

Is God Using Contemporary Christian Music?

(Some Basic Observations and Conclusions)

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Since Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) began to creep into the Church during the era of the 70's, we have seen the expansion, explosion, and exploitation of this type of music into the 21st century, in which we live. The Biblical axiom is true; a little leaven eventually leavens the whole lump (Gal. 5:9). Although many followers of this new beat and sound claim that God is blessing this type of musical expression, God will have the final say on the matter. So let's discover what God's Word teaches about music that reflects the same values, vices, and cultural expressions of the world. Is God using Contemporary Christian Music for His glory and are souls being saved because of this new type of music?

Can God Use Anything?

God never approves of His people using anything that is inherently evil to bring about spiritual results (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 145:17). God cannot and does not use anything to further His work of the salvation of souls (Prov. 6:16-19; 8:13; Zech. 8:17; Rev. 2:6, 15). God hates certain things (Rev. 2:6, 15) and will not use them in His work and for His cause. Many conclude that if good comes out of something (getting people into the church), by using methods that may be questionable (the use of the rock culture), that God can turn this evil around for good and use anything for His glory. However, God has always put a difference between the clean and unclean (Lev. 10:10) or the light and darkness (2 Cor. 6:14; Rom. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:5). Beware of turning the tables upside down!

Can God use anything as contemporary artists claim? Can good come out of something that is inherently evil and wrong? Let us take this argument and run away with it. Can God use Crack Cocaine? Should we use cocaine as a legitimate method to win people to Christ? Can God use pornography? Should we use pornography as a legitimate method to win people to Christ? Can God use gambling? Can God use terrorism? If some good acts of humanity came out of people's lives following the 911 tragedy, does this make the action something that is useable and acceptable to God? Can God use cannibalism as a means of witnessing to the heathen? If a Christian woman could witness to people and win people to Christ by becoming a prostitute, would that make her actions and method acceptable to God? If people were saved in concentration camps, does this mean that this method becomes an acceptable practice that can be legitimately used by God and justify the evil of such a practice? This argument is ludicrous to say the least. It breaks down on every level – logically, spiritually, and Biblically.

Romans 8:28

Don't abuse Romans 8:28 at this point – “all things work together for good.” Some of the contemporary artists will still argue that men, by changing the words and adding them to the perverted sound of rock music, can use what was once evil and work it together for good. This is man's reasoning (fleshly wisdom – 2 Cor. 2:12) - not Biblical reasoning.

First, we must remember that good does not originate from evil. Good can only be linked to truth and righteousness (Prov. 2:9, 20; Ps. 52:3). Secondly, God cannot bring clean things out of those things which are inherently evil. Job 14:4 asks, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.” God has not changed His viewpoint on this matter. Thirdly, Roman 8:28 is referring to God doing the good – not a contemporary artist using rock music to bring about good things. Fourth, not everything is good; it only works together for our good. This is a point missed by the proponent of CCM (Contemporary Christian Music). Fifth, Romans 8:28 is talking about how a believer's trials (not rock music or CCM) work together for good in order to conform us to Christ's image (Rom. 8:29).

Pagan worship does not conform us to God's image, nor has God ever accepted pagan worship, or reworked pagan worship for His glory (Malachi 1:8; 1 Cor. 10:20). Difficult trials or tests should ultimately bring us closer to Christ's image, but the acceptance and promotion of unrighteous things within our life does not make us more like Christ.

Sixth, Romans 8:28 does not give the Christian a license to do what is wrong in order to achieve good results (Rom. 6:1 – “God forbid”). The Bible warns us to never use a passage of Scripture, like Romans 8:28, to promote and fulfill our own selfish agenda. When we do this, we “corrupt the word of God” (2 Cor. 2:17) and are charged with huckstering the Bible or “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2).

Someone wrote:

“Before God can deliver us we must undeceive ourselves.”

This can only be done when we handle the Word of God sincerely, open up our hearts to truth, fully surrender, and place ourselves under God's complete authority (Rom. 12:1-2; James 4:7).

Do Right!

Bob Jones once said:

“It's never right to do wrong in order to do right.”

He's right! In trying to do wrong, in order to do right, you tempt God (Matt. 4:7) and become unfruitful in your living and practice (2 Pet. 1:8-9). Romans 8:28 has nothing to do with using wrong patterns of worship, so God can miraculously turn them around for good. God does not bring good out of the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11) or the rebellious sound that mimics the world system and old way of life (1 Pet. 1:14).

Good comes out of good, bad comes out of bad, and never the two shall meet. Since this is true, we must always do right! Don't get into the habit of asking, "Is it right for me?" Ask yourself, "Is it right?"

Deuteronomy 6:18 echoes this unchanging principle:

"And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord: that it may be well with thee ..."

Wendell Heller once said:

"We are to do right because it is right."

God does not compromise any issue and neither should we. We should always be honest, fair, consistent, and live with integrity before God (Eph. 6:14). Therefore, we must do right and not seek to use a worldly medium to win souls.

Remember:

"There is never a right way to do a wrong thing."

Likewise:

"It's never right to do a good thing in a wrong way."

Lastly:

"There is only one way to be right and many ways to be wrong."

The right thing to do is to do the right thing. It is not enough to do a right thing (worship and evangelism); we must also do it in the right way! We are called upon to "strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5) which means to follow God's rules for righteousness, holiness, and godliness in everything that we do. We are not to play by our own set of rules, but by God's rules. A song may be directed to God in worship but at the same time the worship must be acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1-2).

The idea that is being promoted today is this; even if one is disobedient, God still loves him; therefore, it should not matter how a person worships or what kind music he listens to in his Christian life. This is a warped ideal. God's love for us as His children is not conditioned upon our obedience or disobedience (Rom. 8:38-39); however, our expression of love toward God is connected with our obedience to Him and practicing what is right (John 14:15; 1 John 5:2).

Right is always right and wrong is always wrong and never shall the two be reconciled! We are commanded to choose that which is good and refuse to do the evil. Psalm 34:14, "Depart from evil, and do good..." Psalm 37:27, "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore."

R. B. Ouellette once remarked:

"When you have a choice between doing right and doing wrong, the only good time to do right is right away. It gets harder the longer you wait."

Good advice!

Free

The Bible records, at one point in the history of God's people, that "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). This seems to be the relativistic emphasis of today in the Church, as a false antinomianism (no law) and libertinism (radical freedom) is being promoted within the ranks of the Church, a false freedom and wild fire that the Bible never endorses. Yes, we are free ("free indeed" – John 8:36), which means we are free to live separated and be liberated from the sinful lifestyles of our past (Eph. 2:1-2). Therefore, the real emphasis on liberty is not the freedom to live, as we once lived, but to live a new way of life that is liberated from the old way of life. Our choice now becomes God's choice and we live under His authority, as the "Lord's freeman" (1 Cor. 7:22), while remaining liberated from sin and the old way of life.

Christians in the contemporary movement often say, "It feels right to me and is good for me," when referring to their form of worship and acceptance of rock music. This is the philosophy of *relativism* which concludes that truth, or what is right and wrong can be flexible, much like a rubber band, and that everyone can condone their own belief systems. Of course, living as we please, without any checks and balances is disguising and perverting the message of true Christian liberty (Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16).

Let us never forget that the unchanging message of God's grace, which portrays God hating sin by penalizing Christ in our place, teaches us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). The message of grace does not make us liberal; grace liberates us from sin. The message of the cross and grace is clear: God hates sin and so should we. Grace motivates us to hate sin, as God hated sin, when He allowed His Son, Jesus Christ, die the sinner's death.

Many claim that that grace means freedom, and freedom means we can now listen, follow, and promote CCM. This is grace gone wild! If this is your conclusion, then you have misunderstood and distorted the true message behind grace, which does not mean freedom from all laws, but a newfound freedom to live above the world's standards and ungodliness.

Ernest Pickering has wisely said:

"The New Testament is not all about what we can do, but it is also about what we cannot do."

The instruction and discipline of grace does not grant us a free-for-all lifestyle or a "live and let live" philosophy. Living under grace (Rom. 6:14), as a new way of life, results in believers practicing holiness (1 Pet. 1:14-16; 2 Cor. 7:1), separating from and not supporting apostasy or unrighteousness in any way (2 Cor. 6:14-17); respecting their bodies as the dwelling place of God (1 Cor. 6:19-20), repudiating fleshly lusts (1 Pet.

2:11), refusing to conform to the world (Rom. 12:2), not fellowshiping with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11) and proving all things (1 Thess. 5:21).

Winston Churchill once said:

“I spent the first twenty-five years of my life wanting more freedom, and the next twenty-five years of my life wanting more structure, and the last twenty-five years of my life realizing that structure is freedom.”

Does God Only Look at the Heart?

1 Samuel 16:7 says: “But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.”

Many contemporary Christians have used this verse as a proof text for using rock music as a medium to win the lost. Somehow, if a person has a genuine desire to win souls, if they have good intentions in what they are doing, if their heart is right, then anything goes. They can use rock music and other worldly allurements or enticements to see people saved. Many Christians conclude that the type of music they listen to and worship with does not matter to God, if their heart is right. Of course, this is like saying it's okay to mix rat poison with your apple sauce, if you have convinced yourself that you are trying to build up a resistance to rat poison.

If God only looks at the heart then why does He reveal later in 1 Samuel 15:23 that “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness.” Any truism can be distorted and taken out of context. The point is this; God is looking for a pure heart and one that is free from hypocrisy. The outward physical stature of a person does not matter in relationship to a person's inward purity and personal relationship with God. However, sin does matter before God! In fact, what we do with our bodies (our ears, eyes, hands, feet) does matter with God (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Thess. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:21). What we listen to does matter to God.

“Oh be careful little ears what you hear,
Oh be careful little ears what you hear,
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love,
So be careful little ears what you hear.”

We must remember that the heart can be deceitful (Jer. 17:9) and become defiled (Ps. 51:10). We can err in our hearts (Heb. 3:10). Therefore, truth should be our focus and not the whimsical feelings and fleshly tastes of our heart (John 17:17). *Truth should confirm the heart – the heart should not confirm truth.* Granted, your heart may be sincere in what you are doing, even when your actions might be wrong. The old saying is still true; “we can be sincere, but sincerely wrong.” I believe this is the case with some contemporary, Christian, rock artists who are attempting to use rock music in order to win precious souls to Christ.

Imitators

God is not only concerned about reaching people; He's also concerned with how we reach people. God is not only interested in results; He is interested in how we achieve the results. The *command* for evangelism (Mark 16:15) is just as important as the *way* of evangelism (1 Pet. 3:15). We are to be holy in "all manner of conversation" (or living - 1 Pet. 1:15) – this includes evangelism. We are to imitate God's holiness – "Be ye holy; for I am holy."

God has called us to imitate Him and His ways (Eph. 5:1), which applies to our outreach and ministry toward the unsaved. We are to be imitators of God and not imitators of the unsaved world. God has never invited us to be charmed by the world's delights (Jer. 5:31) as we endeavor to reach the masses. In short, we are never to conform to the world's standard in evangelizing the lost and teaching discipleship to new converts (Rom. 12:2). We should never allow the world to squeeze us into its mold.

Someone wrote:

"Identification with the world and its needs is one thing, imitation of the world and its foolishness is quite another."

We are to be fishers of men (Matt. 4:19) but not compromisers with men (1 Cor. 3:3). Although we can be *innovative* while witnessing to the lost (1 Cor. 9:22), God has never said we are to become *worldly* (Titus 2:12), while casting out the Gospel net. We are to be salt and light in our message, music, and manner of living (Matt. 5:13-14). The unsaved should see a difference in our lives since we are a "new creature" or creation in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). When the unsaved see Christians imitate everything that they do, they will see no reason to change their lives and live for God's glory.

I recall listening to a highly successful, secular, rock artist talking about some Christian rock band that he heard playing. His words were very interesting and pointed, as he remarked about the CCM band. He commented, "I'm not impressed at all with their cheap imitation of rock music." A lost world has never been impressed with the worldly brand of Christianity, which acts and looks like itself in every conceivable way. We must remember that it's the *difference* (a new way of life) that impacts, or attracts the unsaved to Christ and Christianity and not a *sameness*, or similarity, with the unsaved lifestyle (grotesque body piercings, rock music, tattoos, immodest dress, immorality, etc.).

The unsaved are looking for abundant life (John 10:10) - not the same kind of life. If they see no difference between Christians and non-Christians, or if the distinction is blurred between light and darkness, it's then that the liberating message of the Gospel is lost, which declares that Jesus came to save people "from their sins" (Matt. 1:21) - not in their sins. More damage than good has been done to the cause of Christ since the intervention of the rock idiom in church life and evangelism.

Dr. Vance Havner said it best, when he made this conclusion about imitating the lost to win them to Christ: “The idea that we must imitate the world in clothes, language, and music to make the gospel attractive is not divine but demonic. To begin with, the gospel was never meant for entertainment. The sin against the Holy Spirit lay in ascribing the work of God to the devil. Is it not equally possible to ascribe the work of the devil to God? I do not believe that the spiritually sensitive soul can equate gospel jazz and hippie hootenannies with the hallelujahs of the redeemed.”

Strange

1 Peter 4:4 declares:

“Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”

Are you strange? When we live a righteous life, the unsaved will think that we are “strange,” since we refuse to live their own brand of lifestyle. They won’t think we are “groovy” and “secular” like them, but strange. The unsaved should see a marked contrast and difference in our lives, if we are truly living for Christ and His glory. We must seek to maintain our salt and light testimony (Matt. 5:13-14), if we are going to effectively share the transforming message of the Gospel.

Whenever we promote worldly things in our personal lives, churches, and evangelistic outreach ministries, we become less salty and radiate less light before an unsaved and watching world. When we adopt the world’s standards, our light begins to flicker, and we lose our testimony and effectiveness in winning the lost. We are called upon to be the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:14) instead of living in the shadows of worldliness. God wants us to act like “children of the day” (1 Thess. 5:5) instead of children of the devil (John 8:44). He wants us “walk in the light” (1 John 1:7) instead of the night.

“How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Stepping in the light, stepping in the light,
How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Led in paths of light.”

Friend of Sinners

Jesus was a *friend* of sinners (Luke 7:34) but He did not *compromise* with sinners (Heb. 7:25). When the Bible says that Jesus was “separate from sinners” in Hebrews 7:25, it means that He did not participate with their sins, or associate with their sinful lifestyle in any way. The same should be true of Christians today in their outreach ministry to the lost. Jesus *witnessed* to the sinner without becoming *worldly* like the sinner. Jesus *cared* for people without *compromising* with the people. We are called to be like Christ and live undefiled from the ways of sinners. As we *witness* to the lost we should not *walk* like the lost (1 Cor. 3:3 – “walk as men”). This means we can effectively see souls saved without compromising with the culture of our age.

We can do it Christ's way, instead of the carnal way. I can't imagine Jesus being part of a CCM rock band and playing the perverted sounds that stem from a cultural revolution of sex, drugs, and rebellion against God.

"I have one deep, supreme desire,
that I may be like Jesus.
To this I fervently aspire,
that I may be like Jesus.
I want my heart His throne to be,
so that a watching world may see
His likeness shining forth in me.
I want to be like Jesus."

Spiritual Taste Buds

Isaiah 5:20

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

This might be understood as losing one's spiritual taste buds. We can eventually lose our taste for righteousness and God's standard when we continually imbibe contemporary music and worship. We can confuse God's order of things (1 Cor. 14:40). We can become like the frog in hot water. We can become immune to worldly things and lose our sensitivity to what is righteous and holy. Desensitization occurs over time to those who continually seek and listen to the rebellious sound of a perverted age.

It has been wisely observed:

"Almost any behavior or practice begins to look and sound normal if you are exposed to enough of it."

Keep your heart right (Prov. 4:23) and remain sensitive to worldliness and sin.

"I want a principle within
Of jealous, godly fear,
A sensibility of sin,
A pain to feel it near;
I want the first approach to feel
Of pride, or fond desire,
To catch the wandering of my will,
And quench the kindling fire."

God's Results

We must learn to do God's work in God's way, so that we will always get God's results and not man's results. Therefore, our *methodology* and *philosophy* must be Biblical and

holy in order to maintain God's holy standard (1 Pet. 1:16) and promote holiness in the hearts and lives of the generation we are seeking to reach (2 Cor. 7:1). We must remember that results can be attributed to man's ways or doings (Isa. 3:8; Isa. 55:8; Prov. 14:12; 16:25; Matt. 13:20) instead of God. In fact, there are those today, who make the serious blunder of explaining the worldly works of men, as being the genuine work of God (Matt. 7:22). This is a great travesty or mockery of God's holiness. Nevertheless, we know that only God can work in the hearts of people and change lives (1 Cor. 3:7; Nehemiah. 8:9) – not man and his carnal diversions.

The mixture of entertaining and worldly music with God's Word can produce manmade results instead of God's results. In fact, musical rebellion does not produce the environment for true Biblical repentance to occur in the heart of the unsaved (2 Cor. 7:10; Luke 24:47). This is why there are many "way side" hearts who remain hardened in their sins, just like trampled soil (Matt. 13:19). Likewise, there are many "stony" hearts where repentance cannot properly take root, much like stony soil, which cannot effectively maintain established roots.

In Matthew 13:21, Jesus spoke of this person:

"Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

These are some of the problems that exist when God's work is not done in God's way, or when a mixture occurs between righteousness and unrighteousness.

Gary Cohen wrote:

"When God's work is *not* done in God's way, then both good and evil are produced, and only He who sees all things from His seat in heaven can see on which side the balance leans."

When we refuse to do God's work in God's way, the results are skewed or mixed and the Lord's work becomes polluted to some degree. This is why we must always seek to do God's work in His way.

God declares in Isaiah 55:8:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

When man tries to incorporate his own ideas and ways into evangelizing the lost, God's holy and righteous ways becomes lost and spiritual distortion, confusion, and worldliness are the result. When a mixture of both the good and bad occurs, the results always lead to *compromise* (Rev. 2:14; 20; 3:16) and eventually *confusion* (Isa. 5:20) regarding what is right. Mixture always causes a mental breakdown of God's absolute standard and eventually a complete distortion of God's high and holy ways.

God expects us to "Prove all things" (1 Thess. 5:21) and "approve things that are excellent" (Phil. 1:10). The "excellent" things are the superior and best things. They are

the holy and righteous things. It's these things that we must promote in our churches and evangelistic efforts, since they will always bring forth God's lasting results.

God Hates a Mixture

Ezra 9:1-2 declares:

"The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations ... For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands ..."

Psalm 106:35 reminds us that the people "were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works." God has always despised the mixture between His own people and the devil's people (1 Cor. 15:33), since this results in an unholy alliance and the people of God eventually adopting and adapting to the worldly customs of the unsaved. For this reason, God forbade this kind of alliance and mixture. Mixture always causes confusion and corruption.

The application of these verses to contemporary evangelism and the use of rock music can be easily seen. First, whenever contemporary artists attempt to unite with the unsaved around a similar sound of musical rebellion, worldliness is incorporated into the Lord's work and God's people become corrupted with the devil's people. Second, whenever worldly music that is designed to entertain sinners is promoted alongside of the Gospel during evangelism, man's pragmatic, worldly philosophies are poured into the same pot with truth. This results in a strange brew or mixture that can cause the Gospel message to become blurred, distorted, diluted, misleading, and hidden behind the sound of musical rebellion and man-produced, emotional stimuli.

Tim Fisher said:

"We must abandon the notion that we can reach the world with a spiritual message by using a fleshly medium."

It's impossible to do a spiritual work with carnal means. In other words, *worldly methods do not produce spiritual results*. This is because the spiritual and carnal, the light and darkness, or righteousness and unrighteousness comprise two separate, incompatible realms of existence (2 Cor. 6:14), which in God's mind cannot coincide together. This means that whenever we attempt to use a worldly method to accomplish the Lord's work, the carnal expression cannot have any positive or spiritual impact on the unsaved.

It's only truth and righteousness that creates faith and spiritual life in the hearts of people (Acts 4:4; Rom. 10:17). Mixing the spiritual with the carnal is like mixing vanilla ice-cream with ketchup. The spiritual and carnal do not complement one another; they oppose each other in the plan and purpose of God. Granted, souls can be saved wherever the Gospel is clearly presented, but whenever there is a mixture of the carnal and spiritual, results can become drastically altered, distorted, and affected in an

adverse way. Truth can become clouded and lost due to the mixture of spiritual and carnal means.

One thing is certain; only spiritual things beget spiritual things (1 Pet. 1:23; Matt. 13:23) and only worldly things beget worldly things (Mark 7:21; Job 14:4). Souls can only be saved by the Gospel (Eph. 1:13) and not through some worldly medium or carnal diversion. Therefore, we must beware of the unholy mixture between the good and the bad. The enduring principle of Leviticus 10:10 reminds us that God wants us to “put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.” This principle is true in both the Old and New Testaments. Worldly mixture breeds confusion and corruption in God’s work and our own personal lives. Mixture brings about distorted results that hinders spiritual progress and soils the true and pure work of God (James 1:27).

An old Plymouth Brethren, who was a close friend of mine, used to say, “God hates a mixture!” Let us never forget this. God wants us to steer clear of all unholy mixture (Lev. 11:47).

The Problem with Pragmatism

Today churches pattern their ministries after what “works” instead of what is holy. Pragmatism says: “If it works; use it.” “If it brings results, then it must be good.” Therefore, if using CCM results in the salvation of souls, it is worth using in our evangelistic efforts. Personal preferences, peer pressure, popularity, and the politics of success lead to pragmatism, which overrides God’s methodology and the Biblical mindset of obedience to Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Pragmatic, worldly techniques, which are designed by modern-day Church gurus, with the intent to win the lost, fall short of God’s standard of righteousness.

A. W. Tozer said:

“The temptation to introduce *new things* into the work of God has always been too strong for some people to resist. Misguided people have tried to glamorize church life who think that they know more about running God’s work than Christ and His apostles did.”

Instead of asking, “Does it work,” we should first ask, “Is it holy? Is it right?” Pragmatism pollutes the worship of God’s people. There are many that go to church today because it is convenient, comfortable, and carnally entertaining, without being concerned if the worship is Biblical. Jeroboam made worship *convenient* but certainly not *correct* in God’s eyes (1 Kings 12:28-30). How we worship is very important to God. We can worship ignorantly (John 4:22), irreverently (Heb. 12:9), worldly (Lev. 22:20-22; Mal. 1:8), and carnally (1 Cor. 11:20-21; 29-30).

Many churches have incorporated their own methodology of carnal entertainment in order to draw crowds, but in their attempt to draw the masses, they have failed to worship the Lord in a Scriptural fashion, with a spirit of reverence and holiness (Ps.

89:7). Sadly, Christianity is supposed to change people (Acts 17:6), but churches have allowed the world to change Christianity (Exodus 32:7; Deut. 9:12; Rev. 3:4). Instead of Christianity advancing on the world, the world advances on the church and blurs the distinctions between the lifestyles of the saved and the unsaved (1 Cor. 3:3).

The problem with pragmatism and contemporary rock music is that it tries to *coax* people with their own sinful lifestyle instead of *convict* people about their sin. Pragmatism tries to make people feel comfortable in their sin by looking, acting, and sounding like the unsaved world. This approach mocks repentance (Acts 17:30) and is certainly not the approach of the apostles and Christ, who called men to repent of their sinful ways before God (Acts 3:19; Acts 26:20; Luke 24:47) and condemned men to an everlasting hell who fail to repent and believe on Christ (Matt. 23:33; John 3:36; Rom. 3:3-6). As a result of the Contemporary Christian Movement, many people have become the products of pragmatism, instead of being saved through the power of the Gospel. Many have become followers of entertainment instead of followers of Christ (Luke 9:23).

Tozer is also on record as saying: “Any objection to the carryings on of our present gold-calf Christianity is met with the triumphant reply, “But we are winning them!” And winning them to what? To true discipleship? To cross-carrying? To self-denial? To separation from the world? To crucifixion of the flesh? To holy living? To nobility of character? To a despising of the world’s treasures? To hard self-discipline? To love for God? To total committal to Christ? Of course the answer to all these questions is no.” The death of pragmatism will only occur when God’s preachers and people acknowledge the right of Jesus Christ to control the activities of the local assemblies, since He is the spiritual Head of the Church (Eph. 1:22; Rev. 1:13).

Give Me that “Show Time” Religion

We live in a day when unsaved people are lured into a church, in order to feel or experience something, instead of hear from God. We live in a time of “feel good” religion instead of “old time” religion. We also live in an era of “show time” religion instead of old-time religion. Many are singing a different tune today, “Give me that Show Time Religion,” instead of “Give me that Old Time Religion.” For this reason, seeker friendly churches attempt to win people to Christ without trying to offend them. Many church gurus claim we must befriend sinners by accommodating their lifestyles; however, little do they realize that these same compromising churches become an enemy to God and His ways (James 4:4).

The attempt to mimic heathen practices of the unsaved lifestyle downplays sin. We must remember that we cannot reach people without offending them (Gal. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:2; Matt. 13:21). The Bible speaks of the offense of the cross (Gal. 5:11). The message of the Gospel reveals people as dirty, low-down, good-for-nothing, rotten sinners (Rom. 3:23) in God’s sight, who are going to hell (Rom. 6:23), and who need to be saved. This is an offensive message but it’s the truth that sets people free (John 8:32). Yes, a

person's soul is valuable to God (Mark 8:36), but that same soul is exceedingly sinful and in need of redemption and salvation.

The meeting house for the Church is about God, His Word, and bringing glory to His name (1 Cor. 1:30). It's not about trying to impress people with a night club atmosphere, entertainment, and gyrating rock music that mimics the lifestyles of the unregenerate ("Be not ye therefore like unto them" – Matt. 5:8). Frankly, when we are living a Christian life that truly honors God, a life that portrays holiness in the best possible light, we will actually become a "savour of death" (2 Cor. 2:16) to the lost - not a sanctuary to cover-up their sins.

One author remarked:

"The primary message of the church should not be, 'We're a nice place; you'll like us.' Instead, the message should be: 'This is a holy place where sin is despised.'"

While befriending the sinner, we must not become like the sinner. Our music and mannerisms should be that which "becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27) and also "becometh holiness" (Titus 2:3). In other words, our conduct should be suitable or befitting to that which is sacred and reverent, so it properly reflects the Gospel message and character of God's holiness.

The Good Old Ways

Many criticize the "old ways" of evangelism as archaic or out-of-date and "out-of-touch" with a modern-day secular society. However, this reasoning is absurd. Is the Gospel message out of date? No. Has God's basic way to present the Gospel and evangelize changed (1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Pet. 3:16)? No. God wants us to evangelize with the simple Gospel message and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A. Skevington Wood said:

"It is the temptation of this pragmatic age to presume that technique is the secret of evangelism."

We must remember that the power is in the message (Rom. 1:16) – not the music. The *medium* of music does not save souls; the *message* of the Gospel saves souls (Rom. 1:16; 10:17). To argue that people need music to be saved or drawn into the net of salvation is illogical and untrue!

I've always said:

"It's not the good old *days* but good old *ways* that we must follow."

Jeremiah 6:16 declares:

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein."

The old paths have to do with honoring God's holiness, following His plan for Bible separation from the world, and winning souls in a way that honors God. Any other way is foreign to God's plan and purpose for evangelism and personal living.

Lehman Strauss once said:

"But many of the saints are disturbed and concerned about some of the self-styled, flashy combo groups who move from church to church with a new dress and a new beat that has no serious and reverent sense of God."

The good old ways are not the pagan ways! The old Bible saying is still applicable: "Learn not the way of the heathen" (Jer. 10:2). If it looks like the world and sounds like the world; it is the world! God wants us to keep the old spiritual landmarks in place (Prov. 22:28) and refuse to move in any direction but the right direction (Joshua 1:7).

In Spite of Contemporary Christian Music

People are sometimes saved in spite of contemporary Christian music – not because of it (Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 1:21). In a similar way, people are saved in spite of ecumenicalism – not because of it. For instance, God may permit people to be saved at a CCM concert or ecumenical gathering, when the Gospel is clearly presented (1 Cor. 15:1-2), without approving of the worldly or carnal music (Titus 2:12), or ecumenical mixture with liberals. In a similar way, God permitted people to be divorced (Mark 10:4-5), while hating divorce (Malachi 2:16). God hates that which is unholy; however, the penetrating power of God's Word (Heb. 4:12) and Spirit (John 16:8) can sometimes override worldliness and prick the hearts of the hearers (Acts 2:37), resulting in the salvation of the soul (Acts 2:41).

God honors the truth of the Gospel in spite of the fallacies and failures of those who may be presenting it. One man said to me, "Pastor, I was saved out of context." What he meant was that a preacher was preaching on a text that had nothing to do with the Gospel, but he applied the Gospel to the text and this man was saved. So, indeed, he was saved out of context! People can be saved by God's power in spite of the fallacies of men. "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9).

The End Justifies the Means

Of course, the salvation of souls should never be promoted at the expense of God's character and illegitimate forms of evangelism (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). The salvation of souls is no excuse to promote evil that good may come about (Rom. 3:8 – "Let us do evil that good may come"). This is the depraved and warped philosophy that the end justifies the means (1 Tim. 5:20-21). In God's view, *the end does not justify the means; the means justify the end*. In other words, how we win the lost is just as important as winning them. God has never justified doing wrong for the sake of bringing about good. This is because God is holy in all of His ways and works (Deut. 32:4). God is not a worldly pragmatist. Psalm 145:17 declares: "The Lord is righteous in all his

ways, and holy in all his works.” The same should be true of us in our living, outreach, and evangelistic efforts.

A. W. Tozer once said:

“Heresy of method is just as evil as heresy of message.”

Let us reiterate three things. First, nothing good can come out of evil (John 6:63 – “the flesh profiteth nothing”). Second, God’s holiness and glory should always be vindicated in the work of the Lord (“ye shall be holy; for I am holy” - Lev. 11:44). Third, God is “Lord of the harvest” (Luke 10:2) and does not need CCM music and musicians to help save souls. To think that certain people can’t be saved and won’t be saved without the modern use and bait of CCM music is an absurdity and travesty regarding God and His ways. This philosophy doubts God’s *sovereignty* (John 6:44; 12:32), His *power* to save (John 16:8; 1 Cor. 2:4-5), and the divinely ordained *method* He uses to save souls (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16). Fourth, using a rock idiom to evangelize confuses the message of repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) which involves a different attitude about sin, a willingness to break from sin, and no longer live in rebellion against God.

Vance Havner concluded:

“It takes a radical break to turn a man from earth’s trash to heaven’s treasure.”

All true repentance involves turning away from sin. It possesses an inward desire to repudiate sin and be released from sin (Isa. 55:7). Repentance is to be sorry enough to quit sinning! The worldly atmosphere created at CCM concerts is not conducive for repentance to occur. The carnal diversions of rock music can easily breed confusion and produce converts of pragmatism instead of converts of Christ.

In conclusion, God is not using contemporary music to save souls, nor is He pleased with a mixture between light and darkness, or righteousness and unrighteousness (2 Cor. 6:14-17). God has always despised worship that is defiled and pagan (Lev. 10:1) and can only accept worship that reflects His nature (1 Chron. 16:29) and the natural creative order of music, which was designed by the God of order (1 Cor. 14:33, 40). We rejoice whenever souls are saved, but we rejoice even more when souls are saved in an atmosphere that honors God’s holiness and glorifies Him (1 Cor. 10:30).

Payday

Payday is coming! Someday every Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul revealed that there will be much wood, hay, and stubble, or fleshly and worldly works, which will not stand the test of the final examination (1 Cor. 3:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:10). Let us remember that music which is labeled as “contemporary” is really only “temporary,” since our use of it, and obsession with it, will not result in eternal reward (1 John 2:17). We can lose reward, which otherwise we could have had, by following wrong teachings and philosophies which run contrary to truth and righteousness.

2 John 1:8

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

It has been wisely observed:

“We are sent to bless the world, but never are we told to compromise with it. Our glory lies in a spiritual withdrawal from all that builds on dust.”