

Fearless Dreaming: Exploring and Overcoming Resistance

The Lord spoke to Jonah telling him to go to Nineveh, for there was a people in desperate need of God's word. Jonah heard God's voice but, instead, he got on a boat to flee to Tarshish. The Lord saw Jonah on the boat, and he hurled a great wind upon the sea. Every man on the boat was crying out in terror except for Jonah, who was fast asleep. When he woke Jonah told them how he had fled from the presence of the Lord, so the men threw him overboard. The Lord then sent a great fish to swallow Jonah, and he sat in the belly of the fish for three days. The Lord spoke to the fish on the third day and it spit Jonah out upon dry land. Again God called Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach to the people. Jonah obeyed, and the people of Nineveh repented.

This story illustrates an example of what resistance looks like. Jonah is someone who deliberately resisted his divine calling. He fled, and because of that he spent three days in the belly of a fish. Far too often artists know what they are called to do, but are simply too stubborn and resistant to submit to that personal calling. Steven Pressfield would say, "To yield to resistance deforms our spirit. It stunts us and makes us less than we are and were born to be."¹ The phenomenon of resistance is widespread in the creative world. Examining what resistance is and the forms it takes in an artist's life can lead to possible resolutions for overcoming resistance through fearless dreaming, prayer, dedication to excellence and reading God's Word.

The main focus of this essay is the artist's battle against resistance. Defining resistance as an enemy that comes to steal the artist's passion for creativity. Resistance is clever in the way that it appears in an artist's life; it can come in many forms: procrastination, fear and stubbornness are forms that it can take. After examining what resistance looks like then the artist can begin exploring how to overcome resistance. Fearless dreaming, it is a way of explaining an

¹ Steven Pressfield. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York: Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 5

artist's hopes, dreams, desires and passion for creativity. Taking a stand against resistance's hold and fighting for the right to create is what this essay seeks to inspire artists to do. Through dedication to excellence, prayer and meditation on God's word the artist can win the battle against resistance.

Defining Resistance as the Enemy

Artists have a responsibility endowed by the Creator to create. These talents and abilities are not to be taken lightly. A gift bestowed in the form of a talent is targeted by the enemy, who comes to kill, steal and destroy. Resistance is similar; it comes to hinder the artists in many different ways. Pressfield states, "Resistance cannot be seen, touched, heard, or smelled. But it can be felt. We experience it as an energy field radiating from a work-in-potential. It's a repelling force. It's negative. Its aim is to shove us away, distract us, prevent us from doing our work."² Resistance is exceptionally devious. It comes slowly and keeps coming until it grasps onto every inch of the artist's life.

In the Bible, the enemy, Satan, is described as a deceiver, a liar and a distractor. Resistance can be all of these, and it almost takes on its own personality. It lies about who it is, deceives about what it is doing, and distracts people from moving beyond it. It kills dreams, steals hope and destroys lives. It is not a force easily reckoned with. Imagine a stone being thrown into a body of water; the ripples originate from that epicenter and continue to grow outwards. Resistance is that stone and when it is plunged into the center of one's life, the ripples only grow bigger and bigger if allowed.

The goal is to not let resistance win. It takes dedication, drive and a whole lot of prayer to defeat it. There has to be a will to fight so that the enemy cannot kill dreams, steal hope and

² Steven Pressfield. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York:Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 7.

destroy lives. The Christian artist is called to be a fearless dreamer, have unending hope, and live life to the fullest.

What does Resistance look like?

Resistance comes in many forms. Even writing this essay comes with resistance, in the form of procrastination, distraction, and at times pure hatred of the work that comes along with it. Resistance is real. Pressfield describes it best when he says, “Resistance will tell you anything to keep you from doing your work. It will perjure, fabricate, falsify; seduce, bully, cajole. . . . It will assume any form, if that’s what it takes to deceive you.”³ Common forms of Resistance are procrastination, fear and stubbornness.

Procrastination is common in resistance, because it is the easiest to rationalize. “The word [procrastination] comes from the joining of two Latin words: *pro*, meaning ‘forward,’ and *crastinus*, which means, ‘belonging to tomorrow.’⁴ As an undergraduate, it is easily understood when the paper that is due at end of the semester is “forwarded to tomorrow” in lieu of other homework that is due today. So, instead of the final paper being exemplary, it is only average because the proper time that should have been dedicated to it was put towards other things. This is a simple example, but it is how resistance begins its attack. Working towards a goal takes time. Learning Rossini’s aria *Una Voce Poco Fa* does not happen in a night. It takes months of studying and practice to get it performance ready. Procrastinating learning the aria means it will never be ready.

Procrastination is the beginning of a downhill slope. It may not seem that important, because everyone procrastinates on some level, but this is how this enemy called resistance

³ Steven Pressfield. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York:Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 9.

⁴Jane B Burka, and Lenora M. Yuen. *Procrastination : Why You Do It, What to Do About It Now*. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2008. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), 2008), 5

deceives. In a short article by Mark Kingwell, he talks about his personal struggle with procrastination and how it is evident in every occupation. Procrastination makes it appear as if the individual is stuck in a revolving door. They keep going around, doing a lot of frivolous work to get the door to move without ever going anywhere. Kingwell makes this remark, “procrastination most often arises from a sense that there is too much to do, and hence no single aspect of the to-do worth doing...once you start not doing one big project, it's an open question whether you should maybe not do a bunch of others. Pretty soon you're not only not getting up and turning on the computer right away, you're not getting up at all.”⁵ Everyone struggles with procrastination because they know it leads to important work. The revolving door that keeps going around and around is resistance at work.

Ananias was a disciple of Christ who lived in Damascus. One day the Lord called to him in a vision and said, “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying.”⁶ Now, at this time Saul was known as a persecutor of the Jews, and many feared him, for he had great power and terrible rage. Ananias told the Lord, “I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call your name.”⁷ These words spoken by Ananias are a reflection of his resistance. He was fearful of the task he was called to do. Eventually, Ananias went to Saul and laid hands on him in prayer. Saul

⁵ Mark Kingwell. “Meaning to get to: Procrastination and the art of life.” *Queen's Quarterly* 109 (3): 2002. 363.

⁶ All biblical references are take from the English Standard Version:

Acts 9:11

⁷ Acts 9:13-141

immediately regained his sight. From that day on, he became known as Paul, the man who brought the word of God to the gentiles

Fear is crippling. If there was no fear, the world of psychology would, most likely, be a lot less complicated. Bayles writes, “Fears about yourself prevent you from doing your best work.”⁸ Many times when artists do not pursue their talents, it is because they are afraid of what will, or will not, come from their efforts. Studying music as part of an undergraduate degree has been an eye opening experience as to how fear prevents students from practicing and pursuing excellence in their craft. They all have a dream, a “calling” that they want to see come true, but how can they do that as faithful and obedient servants without practicing? Kevin Durant would say, “Hard work will always beat talent, if talent does not work hard.”⁹ This means natural talent can only go so far; for talent to reach to new levels it requires hard work. Hard work is easily derailed by the fear of what the hard work will lead to. Renee Fleming, a world renowned opera singer said, “While it’s a fact that a voice begins with natural talent, any talent must be nurtured, cajoled, wrestled with, pampered, challenged, and, at every turn, examined.”¹⁰ Without persistence fear can be all consuming. Fear of being successful and the fear of failure are two fears that can cause enormous destruction in an artists’ life.

The fear of failure is the fear of disappointment. It could be the fear of disappointing oneself, or disappointing others. Many times, artists pursue their craft to please others, rather than pursuing their craft for the ability to create. Creating art is so personal that every time artists

⁸ David Bayles, and Ted Orland. *Art & Fear: Observations On the Perils (and Rewards) of Art making*. (Santa Cruz, CA : Saint Paul, MN: Image Continuum Press ; Distributed by Consortium Book Sales & Distribution. 1993), 10.

⁹ Goodreads
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/699064-hard-work-beats-talent-when-talent-fails-to-work-hard>

¹⁰ Renée Fleming. *The Inner Voice: The Making of a Singer*. (New York: Penguin Books. 2005),
 xvii.

perform or compose, they are giving a little piece of themselves to the audience. The fear of their art not being accepted can cause anxiety to the point that the fear acts as an excuse for the artist to never share their work. In the book, *Art & Fear*, the writers talk about the correlation between the artists' need to create and fear itself:

If making art gives substance to your sense of self, the corresponding fear is that you're not up to the task—that you can't do it, or can't do it well, or can't do it again; or that you're not a real artist, or not a good artist, or have no talent, or have nothing to say... Making art can feel dangerous and revealing. Making art *is* dangerous and revealing. Making art precipitates self-doubt, stirring deep waters that lay between what you know you should be, and what you fear you might be. For many people, that alone is enough to prevent their ever getting started at all.¹¹

If being an artist were easy, then everyone would do it. How is it that fear can be so monumental in shaping an artist's life, for the better or worse? The fear of failure is enough to make a person stop pursuing their calling. It steals joy, hope and life. Bayles would say, "When you act out of fear your fears comes true."¹²

The fear of failure can lead to many different psychological problems, one being depression, which is a feeling of helplessness and sadness. When an artist stops creating art, something happens to them on a deep emotional level. The fear of disappointment starts to become consuming and a feeling of helplessness settles in. In Martin E.P Seligman's book, *Helplessness*, he addresses the issue of depression at great length. In his chapter titled "Controllability," he draws this conclusion, "helplessness is a disaster for organisms capable of learning that they are helpless."¹³ His research shows the difference between an uncontrollable helplessness and a learned helplessness. The idea of learned helplessness has a direct relationship

¹¹ David Bayles and Ted Orland. *Art & Fear: Observations On the Perils (and Rewards) of Art making*. (Santa Cruz, CA : Saint Paul, MN: Image Continuum Press ; Distributed by Consortium Book Sales & Distribution. 1993), 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³ Martin Seligman, Martin E. P. *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death*. San Francisco : New York: W.H. Freeman; trade distributor, Scriber.1975. 44.

with the idea of learned resistance. Resistance is a choice, therefore, so is the helplessness and depression that comes along with not creating art.

Resistance can also be having the fear of success. Here, an individual knows that they have what it takes to succeed, but simply does not have the courage. Steven Pressfield would say, “Fear that we will succeed [is the fear that] we can access the powers we secretly know we possess.”¹⁴ Artists are their own worst critic and they are their own worst enemy. Many times the voice that keeps an artist from succeeding is their own. Fear of success is extremely complicated, because there is an element of hope covered by a blanket of fear. Don Greene in his book *Performance Success* says, “Success often requires everything you’ve got. If you’re not invested in your pursuit, you’re not going to get very far.”¹⁵ Jane Burka writes, “Some people worry that success will require too much of them, more than they can afford to give. Because working toward success demands a lot of time, effort, and dedication, there are those who believe they are not up to the task.”¹⁶ To whom much is given much is expected. This is terrifying to know that when you finally succeed, only more will be demanded.

The fear of success is about self-doubt. Unfortunately, this is a common trait found in the creative world. There are countless studies and books to help build self-confidence and overcome self-doubt, and it is not commonly categorized as resistance, but that is exactly what self-doubt is. Self-doubt is an excuse to be afraid of the gifts and talents that God has given each artist. Art

¹⁴ Steven Pressfield. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York:Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 143.

¹⁵ Don Greene. *Performance Success: Performing Your Best Under Pressure*. (New York: Routledge. 2002), 24.

¹⁶ Jane B Burka, and Lenora M. Yuen. *Procrastination : Why You Do It, What to Do About It Now*. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2008. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), 2008), 36

Blakey once said, “Play with conviction, the audience is not interested in your self-doubt.”¹⁷

Artists can use their emotions to create art, but when it comes time to share their art the audience wants to see art that inspires.

James 1:6 says, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.”¹⁸ Part of the fear of success is the fear to accept the glory that God has given each artist. In the world of Christian artists many times a fear of success is mistaken for humbleness. If the artists turn down opportunities, or fail to accept praise for the gift that they have it is not humility, it is fear. It is likely the fear of success and the fear of accepting God’s grace and glory as a part of their testimony. C.S. Lewis writes about this in his book *The Weight of Glory*. Lewis talks about his personal reflections on Matthew 25:21 which says, “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”¹⁹ He says this,

I suddenly remembered that no one can enter heaven except as a child; and nothing is so obvious in a child — not in a conceited child, but in a good child — as its great and undisguised pleasure in being praised. . . . I am not forgetting how horribly this most innocent desire is parodied in our human ambitions, or how very quickly, in my own experience, the lawful pleasure of praise from those whom it was my duty to please turns into the deadly poison of self-admiration.²⁰

When artists can accept who God has made them to be, they can rejoice in that glory and praise.

Only then can they persevere in their battle against fear and resistance.

In Sinetar’s book *Do What you Love, The Money will Follow*, she begins with a personal story in which she describes why she wrote this book. It has to do with her resistance and fear to live the life she really wanted. She says,

I distracted myself with a respected career and with the inevitable promotions that came my way. I distracted myself even more successfully with an accumulation of material

¹⁷ "Art Blakey Quotes." BrainyQuote. Accessed May 02, 2016. http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/art_blakey.html.

¹⁸ James 1:6

¹⁹ Matthew 25:21

²⁰ Lewis, C. S. *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*. New York: Macmillan, 1949, 33

rewards and symbols of success. The unknown was too frightening to me. This, despite the fact that by all outward appearances I was creative, spontaneous, and enthusiastic person. In reality, I did not truly trust myself. I was afraid to cross uncharted, unconventional waters to get to a more desirable place in life, afraid that when truth be told I would not have the requisite strength and competence to accomplish what I so dearly wanted.²¹

She was her own distraction. She was afraid of being who she really wanted to be. Then one day, she woke up, moved out of the city and became a writer. After living another life for so long, she gave into her true calling.

So much of the artist's resistance to a calling comes from a place of stubbornness. Being stubborn is being human. Humans are headstrong, willful, pigheaded and difficult. The Lord understands that, which is why he has unending patience and grace. Stubbornness is a common theme in the bible; the story of Moses is an excellent example. When the Lord came to Moses in a burning bush he commanded that Moses return to Egypt to free his people. Moses replied, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"²² The Lord kept giving him the answers but Moses stubbornly refused to listen. The Lord showed Moses, with miraculous signs, that he would be with him through this journey. Moses's final plea to the Lord was, "Oh, my Lord, please send someone else."²³ Moses was stubborn because he was being controlled by his fear. The idea that God came as a burning bush (that did not burn) is extraordinary. Moses got to witness, first hand, God's presence, yet he still resisted. He stubbornly refused to believe that he could be the one chosen to deliver God's people from Egypt.

²¹ Marsha Sinetar. *Do What You Love: The Money Will Follow*. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press. 1987), 1.

²² Exodus 3:11

²³ Exodus 4:13

Moses was not the only stubborn one in this story; after the Israelites had been delivered from Egypt, God brought them to a mountainside where he gave them the ten commandments. God was handing the Israelites everything they wanted and they still refused to be obedient. In their stubbornness, they made a golden calf as their god. It is hard to even begin to understand what the people of Israel must have been thinking. They were slaves who had seen God's miracles with their own eyes. They walked across the Red Sea on dry land and saw fire come down from heaven, yet their stubbornness kept them from believing.

How does stubbornness keep people from seeing the work that God is doing in their life? From stubbornness fear is born and resistance comes alive. This essay comes from a personal experience with the power of resistance. There was a time during my sophomore year of my undergraduate studies that I wanted to leave CCU and quit school. It was because I was afraid to succeed and afraid to fail all at the same time. I was afraid, that if I were to quit music, I would be disappointing everyone in my life who has ever supported my musical dreams. I was also afraid that, if by some miracle, I were to have a musical career, I would not be equipped to handle it. These fears kept me from moving forward. So I simply stopped. I stopped practicing and stopped allowing myself to love what was I doing. I looked for reasons to leave and for opportunities to find a new career path.

Another part of my resistance was I stubbornly felt that I was entitled, as if I was supposed to be somewhere "better." I felt as if there was no challenge or anything else for me to learn from CCU. There was a lot of anger that I felt towards myself, my situation and everyone around me. Looking back, I am positive that I could have gained much more from my time here at CCU, but a year of academic and musical growth was replaced by a year of spiritual and mental growth. I am not downplaying the significance of that year, it played a huge part in my

testimony of being able to recognize my resistance to God's calling. I began to realize that the problem was not the school, the people, or the professors, it was myself. The stubbornness that kept me from loving music was me. I was afraid of who I could be and of who God wanted me to be. I was the only one who could challenge myself to reach new heights. It was not until I spent a month in Swaziland that I finally understood my resistance. There was a quote written on the wall of the small house we were staying at, and it said, "If God wanted you anywhere but here, he would have put you there." To this day I am not sure who wrote it, but it was exactly what I needed to hear to begin to overcome my resistance. It is not an easy battle, and the fight continues everyday but it is a battle worth fighting.

From examining my struggle with resistance, it became clear to me that my resistant stubbornness quickly turned into anger. Anger is one way that stubbornness can appear in a person's life. Anger is known as a "secondary emotion" according to Harry Mills. She says that "Anger can also be a substitute emotion. By this we mean that sometimes people make themselves angry so that they don't have to feel pain. People change their feelings of pain into anger because it feels better to be angry than it does to be in pain."²⁴ Anger is simply an outcome of other emotions. It is used to mask the real issue of resistance. My sophomore year was incredibly difficult, and I can now recognize my resistance as fear, but while I was in that season of my life, I could only feel anger. There are times in every artist's life when they experience anger and frustration in their craft. This is generally due to other issues such as fear, procrastination, or stubbornness.

Is it possible that resistance can come in so many different forms? As this essay has examined, resistance is devious in the way that it appears in an artists life. Procrastination, fear

²⁴ Harry Mills, PHD. "Psychology Of Anger." Mental Help Psychology of Anger Comments. June 25, 2005. Accessed April 08, 2016. <https://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/psychology-of-anger/>.

and stubbornness are all interconnected. Many times when an artists struggle with resistance they struggle with one or all of these ways that resistance can manifest itself. How are artists to battle all the ways that resistance comes into their lives? This is what the next section of the essay seeks to explore. By finally seeing what resistance is, the next step is using the tools that God has already equipped each individual with to fight resistance. By taking action, being dedicated to excellence, praying and reading God's Word, it is possible to battle resistance and win.

The Fight to Resist

John F. Kennedy once said, "There are risk and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction."²⁵ This statement is uncomfortable because it speaks truth. When an artists follows their heart's desires it is terrifying. The questions run rampant in their minds: what if I succeed, what if I do not, what if what I desire is not what I should be doing. Children are told from a young age to follow their hearts, reach for the stars, go for their dreams. As children it is easy to imagine all those dreams coming true. It is not a stretch for them to see themselves as a pop star or the president of the United States. Somewhere along the way from childhood to adulthood they lose the ability for fearless dreaming. Their goals become more realistic and a little less exciting. This is not the sort of action that they are called to be taking. The long-range risks and costs of comfortable inaction are consequences of their unwillingness to follow their hearts.

Some questions that arise are these: If an artist follows her heart can it be considered selfish? Are dreams to be trusted? The difference between knowing right and wrong comes with age. As children grow older they learn. Dreams grow as they do. As their lives begin to shape and mold so do the dreams that they have. Steven pressfield ends his book with this statement,

²⁵ Boldt, Laurence G. *Zen Soup: Tasty Morsels of Wisdom from Great Minds East & West*. New York: Penguin Arkana, 1997. 37.

“creative work is not a selfish act or a bid for attention on the part of the actor. It’s a gift to the world and every being in it. Don’t cheat us of your contribution. Give us what you’ve got.”²⁶

Being a fearless dreamer means taking a look at the desires that God has placed in each individual’s heart and making those become the fearless dream. Knowing if a dream is from God or if it is selfish requires prayer and discernment. There is also an element of faith, that the direction God has for everyone’s life is in their desires and dreams. It is often not about knowing the exact plan, but if an artist is being an obedient servant of the gifts God had given them, then they can have faith that the dreams they are given are part of Gods grand plan.

What exactly is fearless dreaming? It mean having the courage to be patient and to persevere. Maybe it means waiting and having to work part time at a retail store while working to get a degree to pursue that dream. Fearless dreaming is knowing that the nerves and the fears may never go away, but the artist finds a way to keep performing. There is no true “cure” for overcoming resistance. It is something that artist’s will struggle with throughout their entire lives. There are performers who have been doing this for years, and still get nauseous as they are about to go on stage. They have shaking knees while standing in front of crowd and get nervous sweats and cannot seem to catch their breathe before they have to perform. So why would they keep putting themselves through that kind of torture? It is because they are fearlessly dreaming. They are being courageous enough to fight against all those feelings for the sake of performing. This is what it means to overcome resistance.

Resistance is running away from fearless dreaming. However, there is a point when the pain of not pursuing a calling yells louder than the voices saying it is not possible. When the artist has the courage to step out is when art being to happen. Pressfield says, “If Resistance

²⁶ Steven Pressfield. *theWarofArt: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York:Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 165.

could't be beaten, there would be no Fifth Symphony, no *Romeo and Juliet*, no Golden Gate Bridge.”²⁷ Resistance can be overcome. The phenomenal artists that we study today, such as Bach and Brahms, would not exist if they had not beaten their own battle with resistance. It is a decision brought on by an act of will. The more scared of a work or calling the artist is, the more certain they can be that they have to do it. The stronger opposition individuals feel for something may mean it has that much more importance. Renee Fleming gave an account of a time when she had to make a choice to keep going and growing:

Somehow a botched audition brought all of that crashing down on my head. As a result of it, I started to pull together a genuine sense of who I was and what I wanted. It was then that music became mine for the first time, as I started to take responsibility for what I really wanted to achieve. This was not an amazing transformation, and it is one that many young performers experience, but it was the beginning of a real growth.²⁸

There comes a time to take responsibility for the talents and the callings that an artist is given and start living them. Fear, self-doubt and stubbornness will inevitably be present, but it is how the artist chooses to handle the oppositions that makes them who they are.

This is not an easy task. Choosing to be above resistance is incredibly difficult. There are three things that every artist possesses to help them in their fight against resistance: dedication, prayer and reading God's word. God has made each and every person on this earth unique and beautiful. Their calling is a gift as unique as the individual is. Dedication is the hard work that comes along with overcoming Resistance. God gave everyone free will, the choice to determine how to use the gifts and talents he has given. Pressfield says, “The most important thing about art is to work. Nothing else matters except sitting down every day and trying.”²⁹ Hard work is by

²⁷ Ibid, 57

²⁸ Renée Fleming. *The Inner Voice: The Making of a Singer*. (New York: Penguin Books. 2005), 32.

²⁹ Steven Pressfield. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York: Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 108.

definition hard. Pressfield also says, “Resistance’s goal is not to wound or disable. Resistance aims to kill. Its target is the epicenter of our being: our genius, our soul, the unique and priceless gift we were put on earth to give and that no one else has but us. Resistance means business. When we fight it, we are in a war to the death.”³⁰ This is an artist’s fight for their life. This is what it means to have dedication and to have character. Resistance is real, the fight is hard. An artist loses their life when they willingly give into resistance, and choose not to fight for their right to create.

This is not a battle an artists can win on their own. But Christian artists have another ace up their sleeves, prayer. Prayer is a lifeline to a listening ear, a great advisor, a friend, a father. Philippians 4:6-7 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”³¹ Prayer is another way to help conquer resistance. Prayer is about being willing to be patient and obedient as the fight against resistance wages. In the movie *Shadowlands*, the character C.S Lewis says, “I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time — waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God — it changes me.”³² This is the power of prayer and how it can change the battle against resistance.

There is one more step to overcoming resistance and that is creating with excellence. If everything an artist creates is to glorify God, than it should be done excellently. Dr. Allen Schantz in his book *Music, Arts and the Bible* he states, “All of our human capacities receive

³⁰ Steven Pressfield. *theWarofArt: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. (New York:Black Irish Entertainment, 2002), 15.

³¹ Philippians 4:6-7

³² IMDb <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108101/quotes>

their fundamental significance from our responsibility to God.”³³ The Lord was an artist in the way he made creation and man, and He did so with excellence. If Christians are called to live as God did and are made in *Imago Dei* then the art that they create should be excellent. What does excellence look like? Dr Allen Schantz would say that [art that is aesthetically excellent] engages the heart, soul, strength, and mind to make one fully alive.³⁴ Part of being an artist is experiencing self-doubt, anger and fear, and using those emotions to create and at the same time overcome them.

God’s Word

While writing this essay and focusing on an artist’s resistance to create, it became clear that resistance is demonstrated in many ways throughout the Bible. The way resistance manifests itself in an artist’s life is similar to the way sin manifests itself. Humans are sinful creatures, and have been since the fall of man.

The Word of God sets standards as to how artists are to live their life. There are countless times in the Bible when it calls for people to not be afraid. Psalm 27:1 “The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear?”³⁵ Psalm 118:6 says, “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”³⁶ 2 Timothy 1:7 states, “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”³⁷ The Word of God convicts. There are times when reading the bible shines a spotlight into the major issues a person is having. If an artist is feeling resistant, reading the Word of God and feeling convicted can inspire action. It provides the will and the drive to keep pressing forward in their art. Lastly, the Word of God revives. Matthew 11:28-30 says,

³³ Schantz, Allen Paul. *Music, the Arts, and the Bible*. [Lakewood, Colo.]: Aesthetic Arts Press. 2015. 11

³⁴ *Ibid*, 45

³⁵ Psalm 27:1

³⁶ Psalm 118:6

³⁷ 2 Timothy 1:7

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” The artist who rests in the Lord, and seeks guidance from the Word of God is the artist who will win the battle against resistance.

Going back to the story of Jonah, the artist can see that it is not possible to flee from God. The artists may run from their calling, but they will never be able to hide from the Lord. Carl Scovel writes about the story of Jonah. “We flee God's word, and we flee his mercy. We flee his command, and we flee his forgiveness. We flee his presence, and we flee his love.”³⁸ This is what Jonah was doing when he fled to Tarshish, and this is what the artist does when they resist their calling to create. Scovel continues in his article saying that there is a redemptive power that the Lord possesses and it is far greater than human resistance. He says, “The ache in the heart and the hunger for home and the sour stink of the whale's belly are scenes from God's divine comedy in which we play our clumsy parts and through which we will at last come home. And the presence of the Lord that we tried to flee is everywhere, in the first act and the last.”³⁹ The Lord is everywhere, even though the artist's may resist their calling and resist the Lord. His divine plan is much larger than the fear and stubbornness they have.

Overcoming resistance is done through the redemptive love of Christ through the power of his word. God continually saves his people from evil, destruction and from themselves. He sends his own Son to die for the sins of man. From the first day of creation to the final day when

³⁸ Scovel, Carl. "Never Far from Home." *UU World : The Magazine of the Unitarian Universalist Association* 17, no. 6 (Nov, 2003): 22-23. <http://ezproxy.ccu.edu/login?url=http://ezproxy.ccu.edu:2053/docview/201462437accountid=10200>.

³⁹ Scovel, Carl. "Never Far from Home." *UU World : The Magazine of the Unitarian Universalist Association* 17, no. 6 (Nov, 2003): 22-23. <http://ezproxy.ccu.edu/login?url=http://ezproxy.ccu.edu:2053/docview/201462437accountid=10200>.

the Lord returns, redemption is the over arching theme of the Bible. God is saving his people from evil, and if the evil is resistance then God's redemptive love overcomes that as well.

Others Who have Gone Before

Many in the creative world have had to fight their own battle with resistance. In Renee Fleming's battle with resistance early on in her career, it took a terrible audition for her to realize that she needed to make the music her own in order to fulfill her calling. In an interview in 2015 with Opera Today, René Barbera, a renowned tenor, mentioned briefly about a time he fought with resistance. The interviewer asked, "Where did you go to college?" Barbera replied, "I attended the University of Texas at San Antonio for three semesters and then dropped out because I decided I did not want to sing any more. I moved to Colorado where my brother was living and got a job replacing windshields."⁴⁰ He dropped out of college after only three semesters after many year of studying to become a vocalist. He stopped singing because of his resistance of what was yet to come from his singing career. He tried to distract himself by moving, by getting a job that had nothing to do with music. He eventually came back to music and now he sings on the most prestigious opera stages in the world.

Art can take many forms. Nancy Rourke, a deaf artist who does expressionist paintings, talks about her struggle with resistance, and her fear of success. She started painting at the age of six and continued on to get a master's degree in computer graphic design and painting. After her first showing in 1979 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. she stopped painting. She said, "I did not have full confidence in my chances at success in the art community,

⁴⁰ "A Chat with Tenor René Barbera." Interview by Maria Nockin. Opera Today: Opera News, Commentary, and Reviews from Around the World. September 8, 2015. Accessed April 6, 2016. http://www.operatoday.com/content/2015/09/a_chat_with_ten.php

so I chose to become a 9-to-5 employee.”⁴¹ It took her twenty years before she finally returned to painting. In 2010 she became involved in the De’VIA art movement (Deaf View / Image Art) and there she discovered true passion. Her artistic statement is, “My work has a centralized focus that makes a theme; resistance, affirmation and liberation art.”⁴² Her art is this essay, exploring and overcoming resistance. She was afraid of where her art could take her. When she was brave enough to start showing her art work, she made a name for herself in the creative community.

In 2009, *Composition Today* did an interview with composer Graham Lynch. The interviewer asked him how he started composing. Lynch replied, “For me it was one of those ‘Road to Damascus’ moments. I’d dropped out of school after failing most of my zero Levels and worked for a couple of years in offices. One day I sat down and wrote a piece for piano and immediately realized that this was what I wanted to do, it really clicked for me.”⁴³ Lynch had gone to school for music and stopped out of boredom. It was his stubbornness that kept him from trying to really pursue music.

I recently had the privilege of interviewing the Dean of the Music School at Colorado Christian University, Steve Taylor, who is a phenomenal baritone vocalist and has made his career by following his true calling. During the interview he talked about times in his life when he felt like giving up on opera, but there was never a time when he wanted to quit singing. He said, “I just really feel that singing is the soul and if you feel that singing is a part of your soul, than I don’t know how you can quit it.”⁴⁴ This is a man who has had many trials come his way

⁴¹Rourke, Nancy. "Nancy Rourke Paintings — Biography." Nancy Rourke Paintings — Biography. July 21, 2015. Accessed April 06, 2016. <http://www.nancyrourke.com/biography.htm>.

⁴² Rourke, Nancy. "Nancy Rourke Paintings — Biography." Nancy Rourke Paintings — Biography. July 21, 2015. Accessed April 06, 2016. <http://www.nancyrourke.com/biography.htm>.

⁴³ Lynch, Graham. "C:T Talks to Composer Graham Lynch." Interview by David Bruce. *Composition:Today*. November 5, 2009. Accessed April 6, 2016. http://www.compositiontoday.com/interviews/graham_lynch.asp.

⁴⁴ Taylor, Steve. "Questions to Dean Taylor." Interview by author. April 12, 2016.

throughout his career, but he never once stopped pursuing the gift God had given him. His whole attitude is driven towards perseverance. Towards the end of the interview he said, “I believe that ultimately it is about finding what God has for us, but I fully believe that God doesn't waste a thing in our lives. Even when we screw up, even when we do things that are contrary to his will or our faith walk. God uses them to reproach us, improve us and to mold us.”⁴⁵ There was a brief period in Dean Taylor’s life when he worked as a carpenter, and was not doing a lot of singing. He said that it felt as if he was lost in the wilderness. It was a time when he genuinely questioned the plan that God had for him.

Paul said in Ephesians 4:1-3 “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord urge you to walk in a walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”⁴⁶ Dean Taylor persevered, and that has to do with his ability to fearlessly dream. Dean Taylor has been able to accomplish a lot in his life by using the gifts God has given him. He never gave up the fight and he continuously praised the Lord in everything he did.

Conclusion: The Art of Fearless Dreaming

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his highest heavens!
 Praise him in his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!
 Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
 Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!
 Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!⁴⁷

Artist’s are called to praise the Lord with everything they have. Fighting resistance means fighting for the right to create and fighting for the right to fearlessly dream. The Lord has given

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ephesians 4:1-3

⁴⁷ Psalm 150

each person a gift in which to praise him. For some, it may be through teaching, painting, writing or singing. Don Green says, “Dreams can be magical. They will be a source of inspiration to you during the work that lies ahead. If you invest your dreams with true belief in your abilities, they can help you realize your full potential and come to know a deep sense of meaning in your work.”⁴⁸

In his book, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*, Best reveals the way in which God's creation and the human creation of music should be synonymous in approach. Music, just like creation, should be new, full of variety, delicate, rough, fragile, resilient, plain and ornamented. Music should be unique just as God made each artist. It should be an integration of worth and function. When artists create out of a place of fearlessness, passion, and drive, all with the intent to glorify God, it becomes an extension of God's creation. It is miraculous that God, a creator, would allow his creation to create. This is why it is essential that the artists fight against resistance's powers. Music, poetry and painting can all reflect on a battle with resistance and the perseverance it takes to overcome it. The lyrics of the well-known hymn, *Abide with Me*, reflect on a time and need for perseverance. “I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless; I'll have no weight, tears lose their bitterness. Where is thy sting death? Where grace thy victory? I triumph still, abide with me.”⁴⁹ Resistance causes pain, tears and bitterness but there shall be none of these, for the Lord abides. This hymn has been sung for many years in the church and the message remains relevant. The battle is won because the Lord is on the artist's side.

There is a traditional American hymn called “Pilgrim Song” that is arranged by Ryan Murphy. The lyrics read:

⁴⁸ Don Greene. *Performance Success: Performing Your Best Under Pressure*. New York: Routledge. 2002. 25.

⁴⁹ Worship and Service Hymnal. Carol Stream: Hope Publishing Company, 1966. 149

My soul doth long to go where I may fully know, the glory of my savior;
and as I pass along I'll sing the Christian song,
I'm going to sing forever.⁵⁰

This is what the artist is called to do, sing praises to God forever. Bach signed all of his music with SDG, which stood for Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone). Bach, a baroque composer, glorified the Lord with his art forever, and that is the goal in fighting resistance. When the artist finally overcomes resistance it allows for them to glorify God forever with their art.

Charlie Parker once said, “Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn”⁵¹ Creating art is being able to take human emotion and express it, so that an audience receiving it can be engulfed in that same emotion and relate to it. This is why an artist has to overcome resistance, so that art can be shared and human emotion can be expressed in beautiful ways. Resistance is widespread in the creative world. Resistance is real. There are seasons in every artists life when resistance will not be present, but it will inevitably arise at some point. How the artist chooses to handle that resistance, will decide who wins the battle. Fearless dreaming leads to the defeat of resistance’s power in the creative world.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “I believe that anyone can conquer fear by doing the things he fears to do.”⁵² Fearlessly dreaming is having the courage to fight fear, self-doubt and anything else all for the sake of creating art. Artists are the lucky ones, they have an opportunity to express emotion and reach humanity on a deep level. They are able to connect

⁵⁰ Arr. Murphy, Ryan. *Pilgrim Song*. (Oxford University Press. 2012)

⁵¹ "Charlie Parker." Jazz Quotes Charlie Parker Comments. 2011. Accessed April 19, 2016. <http://jazz-quotes.com/artist/charlie-parker/>.

⁵²Boldt, Laurence G. *Zen Soup: Tasty Morsels of Wisdom from Great Minds East & West*. New York: Penguin Arkana, 1997. 9.

people through a gift that they have been given. Conquering any resistance is all about getting up and doing it, not only for yourself but for others.

Glorifying our creator is the ultimate goal. Just like Renee Fleming, there comes a time in every artists life when they have to accept music as their own to truly grow. It is this point when every voice that screams out “you will never be an artist” is muted and when the small voice comes in and says “you can.” This is what will help the artists to overcome their resistance. The artist never truly “arrives” but it is the journey that is most significant. Romans 5:3-4 says, “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering process endurance, and endurance produces character and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts.”⁵³ Artists should rejoice in the times of battle, because from that comes hope.

Exploring and overcoming resistance is all about the fearless dream. Every dream that an artist possesses comes with a battle of resistance. Understanding what resistance is and how to overcome it allows for the artist to freely create. When the artist’s can accept the call that God has for their life is when they have the power to move beyond resistance’s hold and to glorify God forever.

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⁵³ Romans 5:3-4

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