THE EFFECTS OF MUSIC ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

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Music. Everyone enjoys listening to some genre of music. There are many aspects of music, including the beat of the music, lyrics, goals of the music, concerts, music videos, and, of course, the musicians themselves. Some music carries positive goals and others carry negative goals. Music sends out many messages to the listeners. These messages can be positive and strengthen a Christian lifestyle, or they can be negative and weaken a Christian lifestyle. The messages promoted by all aspects of certain secular music directly contradict the beliefs, ethics, and morals of Christians, therefore affecting the lifestyles of those who become involved with these types of music.

According to Cèsar Franck, a mystic composer, music was originally created for religious purposes. Music was often a prayer sung to God. Other times it was used to praise God or to celebrate the beauty of religion (Lingerman 141). As Corinne Heline says, “The highest mission of music is to serve as a link between God and men (and women). It builds a bridge over which angelic hosts can come closer to mankind” (Lingerman 139). God has inspired some music. This music raises spirits and can change attitudes and behaviors without a realization of what is happening (Lingerman 143). Pure instrumental music evokes more emotions and feelings than does music with lyrics. This can cause soul searching (Cole 3). Beautiful and smooth sounding music can cause contemplation. Contemplation brings the most happiness when caused by a movement of the Holy Spirit. This elegant music most often causes contemplation of faith (Cole 2).
Contemporary Christian music glorifies and exalts God. The lyrics of these songs bring people closer to God. They also show love for God, oneself, and fellow people. Sometimes people are led to repent and to learn more about God as a result of listening to this type of music. Christian concerts are similar to large worship services held to praise God and thank Him for what He has done instead of a gathering to idolize the musician. They are very spiritual. The musician will often give his/her testimony and share a little about his/her own personal relationship with God (Littleton and Peters 94). Listening to pure and wholesome music represents a lifestyle of virtue. It is also a great encouragement to love and think about God (Cole 2). It must be said though that Christian music, when sung purely for pleasure, is unable to disperse the message it is meant to send. It only arouses emotion in the listener when it is sung with meaning (Cole 3).

On the other hand, there are genres of music that do not promote the Christian lifestyle, primarily rock. Rock has been a controversial issue since its beginnings in 1952 (Littleton and Peters 13). Even the earliest artists discreetly sang suggestive lyrics dealing with sex, drugs, and alcohol (Littleton and Peters 14). The melody, harmony, and rhythm of rock all have negative influences solely because of their anti-gospel lyrics (Cole 1). The beat and notes in the music were originally embedded into the world by God Himself. God originally made music itself. Therefore, the only thing that makes rock music become evil is the lyrics incorporated with the beat and musical notes (Littleton and Peters 117).
One message sent out by rock and other types of secular music is violence in many forms. These acts are repeatedly pounded into the listeners’ mind until actions are taken upon what is going on in their heads. The sad and depressing lyrics of the music often add to or cause depression making the desire to commit suicide even greater (Littleton and Peters 55). Subliminal messages within the lyrics of the songs are thought to have driven many fans to commit suicide. Titles of these songs also suggest that this action be taken (Worsnop 381). Another contribution to this message is that the musicians themselves give publicized statements promoting the idea that teens in particular commit suicide and other violent acts (Littleton and Peters 56).

Today’s popular music openly promotes drugs and alcohol. Musicians openly confess their addictions to drugs and alcohol in public appearances and in interviews (Littleton and Peters 41). Musician Boy George once said that musicians needed the fame to feel loved. When that does not fill the emptiness, they just take drugs to fill the void (Littleton and Peters 44). Since musicians serve as major role models to many teens today, the drugs and certain brands of alcohol that musicians use are popular with teens. These products are thought to be the coolest (Littleton and Peters 51). The Bible, in “Proverbs” 20:1, says that a person who drinks is not wise (“Proverbs 20” 855). In “Galatians”, God says not to obtain the deeds of the flesh but to obtain the fruits of the Spirit. Included in the deeds of the flesh is drunkenness but one is to obtain self-control instead which is a fruit of the Spirit (Littleton and Peters 39). One musician is said to have stated that he/she only sings about what goes on in his/her daily life. So what occurs in his/her daily life must include lust, drugs, and drunkenessness because these are the things he/she sings about in his/her songs (Littleton and Peters 41).
Teens and adults alike idolize musicians to the point that when a musician dies the fans mourn and grieve as if he/she was family. Sometimes these deaths even cause a fan to commit suicide (Littleton and Peters 51). These musicians, who are idolized by the world, lack joy, peace, and happiness. Their music often reflects this lacking. The reason for their lack of joy, peace, and happiness is that they do not have God in their lives and there is no real peace, joy, or satisfaction without God present (Littleton and Peters 43). Rock musicians have bad, anti-Christ attitudes that openly tell fans that they do not support or even have any Christian beliefs or thoughts (Littleton and Peters 48). Most of these musicians openly confess not only their disbelief in God but also the worldly and non-Christian messages they are sending out to their listeners. They openly admit they know that they are promoting drugs, alcohol, sex, and violence. Many believe there is no such thing as sin and that there is no purpose to life, so there should be no standards, rules, or guidelines. These characteristics are what makes idolizing a secular musician dangerous to a Christian’s lifestyle (Littleton and Peters 45). “Psalms” 14:1 says that only fools say that there is no God (Littleton and Peters 41).

Secular music today often brutally attacks and is out to destroy the family unit. One rock musician even said himself that the whole purpose of his music was to offend parents (Littleton and Peters 58). “Ephesians” 6:1 says that children are to obey their parents and that they are to honor them. If they obey this rule, then God has promised that they will live long lives (“Ephesians 6” 1578). Music has altered many people’s views of human sexuality. Music makes sex appear to be a casual thing and tempts teens and adults alike to have sexual relations.
outside of marriage (Littleton and Peters 40). In 1 “Thessalonians”, the Bible says to control the body in an honorable way and not in a lustful way as heathens do (“1 Thessalonians 4” 1596). Sex in marriage is sacred and God meant for it to be a gift to a spouse. Having sex outside marriage, premarital sex, takes away the sacredness and keeps it from being a special union between just two people who truly love each other (“Dear Sam” 1597).

Some music promotes and makes homosexuality seem acceptable in today’s society (Littleton and Peters 39). God clearly thinks that homosexuality is a perversion and is in no way acceptable. Why then should Christians, who are supposed to be followers of Christ, accept what He deems despicable (“Dear Sam” 1571)? In “Leviticus” it is said that no man should lie with a man the way that one lies with a woman (“Leviticus” 144). If two are caught in the act of homosexuality, both of them are to be put to death (“Leviticus” 147).

Another controversial issue with music is the packaging and advertisements of music albums. The packages and graphics in today’s music industry promote many of the same non-Christian messages as the lyrics of the music themselves (Littleton and Peters 64). The packages can be occultic, giving glory and power to other beings than the one true God. More often than not these packages contain graphic sexual content (Littleton and Peters 65). Nudity and other signs of illicit sex appear on many album covers and are used in advertisements that rapidly sell these albums (Littleton and Peters 68). A study shows that 68% of sexual abuse occurs after the abuser has studied pornographic material (Littleton and Peters 70).
Another concern, which most people do not even think about when the effects of music are mentioned, is the concerts performed by these Christian bashing musicians. The setting of these concerts and the actions of the musicians themselves make it seem that anything is acceptable when no such thing is true. There is little or no supervision and lots of peer pressure which make these concerts a dangerous place, physically and spiritually, for Christian believers (Littleton and Peters 75). Music is often so loud at these concerts that ear plugs must be worn to prevent permanent ear damage. A study has shown that the louder the music the more negative the influence it gives off (Littleton and Peters 71).

Today, the music industry has music videos to accompany the greatest chart-toppers. 57.3 million people receive Music Television (MTV) through their local cable company or satellite. These videos send out confusing messages to teenagers. Some of these messages include murder, violence, drug abuse, sadism, arrogance, irreverence, perversion, and pornography. A 1992 study, held by a Washington-based Center for Media and Public Affairs, showed that more violence is seen on MTV than on three major networks surveyed over a period of time. The most violent music video in history is said to be Guns ‘N Roses’ “You Could Be Mine.” “…The messages don’t have to be violent to encourage certain behavior. What is more important is that such images are seen as normal” (Clark 276). Using sex to sell recordings, music videos dehumanize women and make them appear to be just sex objects to be used by men. Viewers think that the videos
depict what the real world is like, so they act upon what they are viewing and ultimately make bad decisions (Clark 276). Surprisingly, it has been proven that music has more influence than television. Therefore, putting the two together would cause a much greater impact by the combining of the influences of both television and music (Littleton and Peters 52).

In “Colossians” 3:5-8, Christians are told they are to rid themselves from worldly things, such as lust, impurity, and filthy language. All of which are included in secular music today (“Colossians 3” 1590). To live a Christian lifestyle one must try with all his/her might to alleviate as much sin as possible. God has given the Holy Spirit to help with this endeavor. Sin shall enslave no more (“Romans 8” 1517). Christians are also to think about only the things that are pure and righteous in God’s sight. Are things, such as lust, impurity, and filthy language, pure and righteous in God’s sight (“Phillipians 4” 1584)?

Secular music does sometimes possess good qualities. Long-standing musicians usually have a few songs that do not carry many controversial issues, many of which are songs that will never be forgotten. Many secular musicians give morally correct social commentaries. They often publicly speak out against things they do not agree with and speak for the things they do agree with. They often speak out against issues dealing with racism, injustice, and nuclear weapons (Littleton and Peters 83). Some secular musicians have honorable intentions. They only intend to provide entertainment and do not mean to
cause any harm by it (Littleton and Peters 86). Some bands forbid their band members, crew, and management from sexual exploitation and drug abuse. Some band members even claim to have been born again and are now Christians themselves (Littleton and Peters 87). Listening to secular music with good and wholesome lyrics can often bring relief and relaxation after a hard day at work or school. Wholesome music like this can lift one’s spirits giving him/her the boost he/she needs to strive to be the best person in God that he/she can be and to be a witness to others he/she comes in contact with in his/her daily activities (Littleton and Peters 86). Often, questions that a good Christian should ask about their society in order to decide for themselves what they believe and what is right and wrong, are asked in the lyrics of secular music. The only problem is that the lyrics, more often than not, give the wrong answers. These answers may seem right in the eyes of the world but rarely are seen as correct through the eyes of God and one should never question God’s ways and authority. Everyone must ask questions for himself before he finds the true way in life, which is through Jesus Christ (Littleton and Peters 88).

Music is used around the world for many different venues, such as entertainment, relaxation, therapy, and employment. Since music is so widely used as a tool and sometimes as a way of life, it affects many people, Christians and non-Christians alike. Since most secular music contradicts and influences people against the will of God, Christians should be careful of what music they listen to so as not to be tempted to the point
of deceiving God. Non-Christians, in the same respect, should filter what they listen to so maybe they, too, will hear the truth about God and how He wants them to live their lives and not how the world would have them to live. The Bible states that living in the ways of this world will not pay for an eternal life in heaven. Only the blood of Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for everyone’s sins, can make a way to eternity. Some people believe that the many different messages sent out by secular music, such as sex, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, disobedience, and other sinful acts, cause the world to be the way it is today. If the secular ways of this world today should be stopped and if music has so many effects on one’s lifestyle, than should not the lyrics of music be monitored more closely and should parents not become more aware of the music their children are listening to and also to the music that they listen to themselves? What will the world come to if precautionary actions are not taken and what will it take to rid the world from its sinful ways?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


