

# SECULAR MUSIC

The topic of secular music in the life of the believer makes for an interesting discussion. When the issue is brought up you will hear everything from “All secular music is of the devil and should be avoided” to “It is alright to listen to whatever kind of music you desire.” Even though we are not talking about sacred music in this presentation, we can look at it as an example of how controversial this issue is among the saints. There are some denominations that believe it is not Biblical to use musical instruments in worship while other denominations have a full orchestra ministering during the worship experience. Even within some congregations there are those who feel the congregation should just sing hymns and anthems while other want to sing praise and worship songs. Some worshippers want a low-key service while others want an up-beat tempo where they can stand and clap their hands. If there is so much controversy surrounding sacred music in the church, you can imagine how diverse the attitudes are concerning believers listening to secular music. In this study we will see that the Bible has a lot to say about music. It is interesting to note that it doesn't say anything about Christians or religious music. The Bible either talks about either music in general or music that glorifies the Lord.

## MUSIC IS GOD'S GIFT TO HIS CREATION

God gave music to man for two reasons. The first is to worship Him (Ps. 150:1-6) and the second is for enjoyment. Music is God's gift to man as a way for him to get more enjoyment out of life. One of the ways that Solomon enjoyed the life that God had given to him was by surrounding himself with the most talented men and women singers (Eccle. 2:8). When the prodigal son came back home, the father had a great celebration which included music to enhance the festivities. God's gift of music to man has two beneficial qualities for man. First, God uses music to reduce stress and bring relief to one's tormented soul (1 Sam. 16:14-23). When Saul was tormented by an evil spirit, David would play on his harp and “relief would come to Saul, he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.” (vs. 23 NIV). Second, God uses music to help people express their emotions. God gave the Israelites the Book of Psalms as a way to deal with whatever emotions they were experiencing at the time. According to C.I. Scofield, the psalms were poems “sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments.”<sup>1</sup> There were psalms that dealt with comfort (23), depression (42), hope (13), joy (33), trust (37) and so on. As a way to help them deal with their emotions, God provided music to help them along life's journey.

## THE CORRUPTION OF GOD'S GIFT

In Ezekiel 28 we read about the fall of Satan, Isaiah refers to this individual as Lucifer (Isa. 14:12-17). Ezekiel says that the “workmanship of his tabrets (tambourines) and pipes (holes is musical pipes or flutes)<sup>2</sup> was prepared in thee the day that thou wast created” (vs. 13) John MacArthur says, “It also says something else about him, now listen to this. "The workmanship of your timbrels and flutes was prepared in thee in the day that you were created." Did you know that he was the supreme musician of heaven? Did you know that Satan was probably the heavenly choir director? He was the supreme being of God's creation and he was the beauty of all of heaven. He sealed it up, he was the sum of all of God's perfection and his music was beyond comprehension, that will give you a little idea about how God feels about good music.”<sup>3</sup>

When we deal with the question of whether it is alright to listen to secular music, the answer is first that God is the Creator of all music both secular and sacred. Listening to music is like eating food. It is alright to eat food, but eating to the point of gluttony is a sin. It is alright to listen to all types of music as long as it has not be corrupted by man. Lucifer played beautiful music in heaven (Ezek. 28:13), but when he rebelled against God he became corrupted and his music also became corrupted (17-18). He has been working through man ever since to corrupt God's beautiful gift of music.

1. God's gift of music is corrupted the message is not positive. There are many secular songs that have a positive message. Such as a songs by the Winston's titled “Color Him Father” or a song by Larry Graham, “One in a Million”, or Bill Wither's “Lovely Day.” On the other hand, there are songs that promote the wrong message or a negative message such as Stevie Wonder's song “Higher Ground” which promotes the concept of reincarnation. The Bible says that we should test the spirits (1 Jn. 4:1-3).
2. God's gift of music is corrupted if the lyrics are ungodly. Lyrics are ungodly when they include profanity, derogatory remarks about the opposite sex, or blasphemous statements. Proverbs 4:23 says that we should guard our hearts, one way that we do this is by watching what we allow ourselves to hear. Jesus said if we see and listen to evil things there our hearts will be filled with darkness (Matt. 6:22-23).
3. God's gift of music is corrupted if it promotes a sinful lifestyle. As believers we should not listen to or endorse any music that promotes sinful lifestyles such as homosexuality, drunkenness, drugs or sex outside of marriage. In Romans 1:24-32, Paul condemn individuals who are living an ungodly lifestyle. In verse 32 he says that not only do they live an ungodly life but they encourage others who do it. When we listen to music that promotes an ungodly lifestyle, we are giving our consent to it whether we agree with it or not.

In addition to the three points listed above, the believer should ask himself two further questions;

4. Does it hinder your spiritual growth? When I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, I came out of a background of drugs and music. It was important for my spiritual growth that I make a clean break from that lifestyle. As a result, I gave all of my albums away, and believe me I had a great collection of music. But it was important for my growth as a new believer, if I kept on listening to them, it would have been a strong pull back into that old lifestyle. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:12, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient...” Even though it was alright (lawful) for me to listen to secular music, it would not have been to my spiritual advantage (expedient) to do so.
5. Does it turn your heart away from the Lord? Many secular songs deal with the realities of life in a positive way, such as marriage, character, politics, social issues, the environment, etc. On the other hand, some songs incite lust in our hearts and trigger memories of sinful desires that turn our hearts away from the Lord.

## CONCLUSION

Given a choice, most of the music listened to by believers should be focused on glorifying the Lord (1 Cor. 10:31). Since we are created to glorify Him, one way to do it is to listen to music that is centered around the things of God. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel used music for the most part to worship the Lord (Ps. 4:1; 6:1, 54, 55; 61:1; 67:1; 76:1). In the New Testament the believer is instructed to speak to others “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

There is nothing wrong with a believer listening to secular music, especially if it lines up with the three points and two questions in the preceding section. Furthermore, Paul gives us another litmus test in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, wherever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” If the words to the secular songs is in accordance with this verse, there is nothing wrong with listening to it.

There is some masterfully composed music by secular composers that enhances the ability to concentrate. Many people who are studying can get far more out of that time when they have a beautifully composed piece of music in the background.

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<sup>1</sup> C.I. Scofield, The New Scofield Reference Bible, Introduction to the Book of Psalms, [Oxford University Press, 1967] p. 601

<sup>2</sup> Jamison, Faucett, Brown Commentary. Ezekiel 28:13

<sup>3</sup> John MacArthur, Satan, Is He? Who Is He? [www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/1354.HTM](http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/1354.HTM) -