

Spirit-Filled Pastor's Response to Mackenzie Morgan Calling Out Hillsong, Bethel and Elevation

I appreciate Mackenzie Morgan's boldness to stand against wishy-washy churches in this article titled, "Worship leader no longer supports Hillsong, Elevation, Bethel Music over 'false gospel message.'" More and more churches may be following suit in regard to her stance.

But I also think it's important to ask some additional questions.

For example, "Is it possible to not endorse or agree with [such-and-such church] but still listen to their worship in a corporate setting?"

First, I want to be clear that my position has never been, "I don't care what the roots are; I'm playing their music." I myself am in the process of evaluating.

I recently preached a sermon series on revival. Bryan and Katie Torwalt led worship during one of the messages, and Kim Walker-Smith during another one. To view the controversial services that sparked this article, [click here](#) and [here](#). Then let us know your thoughts. Were the services God-honoring? Were the lyrics theologically sound? Were the messages biblically accurate? Could there be abundant fruit?

Just for reference's sake, I use the MacArthur Study Bible, read the Puritans and love any preaching from Lloyd-Jones, Spurgeon and the like. I'm not endorsing and promoting Bethel or the others. I have concerns too. I understand that playing a church's music (in a sense) is viewed as promoting them. I

get that, but there is a huge difference between direct promotion and indirect promotion because we have to legally acknowledge the source of the songs for licensing reasons.

With that said, I've put forth a few questions and answers that may offer clarity:

1. How inconsistent should a group be before we completely discontinue their worship? Should we eliminate all songs because we disagree with some of what their pastors teach? Yes and no. What if the worship leaders are solid in their walk with the Lord? It all depends on the severity of their error. Some people draw the line in the sand much quicker in regard to removing their music, while others are not there yet.

2. Have I done my due diligence in investigating these bands? The problem is that there are many conflicting reports. I know people who attend Bethel, and they say the complete opposite of those who condemn it. For example, Bethel's leadership condemns grave-sucking here, but people still say that they teach it. Yes, I have seen the picture of lead pastor Bill Johnson's wife near a grave, but pictures don't always tell the whole story. You wouldn't believe the number of heresy hunters I heard from when I released this picture.

But, with that said, I have also heard Johnson say things he needs to clarify. I talked to Bethel Communications for over an hour in 2019. They said they were releasing short clips explaining the controversies, and they have finally begun that process at [this link](#).

I haven't had a chance to listen yet, but knowing people like Kim Walker-Smith and Sean Feucht (who are solid), I would hate to throw the baby out with the bathwater because they were once leading worship at Bethel.

Because I myself have often been misrepresented, I appreciate those who try to hear both sides. It's good to be concerned and lovingly rebuke churches such as the ones mentioned above,

but at the same time, we should consider the heart of the worship leader who is writing and leading the songs. For example, do you have any idea who wrote this: “So much heresy is running rampant in the church because we’re not clearly preaching the reality of eternal judgment, the reality of heaven and hell, or the frequent commands concerning holiness, godliness, purity and true Jesus apprenticeship”?

Jeremy Riddle, worship leader at Bethel, wrote that on April 10, 2020, on his Facebook page. In case you missed it, that’s a powerful declaration of sound doctrine.

Emotional Worship Is the Stumbling Block for Many

While not true of everyone, as in the case of Mackenzie Morgan, the vast majority of those who have issues with this music seem to disdain emotional worship and are often not open to what is referred to as revival. They don’t like to sing “Let It Rain” because they don’t want to get wet. You can read more about genuine revival in my past articles.

I stand in awe of how many famous conservative pastors quote George Whitefield yet fail to acknowledge the oddities that happened under his preaching. The same is true of Jonathan Edwards and others who ushered in great moves of the Spirit.

Now, with that said, I am not validating questionable ministries. I have similar concerns as many of the critics, but it is interesting that those mocking are often the same people who would (and do) mock a genuine move of God’s Spirit. I’m hoping that this article sparks dialogue within the controversial bands and a movement to revisit theology is sparked.

Most of these worship groups are young and need theological grounding. Perhaps the young musicians in some of these bands just need believers who are spiritually mature reaching out to them rather than calling them heretical.

In closing, my big concern for many of us is found in Revelation 2:2-5 (NIV), "I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. ... Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."

Could it be that the very thing we need (and that Hillsong, Bethel and Elevation need) is the very thing we are running from: revival and a powerful move of God's Spirit via brokenness, humility and repentance?

Additional Resources

In this sermon, I talk about when my heart was very hard and I was becoming a modern-day Pharisee.

The New Apostolic Reformation always seems to slip into this type of discussion. Since I don't know much about the NAR, I found a video for those interested: "The Truth About NAR and 7 Mountain Theology."

Michael Brown also interviewed Bill Johnson in this video. Granted, I would have asked harder questions, but he was still able to clarify many things. Here is what baffles me: it's almost as though people don't want to know the facts. {eo}

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