

An Open Letter to Taylor Swift This Valentine's Day

Dear Taylor,

When I moved to the Nashville area a decade ago with my wife, you were here launching a musical career that has brought you fame and fortune throughout the world. We, like millions, admired your God-given talent and tenacity while applauding your affectionate title as "America's Sweetheart."

Raising two daughters and now having two granddaughters, I watched your wholesome public image, non-provocative swimsuits and polite manner make you a most appreciated and highly esteemed role model in a society where so few exist in the entertainment industry. As one of the most followed personalities on social media, you acknowledged your "responsibility" to be conscious of your influence on young fans.

As we watched another Nashvillian, Miley Cyrus, depart from her Disney persona to a scandal-seeking, sex-obsessed, weed-promoting performer, you were the one we could turn to as you engaged in friendly interaction with fans, especially young girls. Your cute smile plus surprise visits to sick and disadvantaged adolescents won us over to what we hoped would make us longtime devotees.

I don't know of your spiritual background, but as a Christian, I offer you a maxim that has inspired many through the years: "What you are is God's gift to you; what you make of yourself is your gift to God."

Taylor, you are now 27 years old and indisputably the highest-earning musician in the world (*Forbes* states your net worth as \$1/2 billion). You've earned multiple Grammys, and *Time* magazine placed you repeatedly on its annual list of "100 Most

Influential People.” Quite the achievement for the young girl from Reading, Pennsylvania who came to Nashville with a dream when she was only 14.

Submitting a Humble Request

Taylor, on your journey, you’ve experienced a number of ups and downs in relationships. Young girls going through similar things look your way for guidance. You use your creativity to spin these into creative songs that resonate with your young fans.

After a year’s absence, you recently released a new song—a duet with a popular male singer—with the catchy title, “I Don’t Wanna Live Forever.” Immediately, it went to the top spot on iTunes.

Here’s where I ask you to hang in here with countless numbers of parents and me who love you dearly but have a legitimate concern. Will you please read what follows as not from a critic, but a supporter?

Your song and its accompanying video are promoted as a theme from a supposedly “romantic” film just released nationwide for Valentine’s Day. I’m referring to the disturbing erotic sequel, *Fifty Shades Darker*.

Clever and deceptive marketing presents this movie as an edgy, mysterious love story, but that’s not what it is at all. It is really a pornographic, profane tale of a sexual abuser and perverted manipulator who seduces and controls gullible women. The movie presents immoral and destructive behavior that damages women’s lives and can scar them for a lifetime as normal, beautiful and even desirable.

Recent stats from the Center for Disease Control reveal 43.9 percent of women in America are victims of sexual violence, in addition to 19.3 percent who have been raped. This is shocking, and we certainly don’t want to identify with

anything glamorizing or promoting this reprehensible type of behavior.

As a married man of 40 years and father who watches out for potential minefields in my children's and grandchildren's lives, I wouldn't go near this highly offensive film. Reading reviews we discover the following:

- The central character is a controlling, sadistic billionaire who enjoys abusing women.

- The perverted man has a room for twisted, torturous activities.

- He pets the head of his naive victim as one does a dog.

- The film features an attempted rape scene, attempted murder and suicide; God's name is profaned 20 times; the name of Jesus taken in vain three times; and, vulgar expletives, drugs and alcohol are all woven into the slimy story.

God instructs us to flee evil, and Psalm 101:4a says, "A perverted heart shall be far from me."

Taylor, your song is featured in a steamy elevator scene where a young woman is violated. Honestly, is this what you want to be identified with in your special position of influence?

My understanding is that you were influenced to appear in provocative lingerie for the song's video where you pour champagne and behave sensually while your "boyfriend" wallows in self-pity and rage, smashing glasses and a lamp in a childish temper tantrum.

A Fatherly Appeal

The young actress, Dakota Johnson, who plays the woman in this film is currently on the cover of February's *Vogue* magazine.

She admitted in interviews she needed to drink liquor to

“loosen up” for her embarrassing scenes. She said in the *Vogue* article, “I think I’m a little bit heartbroken all the time ... Can we say I’m taking this time to explore my bisexuality?”

While I pray for Dakota, I want you to know that I love and pray for you, Taylor. My prayer for you as a dad is that you not to be lured onto a broad road that Jesus taught eventually brings heartache and regret.

This month on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine is Paris Jackson, the young daughter of another pop star who died tragically, Michael Jackson. She’s inherited over \$1 billion, yet the article tells us how she was previously “drowning in depression and a drug addiction, she tried to kill herself at age 15, slashing her wrist and downing 20 Motrin pills.” It said she’d tried to kill herself “multiple times.”

No young starlet intends to go this route, but wrong choices bring serious consequences. Consider Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston and others who are no longer with us.

It’s not too late to catch yourself before any further missteps. Because there are scores of young girls who admire you and want to follow your footsteps, consider disassociating yourself from any influences drawing you away from the path that has brought you such phenomenal success.

The Book of Proverbs, written primarily to young people, tells us, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who listens to counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15).

Will you heed this counsel as you proceed on your pathway of life, drawing thousands of girls with you?

Multitudes of us who love you are praying for your continued success.

Sincerely, Larry Tomczak {eo}