money - whether on TV, radio or in the pew. Christian bookstores - money is out front. Christian schooling - preschool through seminary - money is out front. Mailers from all the Christian organizations - money. Even as a Christian, after I paid all the money for my degrees, as an alumni, every mailing asks for more. I just got one yesterday.

I know all the reasons why. They all explain why, why, and then why. And I do know that Paul made the case that those who sow *spiritual* things do have the right to reap *material* things from recipients of the spiritual material. And the ox was not to be muzzled while threshing. He further asserted that those who proclaim the gospel do have the right to earn their living from it (1Cor 9:1-18 - But I do wonder if Paul's definition of what it meant to "*proclaim the gospel*" is the same as what is practiced today). *But*, this same Paul also knew the best way to get through to the fleshly believers in Corinth was to take *no money* from them. This stance he adopted with them comes from this same passage, but is usually "*overlooked*." But not by us! Let's look at the church at Corinth.

The Corinthian church divided up and rallied around charismatic leaders (1Cor 1:10-13 and 3:1-9). The Corinthians tolerated sexual immorality (1Cor 5:1-8), took each other to court before unbelievers (1Cor 6:1-11), flaunted liberties they had in Christ in an unrighteous way (1Cor 8:1-13), made distinctions between rich and poor saints (1Cor 11:17-34) and abused The Lord's Supper, by partaking of it, yet continuing to live in their sin patterns (1Cor 11:17-34). So, the church in America is different? Let's see.

Churches in America rally around *more than* just a few charismatic leaders. They also rally

around entire *institutionalized* denominational structures - with their own charismatic leaders within them. Then add to this all the hardened bylaws sporting their distinctives in teaching and practices. And even in each group so splintered, there are often camps *within them* in a struggle for power, position and influence. So, what is a faction?

Do I even need to say anything about sexual immorality in our churches? Consider just divorce alone – from God's view, how many have unrighteously divorced, yet the perpetrator still unabashedly attends the church, sometimes even in leadership roles?

Concerning legal actions, what two disputing Christians do *not* go to court before unbelievers for settlement? Taking this to wise brothers in the church never even enters the mind. With the doctrine of “*secular work*” for “*laymen*,” - most think God is not really concerned about this non-ministry stuff anyway. And back to divorce, the law in this country has completely thrown out the Bible as any kind of guide, much less authority. How many “*Christians*” run into this *system* of unbelief, populated by judges who will enforce the values of unbelievers? “*No Fault*” divorce is followed by confiscation of marital assets and often mandated child support and/or court ordered alimony - or else jail? The violated one has no say. Divorce perpetrators know these unbelieving courts are the way to go.

Concerning societal class and/or status, in virtually every town or city, one will find the distinctly affluent churches completely separate from the not-so-affluent ones. At least the Corinthians were still meeting together under the same roof.

Also, the Corinthians made all kinds of distinctions between the saints, heaping abundant honor on some while at the same time disregarding the value of other “*less seemly*” saints (1Cor 12:4-31). In America, we elevate those who have been called to “*full time ministry*”- as though the rest of the saints are not. These *special saints* are “*ordained*,” given letters of commendation, and have all sorts of appositions and titles attached to their names. At the same time the lesser Royal Priest saints are labeled, “*laymen*” who spend their lives in “*secular work*.” This has far outdone the church in Corinth.

And how many churches warn participants about the Lord's Supper - that if they partake of this remembrance of Him dying, and yet do not seriously discern and abandon personal sin, they put themselves in tremendous jeopardy with Him? The young believers in that young church in Corinth had no idea, until Paul told them, that their lack of discernment *on this one matter alone* was responsible for much of the havoc in their ranks. But now we have the inside scoop and warnings about this presumptuous sinning. But, have you ever been warned about this from the pulpit - in its true seriousness? This one issue alone can decimate a church's ability to impact one's community and world. Listen to, “*For This Reason Alone*” below!

But the comparisons do not end here. The Corinthians were totally messed up on the make-up of genuine Christian love (1Cor 13:1-13). I have yet to hear a clear and consistent message on the elements of genuine Christian love. You owe it to yourself to read my Ebook on this (“*Love and the Bible*”). I can guarantee that you will be exposed to information *you have never heard*. And it seems to me that the subject of love is a pretty foundational subject for Christianity.

But, the Corinthian's errors kept coming. They were messed up on the proper use of spiritual gifts (1Cor 14:1-33) as well as the role of women (1Cor 14:34-36). I am not at all sure we have anything over the saints of Corinth. There are surely some churches where Jesus is The Boss, but those churches are really the exception and not the rule. Churches heap up teachers according to their own desires (2 Tim 4:3-4) with “*leadership*” in line with the sects chosen doctrines and practices. Some even boast themselves, “*denominational loyalists*” - as a heralded career move and resume enhancer.

So, here is my point. In this current setting, I am not going to have money come between me and my audience. When Paul looked at the spiritual landscape of the Corinthians, he decided to remove money from the equation as that would have caused more problems. I see the same. Besides, everything in me says - I have been freely given and I am going to freely give!

But, that is just me. Others will make their own decisions, and if they are true Christians, they will not account to me one way or the other. Each will account alone to the Lord and He alone will decide the quality of one's work for Him. I am not worried about anyone else. So, *as for me*, I want money *out of the picture, especially in this culture and at this time*. That's just the way it is.

Here is another way I think of this. Let's suppose the richest man in the world gave me free access to his inexhaustible supply of food and goods. He then sent me off, as his representative, to disperse those materials worldwide. So, I go out .... and charge people for it?

### Endnote 3

Here is the basic idea for a unique website and work, called The-Music-Mission. As far as developing this myself, my main obstacle has been a "*time*" challenge. Presently, I still need at least another four years to get all my own songs recorded in a decent manner. Here is the thumbnail sketch.

I know many Christians who have only a few original songs – some just one or two. But, they are often really good songs. I want a website where Christians can upload their original Christian songs – whether one, a dozen, or hundreds. The artist would retain full rights to his/her song(s), but this site would be where that song resides *exclusively* until, or if, they remove it. Visitors who want to listen to original Christian songs would learn this is the site to come to!

There would be three levels of recording: raw (rough), semi-professional (less rough - like mine) and then polished, i.e., more professional studio type recordings. Visitors could easily choose what level they want to hear. There would also be genre categories with each having the three levels of recording. Each artist would do the recording himself/herself. For those with no idea how to get a decent recording done, instructions could be provided.

Each contributing Artist would have an "*Artist's Corner*" - a link to their site where they could share a bio, or info about their song. And maybe other things like their availability to play at churches, with a calendar, and contact info along with their geographical reach and financial arrangements, etc.

The point is that this would become known as a place where one could find exclusive original Christian music – while at the same time preserving the Artist's full rights to his/her work. If some professional recording artist discovered their song and wanted to "*buy it*" and record it through a traditional commercial music venue, the Artist could always do that, too. Full rights retained.

So, the goal would be a site with exclusive, original Christian songs, categorized by genre and recording level skill, with Artists still retaining full control of their work. It would be a place for songs to have an outlet that will otherwise "*die*" with the artist, and it would become a clearing house for professionals to possibly find some real jewels, make a deal with the artist, and then develop it!

I have a full sitemap if anyone would be interested in seeing it.

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So, here are a few of my songs with links:

"For This Reason Alone" - [https://youtu.be/B2\\_S2c-je1Y](https://youtu.be/B2_S2c-je1Y)

"Me, Me, Me" - <https://youtu.be/Htne-ZrzKJA>

"Can the Slave Free Himself From Sin?" - <https://youtu.be/fkZqM8lpXc8>

"Seasons" - <https://youtu.be/xzOGtNRE9ek>

"Before the Flood" - <https://youtu.be/-4Pwx1cPM7E>

"Toil for Fire" - <https://youtu.be/ph6XwwkclUE>

"Altogether Lovely" - <https://youtu.be/s4CTAQIfhHo>

"By the Rivers of Babylon" - <https://youtu.be/fxR5WVpg1Mg>

"Too Blin-dead" - <https://youtu.be/lvlwO4-WwQ8>

“And Rejoice?” - <https://youtu.be/fh1axQNULME>  
“Jesus and the Woman Caught in Adultery” - <https://youtu.be/X8DIEBTyLhk>  
“The Death of the World” - <https://youtu.be/QZjzi8XNXEQ>  
“Thank You, Lord Jesus” - <https://youtu.be/KaPjrLccVm0>  
“Let Them Come” - <https://youtu.be/2cN16Mcpa9o>  
“Start Singin’ Again” - <https://youtu.be/L-MLlc1PKwg>  
“Then” - <https://youtu.be/1SErcYC41A>  
“Dead Men” - <https://youtu.be/45QnCXI9FdE>  
“Glory to God in the Highest” - <https://youtu.be/wtf6mwOA3ns>  
“I Myself Will Raise Him Up” - <https://youtu.be/w8YuWkk20Kw>  
and a bunch more!

And here are a few of Staci's (my eldest daughter)

“To Whom Shall We Go?” - <https://youtu.be/WJ9hlcP3VQg>  
“Faulty Hand” - <https://youtu.be/ny7O-SL5N0Y>  
“Directed By Him” (both of us) - <https://youtu.be/Mi9Di1kEUQk>

And Claire helping out Dad on a few songs: (youngest daughter)

“On the Water” - [https://youtu.be/r\\_U7UFRiJYE](https://youtu.be/r_U7UFRiJYE)  
“I Found My Work” - <https://youtu.be/P2Jb2OicvKY>  
“Really Only One” - [https://youtu.be/\\_5mqquWjXT4](https://youtu.be/_5mqquWjXT4)

Listen, Learn, Live!