

Why Do I Drum?

By Michael Burris

- “This is how you come to me: without why, without power, another link in the chain” of someone else’s objectives, is what the Merovingian said to Morpheus, Neo, and Trinity in “The Matrix Reloaded.” In Proverbs 29:18, the wisest of all men King Solomon said: “Where there is no revealing vision, the people lose self-control and perish.”
- I started drumming because of the amazing Buddy Rich and Ringo Starr! I also wanted to make cool beats like my friend Ralph Doosenbury in 7th grade. Finally, rhythm is what fascinated me most about music – and still does! It’s the foundation of all music!
- Of all the many hobbies, sports, degrees, and careers I’ve pursued, drumming has consistently been the greatest fascination and joy since I was 8 years old. It’s what I kept coming back to, especially during a life-sapping 9 yr. career as a Sr. Programmer-Analyst in healthcare for company that only knew how to “build iron spokes in clay wheels,” bent on being reactive instead of proactive.
- I left this “zoo” in 1998 to launch CoreBeat (now TeachMeToDrum). It’s opened worlds of experiences with over 4900 students that I would have never had if I had played it safe and took the higher paying job. As Polonius, chief counsellor of Claudius the king in William Shakespeare’s Hamlet said: “This above all: to thine own self be true.”
- I’ve made too many life decisions based on “my adult head” – the most logical, safest, financially rewarding, responsible, and approvable by family, friends, colleagues, and my own ego. However, the decision to drum has always been from “my child’s heart,” because it fascinates me most and I’ve enjoyed it so much. I’ve even had many God-dreams & visions with music in them!
- Once I had a vision from God, where I saw a kid totally captivated while joyfully playing in a sandbox as his proud father was standing by smiling, wanting nothing more than this curiosity and joy for his son. I couldn’t see anything else of the man’s face but that unconditionally loving smile – I couldn’t take my eyes off it! Then suddenly I realized this was God the Father smiling at me when I was playing the drums, and all that incredible joy I’ve experienced over the years practicing and playing was no accident – it was actually God’s infinite joy and He was sharing some of it with me! Being in the Presence of joy is what I want a lot more of! So many times I’ve been kept from playing the drums because I felt guilty that I should be doing something more: important, responsible, profitable, or approvable. Now all I have to do is look at God’s smile to know these are lying “voices.” In fact, “the truth that is setting me free” is that all along my Heavenly Father, the only truly ‘Responsible One,’ has been smiling with absolute approval when I’m in my “sandbox of drum play,” that there is no “more important” place to be than in His Presence of great joy. God gives His gifts with no strings attached so that we will stay captivated and stay in joy. For me, this is drumming!
- Once when I was in the backyard thanking God for all the music experiences I’ve had growing up, I looked up and saw the power lines from the alley connecting to my house, and the angle was such that it created a slanted music staff pointing directly at my drum room! And there were birds on the lines to form a rhythmic melody! When I noticed this I was suddenly filled with great joy!
- In February 2010, I desperately needed answers about renter issues and my drum teaching, so I drove to the park and pleaded with God to show me “the answers” in my 8-translation New Testament. I randomly opened it and my eyes immediately fixated on the only part I had underlined (who knows when): 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 “The answer is: If you eat or drink, or whatever you are doing, do it all for the glory of God – His pleasure, benefit, and honor.” Talk about a shotgun solution! I was later amazed that it’s the only verse in 25 translations that ever says “the answer” and it was in my New Century Version I had underlined! Since then, the Expanded Bible Version has done it.
- On 8/5/16, I had a God-dream: I saw myself when I was a kid growing up in Phoenix, playing my drum set in my carport. But then I saw what looked like a butterfly, colored and shining like the sun, flying into the carport, attracted to my drumming. It was mesmerizing and I just wanted to watch it. It landed on a cymbal and I was compelled to play on it. Then I had mallets and I felt compelled to roll on it. I felt a childlike joy! Then it moved to a tom-tom and I felt compelled

to play on it. More joy! It just kept moving and I kept chasing it. We were like two kids playing a "cat & mouse" chase and I started laughing more and more. I was having so much fun that I didn't want the game to stop! I was also amazed at the incredible drumming!

- On 8/13/16, I had a God-dream: I saw a pond of water that had been damned up so it was murky and really stank. A black man (I think he was an African missionary I knew) and I were pulling old boards out of it to build something, but we were afraid to even stick our hands in because it stank so much! So I opened up the blockage to drain it first and then rinsed the boards down with fresh running water. Then I saw a room with someone playing drums and percussion in it, but nobody I was with wanted to go into the room, not even me, a drum teacher! Although I remembered it sounded quite good technically, there was nothing drawing us in, and I heard a Voice say: "It is not anointed; it does not draw." It was simply background entertainment! So many of the 15 churches I've played for was just that – "entertainment of the saints," but clearly not true "Worship by the Spirit and [coupled] by the Truth," as Jesus said of the New Covenant!

- On 6/30/18, I went to bed asking what must I do to be filled with God's love, free from this world of sin, filled with your Holy Spirit? In my God-dream that night, I was a reporter trying to interview a black preacher from Africa, who actually was Jesus. He had come to America to save it. I asked, "What will you say? We already have millions of bibles, millions of churches, and millions of preachers, but look at the rampant worldliness of churches, the resultant lack of holiness in a society that is self-centered, prideful, lustful, hateful, and violent! What could you possibly say to change America? Are you here to start more churches?" The Preacher answered, "Churches were meant to be an out-growth. They need Christ!" I thought that was self-evident, but didn't know how that answered my question. So then the preacher shows me a black woman sent out to America in His name. She was bald with an ornate colorful African gown with jewelry that made Her look like a queen. Everywhere She went I saw Her simply singing adoring praises to the Lord while both of Her hands and feet were playing instruments. It was absolutely mind-boggling the level of coordination with African polyrhythms, though it was absolutely the most beautiful music I've ever heard. The more I watched it the more I wanted to start singing along, like I couldn't help it! Every time I looked towards The Preacher to ask Him what He was going to say that hasn't already been said a million times, He simply showed me this woman traveling, singing, and playing. This was His answer! Then I asked, "Who is this woman that nobody expected to be the emissary of the Messiah?" I kept asking Him this and then suddenly I realized She was the Holy Spirit and remembered that the word in Greek & Hebrew for "Spirit" was feminine. She was The Performer and The Power of God, who would bring Christ to an empty, sinful America full of churches, bibles, books, and preachers, but empty of Christ and the Spirit of Holiness. Her actions were Christ's message, the answer! When I woke I remembered the Greek word for "prayer" actually means to "patiently wait, watch, and listen in a state of adoring worship of God" – only 1 letter difference between "prayer" (*proseuchomai*) and "drawing near to," a Hebraism for worship (*proserchomai*).

- On 11/8/2018 I had a God dream regarding a performance I did with another musician. There were "compromising scenes and words" in the musical play. Jesus said with great compassion: "O, I understand that fear is as old as the Garden and faced with it, man has always chosen one of two ways – 1) compromise, 2) faith and courage." Then I saw "The world and its cravings are passing away, but he who is doing the will of God remains forever."

- 2/6/19: I had a God dream with the African Queen again, this time fixated on her extremely rare and priceless Imperial Jade necklace that Jesus said to "read," but there were no writings on it no matter how much I stared at it or even through it, since some parts were a bit translucent. He later said that I had mistook "read" for "understanding written letters" but that He meant "discern or understand by watching intently" as in "read the situation correctly." He explained that holiness doesn't come by staring or studying a bible text but at the Spirit of Holiness and that "His [directly-spoken] *rhema* word IS SPIRIT and Genuine Life" (John 6:63). Then I saw a very old, short, white woman that came into the room dressed in a royal purple robe. She was smiling with so much joy the room lit up with it, and you could feel it emanating from Her. I was told She was the Ancient of Day, the Holy Spirit of joy to watch!

- 2/16/19: I had a God dream of a "blue bird of paradise," a symbol of prosperity, that came over to me in God's house full of animals, simply when I called it to myself to pet it, as a child would, though it could not be caught if you chased it.

Then I saw music of mine that taught what God had told me from the beginning. I thought maybe these were “My favorite teachings” put to music, but I now believe God is going further back to my childhood, the inner fascination and joy that He has shared with me through drumming.

- 2/20/19: My wife Charlotte had a powerful God dream about my drumming. The message of it was: I have a choice to take the joy & talent of drumming that God has given me and keep it for my own goals or give it back to Him for His purposes. He said, “I give direction to those who are seeking My will, not their own.” I can primarily entertain with drums (symbolic of the red, scraggly, Muppet “Animal”) from an “adult’s brain” or I can “relay a real message from the heart” since “the new man is more like a boy,” messages “you have known – you only need to trust in what I have already shown you and ‘play’ it back for others.” God said of the ‘puppet’ way: “I have never seen this go well.” Of the ‘playback’ way, He says: “Go as the child, not the entertainer. Grasp the simple message for yourself and then give it to others. Power! You can seek to entertain and impress the ‘proud and judgmental’ or you can have your eye on the ‘poor in spirit’ – I will help you reach them. Only the humble, the children, will be changed – knowing they have much to learn and need much help. I go ahead of you, so follow Me and you will find yourself going in the right direction.”

- 2/27/19 I had a revelation concerning that dream: Just as we enjoy sharing our joys with our family & friends, God shares His joys with us, but often we are so caught up in our own world’s that we don’t recognize or acknowledge this. God also enjoys it when we share our joys with Him. He has given me great joy learning, practicing, and performing drums. I can choose to realize this, be grateful, and share that joy back to Him, or I can just hold it to myself. The Sandbox vision reminds me of the joy God experienced as I was enjoying my drumming. Isn’t that what love is like?

- Since then I’ve had other dreams, visions, and prophetic words: “Self-control” is the ultimate outcome of the singular fruit of the Spirit that is “love.” When I yield to the Spirit living in me while playing the drums, I will experience more of the “self-mastery” that the Spirit naturally has of music, just as I saw of the “African Queen.” God invented music and is master of it! “With (alongside in union) God, all things are indeed possible,” and as I have become aware of the Spirit playing music within me and enjoy that fellowship, indeed I have noticed increased mastery of drumming. Her whole-body worship is Who I am to follow; this is the saving Message, and the answer to my prayer to learn how to “truly worship the Father by the Spirit and The Truth,” as Jesus taught. The Old Testament Way was “by all our external might and internal power” FOR God, but the New Testament Way is “By/With My Spirit,” says the Lord! How? By sharing my love & joy of drumming with the Spirit within me, that which the Spirit has and has shared with me since I was 8. This is “with God” communion and worship! If I am distracted by other future agendas/purposes like “How can I use this? How can I make money from this?” If I buckle to “fear and compromise” by trying to turn this into something “more important or valuable,” then I’m no longer “valuing and abiding in” God’s purpose for me NOW, but instead using it for my own FUTURE purposes. If I do “abide” in the NOW, then God promises to “go before Me” for His own purposes later, which He will show me THEN. God told me, “I don’t want you to practice, but to play like a little child. Practice is too much like works – it’s doesn’t work now; it never did!” I’ve studied and written much about the “traditions of men” regarding worship, that “playing skillfully unto to Lord to honor Him” is the result of horrible, twisted translations. It’s kept Christians in the “works-performance” paradigm of the Old Covenant. Being in the my drum room, playing drums as if building a sandcastle for the pure fun of it, is what God is showing me. Abide in this! Trust! All the guilt, “should do something more important” voices, and constant life distractions have all been to keep me out of the drum room, even the “frontage road” parallel track of teaching! I’ve written so much about “playing by the Spirit” and have gloriously tasted the night-and-day difference with a few musicians, but in order to be prepared to play regularly in a band that allows complete control by the Spirit, with no prepared music sitting on music stands to be stared at, then I have to “walk in what the Spirit is saying and showing me” NOW, to be led into this band THEN. The Church and world desperately need “The Real Thing” – to feel the infinite, unconditional love of God! The days are evil and time quickly coming to a close in world events, even as I and many others have seen, so it’s time to “abide in the Spirit,” even one “step of faith after another” in my drumming.