

# Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?

In the early 1700s, Andrew Fletcher wrote, "Let me make the songs of a nation, and I care not who makes its laws."

This is a profound comment, but Fletcher was not the first one to say something like this. More than 2,000 years earlier, Plato wrote, "Any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole state, and ought to be prohibited. ... When modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change with them."

Do we, as followers of Jesus, understand what these men understood? Do we grasp the world-changing power of music? It's one thing to recognize the importance of music in our worship and praise. It's another thing to recognize how music can impact the world around us. Do we?

Martin Luther had a great appreciation for music, writing, "Music is one of the greatest gifts that God has given us; it is divine and therefore Satan is its enemy. For with its aid many dire temptations are overcome; the devil does not stay where music is." Augustine grasped the spiritual importance of music too, commenting, "Those who sing pray twice." Church history is filled with great hymns, melodic prayers and all kinds of musical innovations. That is all wonderful and all good.

But have we taken hold of the power of music in evangelism, in changing social attitudes and impacting the culture? Music can shape the hearts and minds of a generation. We need to ask ourselves, "If classical music and folk music and rock music can touch the world, why can't our music do even more? If heavy metal and hip-hop can captivate the masses, why can't our songs and lyrics do the same, but even better?"

Why can't we write the tunes that get in people's heads, the words that stay in people's hearts and the songs that change those people's minds?

Not everything we write has to contain an overt gospel message. Some songs can carry a broader social message, while others can call for love and kindness. Some can expose human sin, while others can preach Jesus loudly and clearly. But one way or another, our music must move beyond the walls of our church buildings into the cell phones, digital streams, TVs, tablets and laptops of the society. Why should we be consigned to a Christian musical ghetto?

## **Shake the Church**

Given the power of music, just think of what Christian musicians and songwriters and singers could do. The impact could be massive. But if the idea of impacting the society with our music seems too overwhelming, let's start here.

What about writing new songs that will awaken a sleeping, compromised church? What about putting to music prophetic messages that come with a holy sting? What about lyrics that appeal to the depths of our being, that call us to leave everything and follow Jesus? What about new hymns that carry within themselves the seeds of revival and renewal and repentance?

What about songs that could fuel a new mission movement, as millions of young people cast down the idols of this age and give themselves to reach those who are perishing? What about songs that give us a burden for a dying world? What about lyrics that call us to biblical holiness, crucifying the flesh and pursuing purity of heart?

And so, I urge you—particularly those of you who are musically or lyrically gifted—to utilize the extraordinary power of music, hardwired by God into our brains, to touch the lost, to challenge the status quo, to birth world-changing movements,

to teach divine truths, to enhance worship. Utilize music and song to bring heaven down to us so that we might ascend into the heavenlies. Utilize this unique, God-ordained tool to revolutionize the church and the world. Utilize this gift from God to the full.

As Larry Norman asked many years ago, "Why should the devil have all the good music?"

Write songs that will shake the society. Compose melodies and harmonies that will captivate hearts. Pen lyrics that will impact our very souls. Sing and worship with newfound appreciation and with deeper adoration.

### **Change the World**

The world has abused music as much as it has used it. Let us, instead, sanctify music for the Lord, immersed in the Spirit's power and burning with holy fire. Does not your own heart burn at the prospect?

Who will compose the tune that the world will sing until the culture has shifted? Who will pen the lyrics that will re-educate a media-saturated generation? Who will write the song that will be sung around the world in a hundred languages? Who will birth the music that will help usher lost sinners into the kingdom of God?

There is no shortage of sounds and messages and ideas and themes in the presence of God. Who will hear what heaven is saying and singing and playing and bring it down to earth?

To say it yet again: The world understands the power of music. Philosophers and poets and psychologists and scientists understand its power.

Even Friedrich Nietzsche, the militantly anti-Christian philosopher, once asked, "Has anyone ever observed that music emancipates the spirit? Gives wings to thought? And that the

more one becomes a musician the more one is a philosopher?" He also said, "Without music, life would be a mistake. ... I would only believe in a God who knew how to dance." That was Nietzsche!

According to Aristotle, "Music directly imitates the passions or states of the soul. ... When one listens to music that imitates a certain passion, he becomes imbued with the same passion; and if over a long time he habitually listens to music that rouses ignoble passions, his whole character will be shaped to an ignoble form."

If worldly philosophers could grasp this, surely we can grasp it even more—and I mean all of us, not just the musicians and singers and songwriters and worship leaders.

I mean that every single one of us can take hold of the power of music, examine the type of music that we listen to and use music to change the church and the world.

After all, the one thing we all want to do with a favorite song is share it. Every one of us can do that. And when we hear a song we like, we'll probably listen to it again and again.

Now, there are some things I know to the core of my being. One is that God has called us to be holy revolutionaries, people who change the world through the power of the gospel, who bring a message of liberation and freedom, who go against the grain and swim against the tide, who are prepared to glorify Him whether by life or by death, who live to make Jesus known. Revolution—in the best and godliest and purest and most exalted sense of the word—is in my blood.

Another thing I know is that God wants to use music as a major part of this holy movement.

Why should the Jesus Revolution be devoid of world-changing songs? If the Communist Revolution had its songs and the

counterculture revolution had its songs, why shouldn't the Jesus Revolution have its songs? Why shouldn't its music burst the bonds of church buildings and Christian stations and flood into every corner of our society? It can. It must!

The time is at hand for radical change. The question is: Are you called to be part of it? Are you called to be part of this Spirit-empowered movement? Are you called to be one of the lyricists or musicians or singers or worship leaders or poets or prophets or teachers or shepherds or soul-winners or writers or techies who will help lead the way?

I have often watched scenes from Woodstock with those massive crowds of lost young people seduced by sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll and Eastern religion, caught up in the sinful counterculture revolution.

When I see those crowds, my heart cries out, "Oh for a spiritual Woodstock! Oh for a generation to encounter God through holy, anointed music! Oh for leaders who will call the masses to radical surrender to the Lord! Oh, for Jesus to be the center of attention, and for the Spirit, rather than drugs, to pervade the atmosphere! Oh, for a burning word from heaven to go forth in an atmosphere like that with lasting effects that will touch the generations!"

Could it be that this moment—or better still, the birthing of a lasting movement—is at hand? Could it be that the rising tide of new songwriting and prophetic worship in the church is pushing us closer towards that goal?

I believe the Lord is saying, "Yes, it is time!" Will you add your "Amen"?

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