

FIGHT THE POWER

MATT TURRIGIANO

When I was a kid growing up on the streets of New York City, I remember the summer when a new group called Public Enemy launched a song titled Fight The Power. That song would become an anthem for many young people growing up in the city. While the song and its message still remain controversial in many circles, the idea that we have to fight against the strong cultural fads and influences around us will be something that I always remember.

STUMBLING INTO WORSHIP LEADING

I stumbled into the act of leading worship soon after I returned from university, and was leading a small group

as a part of the NYC Vineyard. We met on the rooftop of an apartment building in Greenwich Village. It was full of twenty-something artists, actors and other typical village residents, but strangely, none of them played an instrument. So, over the course of a few months, I began my journey of learning enough chords (torturing my roommates and neighbors) to be able to deliver 2 or 3 songs with which we could worship.

I know this sort of beginning isn't unique to me, and many of you share my entry point. While my musical roots may be humble, my desire to learn to play these songs was fuelled by my voracious passion to simply worship Jesus. The act of worshiping, of using simple songs as a way to offer my heart to Jesus, has always had an important place in my life. Worship was fundamental in drawing me into a personal relationship with Jesus as a teenager,



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IN OTHER WORDS, THE LURE OF MONEY, FAME AND SUCCESS CAN TAKE US AWAY FROM THE VERY PLACE FOR WHICH WE WERE MEANT — THE LOCAL CHURCH.

and so while I've never felt as if I was a qualified musician, I've always felt that I had what it took to lead worship. This was due to my deep passion for the act of worship, and my desperation to worship Jesus in all that I do.

MOTIVES CAN MOVE

Over the past 13 years — from those days on a rooftop, to today where I've had the privilege of leading worship and equipping worship leaders all over the world — my goal is still the same as it was from day one. I want to serve Jesus with everything I have, and serve His Church however and wherever possible.

Over the past decade, worship as we know it has changed. While we have had the incredible opportunity to shape and influence how we worship, there has been a cost to pay. Sadly, what was once grass-roots and organic has now become a worldwide industry that even finds its way near the top of The Forbes 500 list of revenue makers.

This type of shift impacts our motives, impacts our desires, and influences what we think it means to be successful in this calling. The danger we now find ourselves in is that the lure of money, fame and power competes for our affections — and taint how we serve our local churches.

I've watched time and time again how these temptations have nagged at, and deteriorated, the call that many have on their lives. They fall into the "If I..." trap: "If I could only lead at that conference, if I could only sing on that recording, if I could only have my song on that CD, then I'll have arrived and be able to have this gig for a living. Wouldn't that be great?"

They aspire to become the next well-known name that will go around the world. They want to write songs that will make it big, and they lose sight of the fact that it is our local church that needs our best efforts.

Worse still, after having been mentored, trained, and raised up in the local church, a worship leader may be given

more profile and become known to the industry. At this point, the industry takes them away from the very community that has invested in them to enable them to realize their potential — with offers of success and fame.

That attitude, that desire, that set of goals can subtly drive us away from that which we are called to do — to use our God-given talents as a gift offering back to Jesus to serve Him, serve His church, and ultimately serve His cause of transforming lives.

JOIN THE RESISTANCE

In other words, the lure of money, fame and success can take us away from the very place for which we were meant — the local church. I know that these words may be pressing some buttons and making some of you very uncomfortable as you read. Maybe at this point many of you are thinking along the lines of, "Who does this guy think he is..." and you may have every right to feel that way. However, please hear what I am saying. When did leading worship in our local communities become the stepping stone to a more successful career?

This isn't about us, it's about Jesus. We have to constantly fight against the pull of this world to turn this beautiful activity we've been given into something that it was never intended to be.

As worshipers, we are called to serve our local churches. It is God who moves and breathes, and uses the gifts with which He's graced us to go beyond the four walls of our church to the wider church movement and beyond. I love it when that happens.

Our mission, as those entrusted to lead worship, should be to do our best to worship God ourselves, and invite anyone who would like to join us to come along. We have no greater privilege than to provide our communities with the best possible opportunity to meet with Jesus, to model how to be a worshipper, and to put good words on the lips of the gathered in order to pour out our hearts to Him in song.

My humble challenge is this: *Whatever level of influence you are given with which to lead, do it for nothing and no one other than Jesus.* Never ever lose sight of the local church of which you are a part. The moment our motivation becomes anything else, we are toast!

FIGHT THE POWER OF SELF

Have you ever been taught the value that "the pay is the same"? Whether you lead worship in a small group, or in kids' church, or in your Sunday gatherings, or in a conference, or simply in the bathroom as your children are taking a bath, *the pay is the same.* It is of great value to Jesus that your heart be focused on Him, and that your motive be to give him your best.

I don't think we should have any loftier ideas than that of serving our local church. I believe it is time for us to call our worship leaders to give themselves to something greater than themselves. Where this industry tries to tell us that *we* are what is important — that *we* are what sells — we need to stand firm as people called to lead worship and fight the power of self in order that we may give our best to those around us and who need it most — our local churches.

Fight the power.



Matt and his wife Rebecca are assistant pastors at the Bristol Vineyard in England, where they enjoy raising their four boys and spending time at work and play with their community. When not busy locally, Matt has developed a relationship with Vineyard Records UK where he has served as a teacher, trainer, worship leader, consultant, producer and roadie. He is passionate about Jesus, his family — and baseball.

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