

Is Secular Music OK for Christians?

Over the last 15 years of youth and young adult ministry, I've been asked countless times, "Is it OK for Christians to listen to secular music?" I've always had the same response. "The battle between the Spirit and the flesh is won by what one you feed the most!"

I've always found it interesting that many Christian young people can't pronounce the names of the books in the Bible, they don't know basic Scripture, yet they have memorized every word of the latest hit song on iTunes.

It has become more and more common for young people to embrace secular music. More concerning than this, recently there has been a wide spread endorsement of this music by Christian leaders. In my book *Jezebel: The Witch Is Back*, I write about this.

I am not one of those ministers who calls the latest pop singer the devil, the Antichrist, and so on. For decades, ministers have declared music artists to be evil. They said this about Elvis, Madonna and now artists such as Lady Gaga. In fact, I believe that God loves all these artists and that He sent His Son to die for them.

However, I also believe that out of their rebellion they are used by the enemy (the devil) to sing songs that have devastated the lives of millions of people. To me, the scary thing is that some Christians support and endorse this music. They post on social networks how much they "love their music" and attend their concerts. They do this under the banner of love. They say, "We need to show artists like this the love of God." I agree ... just not to do it at the expense of truth! There are two sides to love: grace and truth. To embrace this

kind of worldliness is to abandon wisdom.

Recently I was traveling and ministering at a dynamic youth ministry in the Midwest. The youth pastor asked me whether I noticed Christian leaders posting on social networks about listening to this music and going to these concerts. He made the comment, "It sure is difficult to tell the teenagers in my youth church that it's not a good idea to embrace this music when their favorite preachers on Twitter and Instagram are promoting these artists and posting pictures of themselves at their concerts!"

Now, not all music that is not Christian is evil.

I think it's important to note that all music that is not Christ-centered is secular. As my friend Pastor Jonathan Miller (@PastorYPJ) puts it, "The Happy Birthday song and the ABC song is secular music."

The real issue is not about Christian music vs. secular music, it's about endorsing profane music. Ezekiel 44:23 says, "They are to teach my people the difference between the holy and the common (profane) and show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean."

The profane is that which resists the things of God. Music that is promoting fornication (sex out of marriage), homosexuality, immorality, using profanity (curse words), chasing greed/money and a worldly lifestyle is all profane. This music has an anti-Christ agenda; it resists the holiness of God and the move of the Spirit of God. How ministers are promoting these celebrities, pop artists and songs is not advancing the kingdom of God.

Ezekiel is instructing all ministers that it's our job to teach believers the difference in honoring God and dishonoring God. This is usually the point where someone blurts out, "We need to show them the love of God!" And I say, "First show God love!" Before I'm concerned about showing a pop star "love"

over promoting a song they may not have even written, I'm concerned about honoring God. Am I honoring God by what I'm watching, listening to and promoting? I can't possibly love them, which is the second greatest commandment, unless I obey the greatest commandment first (Matt. 22:37-40)! I would be more mindful of loving the people who follow you on social networks. Love them enough not to promote or encourage them in the lifestyle of sin from which Jesus came to save us.

Someone usually adds about now, "Pop stars need to be ministered to as well!" I agree with that, but you don't disciple celebrities and pop stars over social media. Christian leaders in places of influence can speak into the lives of these individuals behind closed doors without potentially causing younger Christians to stumble in their walk with the Lord. If a pop star or anyone is truly being disciplined and has encountered Jesus, then there will be a change in their lives and music. Everyone who encountered Jesus changed for the glory of God! Jesus *never* embraced unrighteous behavior. He loved the person and told them to "sin no more!"

In our cultural relevancy, we can't lose our conviction of righteousness. We can't lose the thing that separates us from the profane, which is our Christlikeness. I want to encourage pastors to be aware of what your youth pastors are promoting. Be aware of who is influencing them. Make sure you are taking time to continue to mentor your young leaders. I want to encourage young leaders to be so very aware of your sphere of influence. We are warned that death is a better result than causing a young one to stumble (Matt. 18:6). I want to encourage young people; the battle between the flesh and spirit is won by which one you feed the most! {eoa}

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