

# Principles for Selecting Christian Music-Part 1

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**Host: David Wheaton 00:00**

The Principles for Selecting Christian Music. Today is part one of that topic right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton, the host.

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And just a quick note, before we get into the preview for today's program, our end of year newsletter is going to be arriving soon. If you are subscribed to our mailing list, either by mail or by email, this is going to be a letter and update to the ministry, the new stations that we have recently expanded to and also our resource catalog, which is chock full of books and videos and all sorts of things for adults and children. If you haven't got a free subscription to this, you can go to our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) and just sign up for our weekly email and you also get our annual print letter if you want to put your mailing address in there. Or you can call us toll free to sign up as well at 1-888-646-2233.

"Houston, we have a problem." Now that's a slight misquote of what an Apollo 13 astronaut said to NASA Mission Control in Houston after an explosion harmed their spacecraft back in 1970.

That was a physical, life-threatening problem. But there are even bigger God-dishonoring problems in the Evangelical church today. The preaching of weak or unsound doctrine is a big one. But another one is the message and the methodology of music within the church.

While music in sound churches over the centuries was mainly congregational singing of Psalms and hymns with or without musical instruments, that all changed over the past 50 or 60 years with the introduction of Christian contemporary music, CCM as it's known. The worldview driving this genre of music into the church believes that the form of rock and roll or at least soft rock or rap music, glorifies God and attracts people to Christianity by simply swapping out the secular lyrics for Christian lyrics.

And yet tragically, at least in my view, the result has been compromise. Instead of congregations belting out inspired Psalms or sound hymns of the faith, shallow, repetitive, mesmerizing, almost hypnotic error filled songs fill nearly every space in Evangelicalism whether in schools or colleges, on the radio, churches everywhere.

The water may have flooded over the dam at this point, but our guest this weekend and next will help Christians and churches select what Scripture calls "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" that are sound in theology, honoring to God, and edifying for the saints. Our guest is Chris Anderson. He's a former

pastor of 25 years, and author of several well-known hymns, including "His Robes for Mine." He is also the author of the new book that we'll be discussing today, *Theology That Sticks—The Life Changing Power of Exceptional Hymns*. We have that for purchase if you just get in touch with us the usual ways.

The purpose of these two programs is to help us as individuals and churches be circumspect. And what that means is to be aware, to be discerning, about the music we sing at church and listen to outside of church. To evaluate not just a musician as a whole or a group as a whole, but to be able to evaluate each song, both in lyric and musical form, for its worthiness to glorify God. And that is the point by the way. Worship is not just worship, it's worship of someone and that someone is God. Does it please Him and thus bring us joy? Or is our personal gratification and our personal preferences driving primarily what we sing and choose to listen to?

Chris, thank you for coming on The Christian Worldview Radio Program today. In your book, *Theology That Sticks*, you write something to the effect that, Do you remember lines from a sermon at your church last week or several months ago? And you say, I bet you don't. But you remember lines to certain songs. So why is music so impactful, memorable and powerful?

**Guest: Chris Anderson 05:25**

Well, I'm a preacher. And the last thing I want to do is seem like I'm de emphasizing the importance of sermons. But people don't walk out of church quoting a sermon or humming a sermon. Typically, we don't even remember the quotations from great speakers like Charles Spurgeon. Sermons don't stick in our memory that way. Music sticks, even non Christians know that. They might be in a Walmart, and they hear a song from four years ago, and they can sing every word, you know, they remember every note.

Music just sticks with us. And there's a number of reasons for that. Part of it is just rhythm and rhyme, melody, harmony, you know, just the artistry of it. It's written to be poetry that rhymes, so it sticks with you. And that's why I say music is "theology that sticks". Or I'll say, you know, the Christian songs we sing are rhyming, rhythmic theology, we're learning doctrine. And it is important because the people who aren't quoting maybe their churches doctrinal statement, or the Apostles Creed, they're not quoting sermons, but they're singing songs. And you know, they might be singing secular songs, or they might be singing songs from Christian radio, but for better or worse, the songs that they sing are going to stick in their memory.

**Host: David Wheaton 06:45**

I'd like to get into just a brief history of music in the church to give us some context on where we are today, in, let's say, the Evangelical church. So let's go back and have you give them a bit of an overview. It doesn't need to be super detailed, but starting with what was music like, and I'm going to specify in sound churches, not unsound churches, but in sound churches through the centuries, starting in the early church, let's say from the period of the Roman Catholic era, when that was really dominant from the fourth century, let's say, into the start of the Reformation, from the Reformation into generally the 1960s and then there was a change I think that took place in the 60s and 70s, to what it is today.

**Guest: Chris Anderson 07:29**

The command to sing is the most frequently repeated command in Scripture. Obviously, the Psalms are a lot of that. And you had congregational singing, the Psalms are basically a handbook. So we have a pretty good idea of what Old Testament worship looked like, even beyond sacrifices and special days

and feasts and things. You know, music was a big part of that. In the New Testament we're commanded to sing. And of course, Colossians 3:16 is a key passage that commands us to be singing the Word of God to each other, singing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Ephesians 5:19 is a parallel passage that says much the same, that we're commanded to sing together. We read that in James. I Corinthians 14 talks about when you come together, and somebody brings a hymn, here's how they should do it in an orderly fashion.

So singing has always been a big part of Christian worship. We're commanded, we're given the example of Jesus who, the night before his crucifixion after instituting the Lord's table, they sang a Psalm and then they departed. So we know biblically, it was big. And we have some examples of early hymns. Some, I think, actually are recorded in passages of Scripture, like Philipians 2, what look to be hymns in the New Testament.

And then we still sing some of the Gloria Patri. It is "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost". And that was written in the fourth century, when the church was kind of sorting out exactly what we believe on the Trinity, the doctrine of Christ. So the church has always been a singing church. However, to your question about when Roman Catholicism rose in its influence, really, up until the time of the Reformation, so a 1000 year period, gradually, the singing of the church was kind of taken from the congregation and given to the clergy.

So in Martin Luther's time in Germany, here's Martin Luther, he's the highest but frustrated Roman Catholic monk, and the only people singing in the church are clergy, and they're only singing in Latin, so the German speaking people can't understand it. They certainly can't participate in it. One of the biggest changes that Martin Luther made through the Reformation besides uncluttering the Gospel from years of Catholic tradition, getting back to the genius of justification by faith, he was determined to give the Germans their own Bible in their own language, and he helped translate that, but he also wanted to give them their own hymnal.

So he began translating and writing hymns into the German vernacular. And he would use memorable melodies, because he wanted the entire church to sing. Instead of just listening to a choir or a cantor or something, he wanted the entire congregation to sing. And the Reformation was really, among other things, it was a revival of congregational singing. Luther knew that with a God given gift of music, he could help people memorize sound doctrine, by teaching them to sing it. And they might go out into the fields and work all week, but they could be singing sermons, if godly hymns were used, if memorable melodies were used. Especially because we get excited about his translation of the Bible, but most people didn't have a Bible, and most people actually were illiterate, but they could hear and learn and remember hymns.

So, you know, there's a sense in which God in His providence used the printing press to spread the Word, and preachers, but he used songs a lot. And we started having the publishing of hymnals with great energy and urgency in Germany in the early 1500s. And to this day, you know, the church has really been a singing church. And one of the burdens of the book is congregational singing is special music.

I grew up in churches where you would have a soloist, and that would be called "special music" or a choir would be "special music". I'm not opposed to rehearsed groups that get ready to minister to the congregation, a soloist, a duet, an ensemble, a choir, but the best music of the church is congregational

singing, healthy church music sounds like the congregation. And to the degree that we're taking it away from the congregation and giving it back to a few performers on stage, we're actually kind of devolving. That is not the goal. We want an entire church to be singing together. And in history, when the church has sung together, it's been good for the church. And when the Church has lost its song, it's been bad for the church.

**Host: David Wheaton 12:02**

Our guest today is Chris Anderson. He's a former pastor for 25 years and now works in missions. He's also the author of the book we're discussing, *Theology That Sticks*. Our topic is "Principles for Selecting Christian Music". Would it be inaccurate to say that church music was more uniform?

You mentioned in your answer that they sang Psalms, they sang hymns. Luther wrote hymns. That music was more uniform until about, say, the last 50 or 60 years, where there has been tremendous emphasis, I mean, you could almost say, there's even an overemphasis on music now in the church. Literally up to half of a typical Evangelical service or more, is focused on music. There were no Christian, so called artists, there wasn't an Evangelical Christian contemporary music industry back, way back when, there weren't concerts traveling around to churches all over the country in major stadiums and so forth. Is there any thought that music has become too much of an emphasis? And the form of music has just radically altered the Evangelical church in the last 60 years.

**Guest: Chris Anderson 13:11**

Yeah, that's a great question. And, you know, historically, there's a lot to it. I wouldn't want to say that even the Reformers were lockstep in agreement on how to use music. Luther would use choral music and congregational music. Calvin would only sing the Psalms, but he wouldn't allow for any instrumentation in the church. And then Zwingli didn't have singing in the church at all. So even among the famous Reformers, there wasn't agreement. In some sense, the worship wars aren't entirely new. I think there's always been kind of a disagreement among, What kind of songs should we sing, with what kind of accompaniment? That kind of thing.

But as you suggest, I think part of it is just modern society. We can talk about how the printing press changed the world. Well, the transistor radio changed the world. There's a really fascinating book about Rodeheaver, who traveled with Billy Sunday, and became just this popular vocalist and song leader. He was being broadcast on major networks. He was a cultural icon. And he's singing Christian songs. But instead of people gathering together to sing, now all of a sudden they could listen to the phonograph.

And in time, families aren't gathering around the phonograph, everybody has their own Walkman and music is getting more and more private, it's getting more and more dominated by performance. You know, is it a bad thing? Well, it reminds me of Dickens line, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times". You know, we're blessed that we can stream Christian music all day, and we can hear it beautifully performed. And I would actually say the last 20 years of church history has seen kind of a renaissance of hymn writing.

You know, I'm so encouraged by the new hymns that are being written today by people like the Gettys, Sovereign Grace, CityAlight, and ChurchWorks is trying to contribute our part. There's a lot of good music being written, but it's also the worst of times, there's a lot of bad music being written. And there's a lot of Christians that are, I would say, they're kind of wholesale rejecting the past and they don't want to sing songs at all. And they don't sing a lot of hymns.

And you know, maybe every song in the service was written in the last 10 or 20 years. To me, that's very unfortunate. So, you know, there's some things that I'm encouraged and I'm blessed that we can have the opportunity to, you know, maybe I write a song in Atlanta, and it's translated. We have songs that are sung in Russian and Chinese and Portuguese. That's amazing! Then part of it is because we live in modern times with the internet and things like that.

But there's a downside to it as well, where hymnals are becoming almost extinct. And people are starting to sing in church what they hear on popular Christian radio, and not always with a lot of discernment on exactly what the song is teaching. So I think great opportunities for us today, but also some some unique challenges for us today as well.

**Host: David Wheaton 16:11**

Chris Anderson is with us today here on The Christian Worldview. He is a hymn writer, as well as a pastor and author. You've maybe heard some of the hymns he has written as in, *Christ is Sufficient, His Robes for Mine*, which we hope to actually play later in the program, *You are Always Good* and several others. You can purchase Chris's book, *Theology That Sticks-The Life Changing Power of Exceptional Hymns*, through the Christian Worldview. Just go to our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) or give us a call at 1-888-646-2233. We will be right back after these ministry announcements.

**Audio Sound bite: The Pilgrims 16:49**

The original stalwart souls who created a colony in the howling New England winter, just so they could worship according to the dictates of conscience, had far more influence on world history than they could have ever imagined. You see the seeds of liberty, both religious liberty and civil liberty, and the idea of self government and rule from within, all these are within that body of Pilgrims.

The preceding is from *The Pilgrims*, a 57 minute documentary of the inspiring story and faith of these Christians who greatly impacted our nation. You can order the DVD for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. Go to [TheChristianworldview.org](http://TheChristianworldview.org), or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. That's 1-888-646-2233 or [TheChristian Worldview.org](http://TheChristian Worldview.org).

**Featured Resource: My Boy Ben 17:49**

For a limited time, we are offering *My Boy, Ben* for a donation of any amount to The Christian Worldview. The book is the true story of a Yellow Lab that I had back when I was competing in the professional tennis tour. It's about relationships with Ben, my parents, with a childhood friend I would eventually marry, but ultimately with God who causes all things, even the hard things to work together for good.

You can order a signed and personalized copy for yourself or for your friend who enjoys a good story, loves dogs, sports, or the outdoors and most of all needs to hear about God's grace and the Gospel. *My Boy, Ben* is owned by The Christian Worldview. It's 264 pages, hardcover, and retails for \$24.95. To order go to [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) or call 1-888-646-2233 or write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

**Host: David Wheaton 18:54**

Welcome back to The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton. Be sure to visit our website [The ChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org) where you can subscribe to our free weekly email and annual print letter, order resources for adults and children and support the ministry.

Our topic today is principles for selecting Christian music and Chris Anderson, pastor, hymn writer, and author of the book, *Theology That Sticks* is our guest. And Chris, I want to read two passages of Scripture that figure prominently in your book, *Theology That Sticks*, both written by the Apostle Paul. Colossians chapter 3 and then Ephesians chapter 5, they say something very similar. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which you indeed you were called in one body and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you with all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And then go over to Ephesians chapter 5 starting in verse 18. There's an interesting contrast here in this passage. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, [those three things again,] singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. Maybe you could just briefly explain those two passages. What is the apostle Paul getting at there? Are there any distinctions to be made between psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? And maybe even talk about the contrast between getting drunk with wine versus being filled with the Spirit and it goes right into speaking to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

**Guest: Chris Anderson 20:37**

Yeah, I love these two passages. And I love the way they kind of relate to one another. Colossians 3 starts by saying, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you*. And if the word of Christ is dwelling in you, then it kind of overflows. So the word of God is coming into you, but it can't just stay there. So then it comes out in your speech. And we're teaching each other with wisdom. But we're also teaching and singing to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

Ephesians 5, it doesn't mention scripture, it mentions being filled with the Spirit. Of course, He's the author of Scripture. So when we are controlled by the Spirit, not with wine, you know, we don't want to be under the influence of alcohol, which leads to all kinds of other sins, but we want to be under the influence of the Spirit. So we're living a life under the influence of the Spirit of God, we're obeying Him, we're submitting to His Word. And then in both cases, we have that same command that as we're spirit filled, as we are word filled, that is evident because it comes out of our mouths, and it comes out in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

Predictively people are going to ask, okay, so what are those? What's the difference between a psalm and a hymn and a spiritual song? Bible scholars, commentators are kind of in disagreement on exactly what it means. Even somebody as careful as John MacArthur says, You know, it's not really obvious where one ends and the other begins. I would say, the easiest term to figure out is Psalms. The Bible has given us 150 Psalms. And that is not just a collection of prayers, those are all songs that were sung. We have a hymn book, we have an inspired hymn book right in the middle of the Bible. I feel so strongly that the church should sing psalms on purpose, that I would say, if we don't sing psalms, at least at some point, as part of our kind of Christian repertoire, then we're disobeying scripture, we're sinning.

So we should be singing the Psalms. There are good soldiers, and you know more than just a praise chorus that sings a portion of a verse from a Psalm, you could sing the entire song. So I think we start with that. We have an inspired hymnbook. My hymn heroes are like Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, who could be better at writing hymns than them? Well, God. And God, you know, through the Spirit, through writers like David and Asaph, Moses, He's given us the Psalms.



The best I can understand, hymns are maybe Psalm like, they're kind of patterned after the songs. So they're poetical. They're doctrinal, but they're uninspired. Okay, so whereas the Psalms are actually we're singing scripture, a hymn would be something that a non-inspired human writer like me, like Isaac Watts, or somebody else, they're penning words that are especially doctrinal, and I would categorize a hymn as a doctrinal, God-focused song. And there's probably a little bit more form, a little bit more structure, a little bit more formality. And then spiritual songs are songs that are, I can't use the word inspired, because I want to save that for a special revelation of Scripture, but there's songs that are kind of provoked by the spirit, their on spiritual themes.

And it might be a song of testimony, you know, and it is a little bit hard to say is that a hymn or is that a spiritual song? Is that a hymn? Or is that a gospel song? Or a praise chorus? But I would say it's maybe more a song of testimony, like, the spirit is burdening you to share something about what Christ has done in your life, and it might be less formal than a hymn. Some of that, honestly, I'm stepping a little bit out on a limb. I want to be very careful when the Bible says something, then we can't hedge on it. Some of this is a little bit interpretational because the exact meaning of the terms isn't clear. Psalms are the Psalms. Inspired hymns are Psalm-like songs that are not inspired but true. Spiritual songs or other songs of testimony, we might think of gospel songs, Fanny Crosby type, something like that.

**Host: David Wheaton 24:41**

Chris Anderson is our guest today here on The Christian Worldview, the author of the book, we're discussing, *Theology That Sticks*. This would be a very helpful book for you, or especially for your minister of music at your church, to select the right kind of music that will be both honoring to God and edifying for the saints. We have it for purchase at our website, The ChristianWorldview.org or you can just give us a call at 1-888-646-2233.

Now let me follow up to that question. So you describe what psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are. And I'm wondering whether the music that takes place then in most Evangelical churches today is really any of those things. And I'm going to preface it by giving a couple quotes. Because what the form of music in most churches today, let's just say people are familiar with, say, the music of Hillsong or Bethel music or Elevation music, those are probably the three biggest purveyors of music that gets into the evangelical church today.

Going back in time, we all remember probably the rock musician, Little Richard, he said this. During the time when he was a musician, "I was using marijuana, Angel Dust, cocaine and heroin. All I wanted to do was have sexual orgies. Rock and roll music doesn't glorify God. You can't drink out of God's cup, and the devil's cup at the same time. I was one of the pioneers of that music, rock music, one of the builders, he said, I know what the blocks are made of, because I built them." That's by Little Richard.

And then there's an older book and you're probably familiar with this book. It came out in one of the early books when the, "Contemporary Christian music" came around in the late 60s, early 70s. There's a book called *Rock, Bach & Superschlock*. It was a book on the advent of the contemporary Christian music movement by Harold Myra and Dean Morel. And one of the main quotes from that book was, "Finally after far too many centuries, we realize that musical sounds are merely tools, and cannot be good or evil in themselves." So what they're basically saying is, we can take the music that Little Richard just described, the rock music that was developed probably by him and others, and if we put Christian lyrics to that same form of music, now it's a good thing. By extension you'd say, well, whatever the Beatles, the Stones, Michael Jackson, and Eminem, you name the secular rock or rap musician, if

you put doctrinally sound lyrics to that form of music, I think the question is, Is that pleasing to God? Would that fall under the psalms and hymns and spiritual songs the Bible is talking about there in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5?

**Guest: Chris Anderson 27:39**

Yeah, well, that is an important question. And actually, in some ways, it's a difficult question. I want to be honest enough to say, well, music and Scripture wasn't necessarily an organ and a piano. The instrumentation that you have in the book of Psalms is very broad, you have strings, and you have brass, and you have percussion. And you have shouting and some form of dancing. So you definitely had a celebratory feel to the music. Not anything like you would see dancing on television today, or, you know, movies or clubs or not like that, but it wasn't stoic. You know, it wasn't necessarily your typical high church, Presbyterian or very traditional Baptist.

We can't project our preferences on the scripture. But I do think Scripture gives us at least clear principles that we're not trying to be like the world. I would say, at the very least, the music that we use needs to be consistent, it actually should elevate, it should advance the teaching of the music. You know, so you use examples like Eminem, if I were to take a song by Queen, the famous, We Will, We Will Rock You and you know, we could change the lyrics and sing it to God and say, We will, we will praise you, it's laughable. You know, it would be silly.

But you'd also say, yeah, actually, the mood, the pathos of the music isn't fitting the text of the lyrics, and that's a problem, we need to have them in alignment. I'm not going to say that always means only piano and organ or only high church. I think you can accomplish that with a variety of different instrumentation. But there at least needs to be a clear connection that the message of the music and the message of the text are supporting each other, they're not clashing with each other. And actually, that didn't just change with the advent of the rock genre. It actually changed kind of with the gospel song that we talked about earlier with Rodeheaver and Fanny Crosby and the revivalists that were going around. They would sing songs that were less doctrinal. They weren't really hymns.

They might be songs of salvation or testimony. And occasionally, they were pretty light: "You could have a rainbow in your heart, even on a cloudy day". I mean, just kind of very nominal biblical or doctrinal content. And they just would kind of be embraced as a happy song. And then once in a while, you'd have something like an Isaac Watts text that was sung to such a chipper tune. So you have "Alas and Did My Savior Bleed and Did My Sovereign Die", but it's sung to a such a happy melody. And it ends with, "and now I am happy all the day". So that tune probably doesn't support the text well. So yeah, part of it has to do with a contemporary sound. But part of it too, is just, I think a common sense, Is the message of this song really being advanced by the kind of music, or is it being contradicted by the kind of music, and it's something that we need to give more thought to.

**Host: David Wheaton 31:02**

Chris Anderson is our guest today on The Christian Worldview. You can purchase his book, Theology That Sticks at our website, TheChristianWorldview.org or by calling us toll free 1-888-646-2233. When we come back from this break, we're going to talk about the form of music, the style of music, and whether that's relevant as long as the music has Christian lyrics. I'm David Wheaton, and you're listening to The Christian Worldview.

**Worldview Partners 31:30**



What is The Christian Worldview Radio Program really about? Fundamentally, it's about impacting people, families, churches, with the life and eternity changing truth of God's Word. We know the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only message that saves us from God's wrath by God's grace for God's glory. And we know the Bible is the inspired Word of God providing the only way to think and live to the glory of God. We are a nonprofit listener supported ministry.

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### **Featured Children's Resources 32:30**

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### **Host: David Wheaton 33:37**

Thanks for joining us today on The Christian Worldview. I'm David Wheaton, the host. Just a reminder that today's program and past programs are archived at our website, [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org). Transcripts and Short Takes are also available.

Alright, just a reminder, Chris Anderson will join us for part two next week as he discusses how to select worthy songs to sing in your church or to listen to yourself. For the rest of the program we're going to talk about the last question I just asked him about the form of music and whether that's relevant as long as it has Christian words or Christian lyrics to it.

And I want to be clear that I'm speaking on behalf of The Christian Worldview in these upcoming comments and not Chris Anderson, because Christians have diverse views when it comes to the form of music. Music is a powerful influence as Chris discussed today. And thus we need to carefully consider what we are putting ourselves under the influence of, just as you would be with what kind of preaching or books you read or friends you have or the movies you watch.

What kind of influences are taking place in your life? Words, let's say lyrics, are one level of influence. But words that rhyme is an even deeper level, and then words and rhyme and instrumentation is an even more deeper level, and you take words and you rhyme them and you have instrumentation, and then a setting and presentation takes you even deeper. So music is incredibly powerful. It has power to glorify God and also has power to enslave your soul. And music has become a top priority in many Evangelical churches today. 50% or more of the service is devoted to music. It is used as an attractant

to bring people to church. It's why people go to church, because of the music, that is their top priority about selecting a church. What's the music like?

Not only that, Christian music is huge business today. It funds churches and ministries, churches like Hillsong, or Bethel, with the group, Jesus Culture, they bring in millions of dollars through the music they produce and sell. And it goes all throughout the world. It's albums, but not only that, but it's the musical rights of the songs that are being sung in churches all over the world. This is a very big business. And a critical point here is that music in the Evangelical church has mostly or almost entirely become based on a form of rock'n'roll music, or rap music. And the question that naturally comes from that is, can a form of music borrowed from one that is known for and associated with rebellion against God and His Word, be made honoring to God by simply changing the words of the songs? And I believe the answer to that is absolutely not.

I think the almost ubiquitous and unquestioned practice of this is a leading cause of how the Evangelical church has become more characterized by unsound doctrine, by a faith of people that are driven by emotions and experience instead of the mind, the will and the affections. And it also leads to ecumenism, which is diminishing or discarding sound doctrine in the name of unity across denominational or religious lines. And you see that with this music causes Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, and charismatics, to drop all the distinctions and come together as one. Now that all being said, let me be clear about something else.

I am not questioning any musician's motive or intentions, I really don't know them. I don't know what's going on inside of their heart. So I'm not questioning that they want to undermine the faith or anything like that. And I'm certainly not questioning their musical abilities. If you watch these musicians, they're very good at what they do. But that being said, I don't know of any genre of music and history that has been so openly and closely associated with rebelling against God, then rock and roll music. Perhaps jazz to a certain degree or big band music, perhaps slightly tavern songs in the past. Perhaps they were drinking songs, but rock musicians say it themselves. Rock and roll is a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

It's just irrefutable that the messaging and lifestyles of the greatest rock groups and greatest rock singers all had one thing in common. It was about immoral sex. It was about alcohol and drugs. It was about rebelling against authority, especially God's authority. It was even about false religion. The music may have been slightly diverse, from one group to another, but it was really the same form of music with the heavy, throbbing beat. Now in the 60s and 70s, after rock'n'roll music had been around for let's say, 10, 20 years, it made its way into the Christian church. There was the Jesus People Movement out in California, I'm sure it was part of it. I don't know exactly the history of it, but somehow it got into the Christian church, and the church had a decision to make. Well, do we reject this form of music and lose the newcomers, the Jesus people that want to come in? Or do we accept it and accept them into the church?

Well, we know what happened with the answer to that particular question was. It was accepted first by charismatic leaning churches and then marched right into the Evangelical church, and all the institutions of evangelicalism afterwards. And has completely transformed everything in the Evangelical Church. The preaching, the doctrine, how people dress in church, the methodology of the service is all driven by this form of Christian contemporary music or Christian rock music. It's very rare for an Evangelical church today to not have Christian contemporary music or Christian rock music as their

musical style of their service. I went online do a simple search for what the music is like at some of the most influential Evangelical churches in the country. You've all heard of Saddleback Church in Southern California where Rick Warren used to pastor, he just recently retired. Here's what their church sounded like in their most recent service.

**Sound bite: Saddleback Church 40:19**

Welcome to Christmas at Saddleback everybody. Come on, let's stand. We're gonna bring in this season this season this morning, we're going to celebrate Jesus. Come on, let's sing.

**Host: David Wheaton 40:49**

Again, that was at Saddleback Church. Now, you may like that. You may think that appropriate for church. You may think that brings people in the door and it's a net positive, it brings people to God. But let's not deceive ourselves to say that that isn't just rock music with Christian lyrics, something that has never been done except for the last 60 years in the church. Alright, let's just do one more example. Let's move over to Atlanta in North Point Church where Andy Stanley pastors, he's a very popular and influential pastor in this country. And I was reminded as I did a search for them, something came up on how they started their church service earlier this year. Listen to this.

**Sound bite: North Point Church 41:35**

There's a lady whose sure all that glitters is gold and she's buying the stairway to heaven.

**Host: David Wheaton 41:47**

Now, if you're thinking, Wait a second, is that Led Zeppelin's Stairway to Heaven being played at Andy Stanley's church? You'd be right.

**Host: David Wheaton 42:19**

Okay, I obviously didn't play the whole song, there was just an excerpt of Led Zeppelin's song Stairway to Heaven, played by the musical team at Andy Stanley's church in Atlanta. What's interesting is when Andy Stanley came on the platform immediately afterwards and what he said.

**Sound bite: North Point Church Church 42:40**

Taylor, unbelievable. And just so you know, Chris was homeschooled. So there, that'll teach you. You can be seated for just a minute. Unbelievable. Yes, I saw those grins. So why did we do that? Here's why we did that. Because we have to let the band get things out of their system every once in a while just so they'll play the songs we need them to play. Oh, my goodness, you know, so I was watching the rehearsal and they sent me this stuff ahead of time. It just reminded me that you know, for some of you, that was a reminder of a season of life. I can see some of the guys my age kind of looking like oh my gosh, you're just thinking of high school. Anyway, welcome back, everybody. It's good to see you. We thought we would clean the palette, Christmas is over. I think the last thing we sang was Silent Night. So we have got, we've covered the spectrum from Silent Night to Led Zeppelin. Anyway, we're glad you're here.

**Host: David Wheaton 43:34**

That is not funny. It's not appropriate. Please don't excuse it a sort of a one off. That is never appropriate to play in the Church of Jesus Christ. Now, it's not just the music. If you'd seen the video, you'd see the presentation there and basically everywhere else that does this form of music in evangelicalism. It's like a secular rock concert. They've not only taken the form of music, but also the

presentation of it. It is the dark rooms, it's the mood lighting, it is the musicians who dress and act like secular rock singers, it is the audience being put into this highly emotional, almost ecstatic trance like state. And this is ubiquitous in evangelicalism. Kids go to Christian schools K through 12 or youth groups at church where they learn to sing and play these Christian rock songs, than Christian colleges where they strive to become so called worship leaders.

And most people under 50 nowadays will not even recognize the songs in a hymn book that were used for hundreds of years because they've just never sung them. The influencers and teachers and preachers of our day are, yes, pastors but also these Christian musicians. And very few of them are sound theologically. I was reading an article on Amy Grant. She was one of the forerunners of Christian contemporary music. In Pride Source, an online publication, it says this. Though she, Amy Grant, has a large LGBTQ+ following, the singer has been somewhat guarded in verbalizing her support for the LGBTQ+ community. We can now say without a doubt that the community has Grant's support. "Who loves us, Grant said, more than the one who made us? None of us are a surprise to God. Nothing about who we are or what we've done.

That's why to me, it's so important to set a welcome table because I was invited to a table when someone said, don't be afraid, your loved, Gay, Straight, it does not matter." Some of you have heard of Lecrae. He is a very popular Christian rapper. He's in the midst of some sort of faith deconstruction. There are other mega stars like Kari Jobe or Lauren Daigle, the former associates with the New Apostolic Reformation folks. And the latter, when asked about homosexuality being a sin, she responded, "You know, I can't honestly answer that." And then there's Hillsong, a very well known influential church and music ministry. They're really part of the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. And just listen to the form of music these mega star Christian musicians are playing. Here's Kari Jobe with her revelation song, which has distinctly scriptural lyrics in it, but listen to the form of music. [Note: Soundbite can be heard on the podcast].

I wish you could see the video of the musicians on stage and the audience being put into this totally ecstatic state. I keep on thinking, What would Jesus Christ think of this? Here's another example. Lauren Daigle in her popular song, You Say. Again, the form of music is uniform within evangelicalism now. It's Christian rock.

**Sound bite: Lauren Daigle 47:05**

In You I find my worth, in You I find my identity. You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing. You say I am strong, when I think I am weak.

**Host: David Wheaton 47:31**

There's a reason that the driving beat of rock music is called a hook. Because once you get under its influence, it hooks you in. And that's what you want and you want more of it. And that's why Christian contemporary music, Christian rock music only gets more driving, more stimulating over time. So the obvious questions here are, Why is the most common and popular music within the church today all the same form of rock and roll music or rap? Why isn't there a popular movement of more traditional hymns? There is some of that and we'll get to that in the interview next week. Or another way of asking the question is, Why do those churches, let's say Andy Stanley's or Saddleback and ministries and Christian leaders who compromise in doctrine, Why do they all use this same form of music, this rock form of Christian music? Another question, Why is there very little written in Scripture about music in

the early church? Scripture says that Christ sang a hymn with his disciples at the Last Supper. Paul was singing hymns when he was jailed in Philippi.

There's very little in Acts about music being prominent in church. And yet it is super prominent today. And one form of music is super prominent today in the Evangelical church. I think one good way of assessing what kind of music is proper or most worthy of worship is to find out what the most sound Christians in history used in their own churches. Let's start there. Let's go back and see what Martin Luther did or Ulrich Zwingli or John Calvin or the Puritans or Charles Spurgeon or Martyn Lloyd Jones over in England. I read an article on Westminster's seminary website. Luther composed hymns, congregational music, used folk melodies, and to be clear the entire genre of folk melodies was not associated with sin as rock and roll music is.

Martin Luther is probably best remembered the article says, as a writer of hymn texts and tunes. His immortal hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, is one of the best loved amongst Christians. And I would say that I'm not even sure how much the younger generation even knows that hymn exists. He was convinced that hymns were a great device for teaching doctrine, and he's right about that. Zwingli, probably the best musician among the major reformers the article said, had a radically different position from that of Luther. Zwingli believed that music was too powerful and too emotional to be used in Christian worship. He argued that music would too easily move people away from focusing on the Word and its meaning for them. As a result in Zurich, Switzerland singing was eliminated from worship in Zwingli's day. No musical instruments, no choirs and no congregational singing were permitted. Now, I'm certainly not advocating for that. I think there's definitely a place for congregational singing and instrumentation in worship services. It's just to what point and to what form?

John Calvin the article says, like Zwingli feared in excess of emotion in the music of the church as a distraction from the Word. He wanted only unison singing by the congregation. The Puritans, Joel Beeke was on the program recently, they loved to have corporate singing from the book of Psalms. Charles Spurgeon, another article says, although he didn't use an organ or musical instruments during worship at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, Spurgeon had an undeniable love of singing psalms and Christian hymns. And there's Martyn Lloyd Jones, a great preacher of the last century. The quote about him was, "The more a church is focused on her building, ceremony, special singing and music, the less the church experiences a robust and biblical spirituality." This leads, Lloyd Jones believed, to an entertainment style of ministry. Boy, does that really hit the nail on the head of what it's like today. All instruments are to accompany congregational singing alone.

To be clear, I don't think the Bible teaches that God has one form of music that is acceptable across all generations and times and cultures. But I do think what is acceptable and praiseworthy to God is much more narrow than what has been done in the Evangelical church today. And it's certainly not associated with a specific genre of music of rock'n'roll, which was constructed to incite rebellion within man's heart. We are out of time, but I just want to close with this passage from I Peter chapter one. It says, As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former loss, which were yours in your ignorance, but like the holy one who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior, because it is written, You shall be holy, for I am holy. God doesn't need the church to become like the world to reach the world. The church needs to be focused on holiness, sanctification, and faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thanks for joining us today on The Christian Worldview. Until next time, "Think biblically, live accordingly, and stand firm!"

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