

Young People: Are You Amusing Yourself to Hell?

Author's Note: *If you are a parent or a youth pastor, I want to encourage you to screen this and then consider reading it to your teens and youth group. Use discretion and skim over words or sections if you think they're inappropriate or you feel uncomfortable. Just don't opt out because you feel it's premature to raise some of this subject matter with most young people. Due to the Internet, the challenge of preserving innocence has all but gone out the window for most adolescents today.*

Young person, I'd like to share something with you as a father and a former drummer in a rock band that was called The Lost Souls. We were based in Cleveland—home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and where the term “rock 'n' roll” originated.

If you ever visit that spot in Cleveland, you may climb the stairs to the cryptic shrine on the eerie top floor only to discover the tragic endings of many of celebrity's biggest stars. If you call yourself a Christian, it should cause you to feel a sense of profound sadness and also ponder the question, “Where are they now? “

In your lifetime, you may have had similar thoughts regarding the fate of people like Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson and Kurt Cobain. The *Fast and the Furious* movie star who just met his end suddenly when his vehicle was incinerated due to reckless living may also have prompted a fleeting inquiry: “I wonder where he ended up?”

After death, there are only two destinies for a person: heaven or hell. God is a loving God but He is also a just God who must punish rebellion. If someone has not repented and put their total trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, that

person is consigned to the place that Jesus described as not originally intended for humanity but created for “the devil and his angels.” It is a place of “outer darkness” and eternal torment “where the worm does not die and the fire is never quenched.” As a movie soon to be released has the title *Heaven Is for Real*, heaven most certainly exists and so does hell.

Imagine There Is No Heaven ...

John Lennon’s classic song “Imagine” may be a catchy tune denying the reality of heaven and hell, but when he was felled by an assassin’s bullet, he discovered very quickly what truth versus fiction is.

I live outside of Nashville, Tenn., in a community called Broadgate. When I pull into our neighborhood, I often tell guests that I am not going the way of the broad gate but rather through a narrow gate as Jesus instructed. Do you recall these words: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt 7: 13-14, NIV).

Not too long ago I was walking the streets at night in Amsterdam, where abortion on demand is legal, mercy killing is legal, same-sex marriage is legal, drugs are sold in coffee shops freely, on-the-street sex shows and explicit pornography are rampant, multitudes of prostitutes sit in sidewalk display windows, explicit homosexual, lesbian, bisexual and transvestite activity is celebrated, and public nudity is no big deal.

Some people react to this by saying, “Cool.” But our holy God is grieved by the wholesale immorality and debauchery that is evident everywhere. Why? Because it is this kind of moral depravity and sexual freedom gone wild that historically leads to the collapse of civilizations.

What was ironic when I was walking the street that evening was a car driving alongside me with blaring music permeating the nighttime air. The song being played on the radio was the monster hit from 1979, "Highway to Hell" by AC/DC. Check out the lyrics.

"Livin' easy/ Lovin free/ Season ticket on a one-way ride/
Askin' nothin'/ Leave me be/ Takin' everythin' in my stride/
Don't need reason/ Don't need rhyme/ Ain't nothin' I'd rather
do/ Goin' down/ Party time/ My friends gonna be there too/ I'm
on the highway to hell ... to hell ... to hell ... to hell."

You may snicker here but let's get serious for a moment. Your parents and youth leaders are given by God as gifts to you to help you avoid going down this very real "Highway to Hell." They may not always be right and sometimes they "fly off the handle" in ways they later regret, but they are present in your life to steer you away from any "Pied Pipers" in our culture who are dazzling and delicious to the ear and eye, yet seducing millions straight into hell.

Nobody's saying we need to write off all music and music videos as being corrupt, yet some of the most popular stars of pop culture today couldn't care less about your eternal destiny! Their songs and lifestyle demonstrate a callous disregard for you and your well-being.

If you get a sexually transmitted disease, find your life spinning out of control through addictions, live with a lifetime of guilt and regret due to an abortion, battle daily depression or struggle with suicide because your lifestyle is contrary to God's will, they'll absolve themselves of all responsibility because they're in the entertainment industry, laughing all the way to the bank.

It's Time to Learn to Discern

With your entire future on the line, you cannot afford to simply set your life on cruise control and amuse yourself to

hell. The word *amuse* means “to not think.” I want to challenge you to demonstrate maturity, learn to discern the evil in so much of today’s music and become part of a counterculture in your generation so you will not be duped like mind-numbed robots or zombies being led off the cliff!

God tells us in His Word, “test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21-22). Applied to music, this means that we need to categorically reject anything that condones illicit sex, violence, profanity, rejection of authority, homosexuality, sensuality, use of drugs or any sinful activity that brings about a person’s ruin—eventually if not immediately.

The Bible makes it clear that we as Christians are not to conform to the world and its value system but rather, “Come out from them and be separate” (2 Cor. 6:17).

Romans 12:2 says, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but be a new and different person with a fresh newness in all you do and think” (Living Bible).

“Oh I don’t pay any attention to the lyrics or the lifestyles of these performers, I just like the cool music pumped through my iPod and headphones when I exercise or kick back to relax.”

Don’t deceive yourself! Just like when you eat a box of Cracker Jacks and find the surprise in the box, so too is there a spirit influencing performers and their music that will be transmitted subconsciously to you.

Here’s the deal: Not all pop singers and songs are perverted and immoral. Yet Christians living in a pagan culture like ours today requires us to be uncompromisingly discerning with our musical tastes. Also, it is essential that we remain compassionate in our attitude toward unbelieving performers, no matter how degenerate they may be, and regularly intercede for their salvation from their jaded and confused lives. No one is beyond God’s saving grace!

Naming Names

Now let's get more specific. While it's good to remind ourselves that God had mercy on us, so too should we pray that God would have mercy on people such as the following while not shrinking back from exposing their wicked ways. Scripture tells us, "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them" (Eph 5:11, ESV).

- **Britney Spears**—This twice-married young woman's previous album, "Femme Fatale," primarily focused on one subject: sex. Her latest offering is *Britney Jean*, with "Work B--" as the breakout hit and her posing topless for the album cover. Rapper T.I. joins her on a song with lyrics that are explicit vulgarity and too explicit to print. There are graphic references to oral sex and sadomasochism.
- **Justin Bieber**—This teen heartthrob cleverly camouflages his image while drifting into all sorts of behind-the-scenes sordid activity. As a 19-year-old he boasted on stage this month, "I f- b--es!" He appears completely naked, except for a guitar concealing his privates, and broadcasts it to the world.
- **Miley Cyrus**—Little needs to be said after her scandalous twerking performance at the MTV awards. Her current smash hit features her in a video completely nude swinging on a wrecking ball while provocatively licking a hammer, and her newly released video for "Adore You" shows the 20-year-old performer beneath the sheets and simulating pleasuring herself.
- **Eminem**—*Rolling Stone* magazine features him and lays out his life story, which is a tragic soap opera of drugs, alcohol, depression and almost suicide. His latest album, which is a blockbuster hit, is laced with constant filth and four letter words to shock, degrade and celebrate rage.
- **Lady Gaga**—Her new album, which features her nearly naked on its cover, includes song after song boasting f- and

s-words, other profanities, hookers and shout-outs to Ecstasy and marijuana. She sings of “Sex Dreams” and in one song declares “Make deals with every devil in sight!” Wasn’t it clever of her to showcase herself with the Muppets for a holiday special to begin capturing our little ones as followers?

- **Nicki Minaj**—*The New York Times* said she is “the most influential female rapper of all time.” She was featured on *American Idol* as a judge earlier this year. Yet this clever performer spews f-words, profanities and foul references to women’s body parts with no sense of shame. And need I say it—yes, she declares herself a Christian!
- **R. Kelly**—This megastar whom I personally believe is possessed by a demon of lust, just released his latest album entitled, *Black Panties*. Foul, crude, obscene, perverse.

For the record, I do not and will not listen to any of the above music. My careful research enables me to be a “watchman on the wall,” helping you as young people avoid the minefield that is before you.

There is no doubt that the above performers are charismatic, magnetic in their personalities and extremely gifted as writers, singers and gyrating dancers. While we pray for God’s mercy on their lives, we cannot and must not shield ourselves from what they are doing to the lives and futures of millions of young people around the world.

I conclude where we started. Young person: Are you amusing yourself to hell? Isn’t it time to turn from worldly counterfeits to celebrate music as God intended it—to lift our spirits, inspire us and enable us to better glorify Him?

In the closing days of the Roman empire, “bizarreness masqueraded as creativity.” As we are sadly witnessing disintegration in much of our culture today, may we be like the courageous 1st-century Christians who burned publicly all

their ungodly materials (see Acts 19:19) and honored God in all aspects of their lives. It was said of this radical breed of believers, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (Acts 17:6, NKJV).

No more straddling the fence! It’s time to close a chapter of any compromise in your life and join the company of the committed as we close out 2013.

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