

MUSIC THE LORD LIKES

By T. R. Post

On August 16th, 2018, singer Aretha Franklin died at 76. That occurred on the 41st anniversary of Elvis Presley's death. Both the Queen of Soul and the King of Rock 'n' Roll had also recorded gospel albums. That got me thinking of a question I'm sure many Christians have asked: "Does God approve of secular music?"

Growing up in a traditional denominational church, most of the music I heard during services were old hymns played on an organ. That caused me to think God wasn't fond of modern sounds. (Years later I learned the Bible says many times, *"Sing to the Lord a new song."*)

Around the time I first asked Jesus into my heart as a teenager, I became familiar with two preachers who crusaded against secular rock music. Dan and Steve Peters gained national attention with seminars that sometimes concluded with young people burning their records. The Peters Brothers strongly recommended listening to "Christian rock" and gospel music only.

The roller rink I worked at had a Christian Skate Night. The music played there sounded lame and outdated compared to the secular stuff I enjoyed so much. I thought to myself; *if I have to be a good little Christian by listening to this wimpy stuff all day long, then forget it!* Over the next ten years, I fell deeper into a lifestyle of sin. By the time I recommitted my life to the Lord, I had already cut back on listening to secular rock music. Many of the lyrics I heard weren't too positive.

Some religious people think we must always listen to music with a Christian label on it. It's worth noting two books in the Bible don't mention God at all: Esther and Song of Solomon.

So is the Lord okay with songs that don't mention Him at all? I believe that would partially depend on the lyrics. Philippians 4:8 gives us some guidelines to follow...

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy— meditate on these things."

Jesus told us in Mark 4:24, *"Take heed what you hear."* Music is a tool like money or a gun. Those things in themselves aren't evil but how they're used. It's bad enough that many popular songs promote drug usage and illicit sex. An increasing amount of today's hits contain profanity. Nowadays, I rarely listen to secular radio stations.

I also shy away from "religious" songs with lyrics promoting ideas contrary to Scripture. One example is the Christmas carol "Little Drummer Boy." I used to love the version heard in the animated TV special but later got turned off by the words "I am a poor boy, too."

Jesus was born in a stable not because Joseph and Mary were broke but *"because there was no room for them in the inn."* (Matthew 2:7) Later the wise men *"opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."* (Matthew 2:11) Jesus even had a treasurer during His earthly ministry. The Lord did become poor on the cross so *"that you through His poverty might become rich."* (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Another Christian song I shun is “Blessed Be Your Name”, written by Matt & Beth Redman and recorded by a variety of Christian artists. I would like this song better if these lyrics weren’t included...

You give and take away
You give and take away
My heart will choose to say Lord, blessed be Your name

How many times have we heard Job 1:21 quoted to explain away tragedies such as the death of a child? “*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away*” is not a statement of truth but a comment Job made in ignorance. John 10:10 says that Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy but Jesus came “...*that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*”

Jesus also said in Matthew 7:20, “*Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*” Even genres of music often associated with Satanism can be used for good. The Christian heavy metal band Stryper achieved mainstream success in the 1980s. They had gold and platinum albums plus music videos that were popular requests on MTV. Still, they remained focused on promoting the Lord. Stryper even threw Bibles into concert crowds.

A decade later, five young men I knew through our church’s evangelism ministry formed a speed metal band called Prophecy Inc. Their concerts included appearances in bars and nightclubs. That and an album they recorded featured calls for salvation.

WHAT ABOUT INSTRUMENTALS?

One might ask, “What about instrumental music?” I used to think that was always neutral until an incident that happened after I’d been a Christian for almost five years. The Lord was leading me to erase some cassettes of mostly instrumentals I produced prior to my conversion. I was willing to do that but questioned if it was necessary. Then one night after a church service, I approached a pastor’s wife who was a singer and songwriter. Before I even brought up the subject she told me, “You need to be careful of the music you listen to...even instrumental music because of the minstrel behind it.” Knowing this was a confirmation, I erased those cassettes and felt at peace afterward. Soon I realized most of my old instrumentals triggered memories of sinful things done around the time those recordings were made.

I do believe secular songs can be redeemed if used for God’s glory. Some of the music used in old hymns originated as bar tunes. One group that was featured on my Internet radio station is ApologetiX. This Pittsburgh-based parody band rewrites Christian lyrics to secular hit songs. Lead singer J. Jackson once shared with me testimonies of people getting saved as a result of their music.

Sometimes God has used secular songs to minister to me. One example happened in the Twin Cities area where a friend of mine prepared to make a temporary move to Nashville. Two days before leaving Minnesota, my friend asked me to ride with her because she didn’t want to make the trip alone. At first, I resisted because she insisted on making an all-night drive to attend a prophetic conference in Tennessee. She didn’t like my suggestion of waiting an extra day.

Just after 1:00 the next morning, I woke up from a dream in which I heard the old S. O. S. Band song “Take Your Time (Do It Right).” I knew that was the Lord speaking to me and emailed my friend about it. She then agreed to postpone the trip. That gave us more time to take care of unfinished business.

Another incident involved an old Eric Clapton hit. I was severely depressed one night and sought for something to cheer me up. Then I recalled the joy experienced while seeing John Scotland minister for the first time a few months before. I searched the Internet for sermons by him. The only thing I found was a website with videos attempting to expose "Pentecostal heresy." I laughed when viewing a clip of John putting on a cowboy hat and singing "I Shot the Sheriff" to legalism and religion. That helped me get over my depression.

At Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, I've heard the worship band sing oldies to the Lord like The Troggs' "Love is All Around", Free's "All Right Now" and Sly and the Family Stone's "Thank You." At another church in Florida, the musicians sang James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" but added the words, "I feel nice because of Christ." At my former home church in Minnesota, Jesse Duplantis once sang Joe Cocker's "You Are So Beautiful" to Jesus.

During a church service I attended in Illinois, the worship leader sang the Temptations classic "My Girl." Three women (including the pastor's wife) went onstage and sang backup plus added hand jive. The pastor expressed his approval afterward. Just as Song of Solomon is about a couple expressing marital love to each other, secular songs can be used to express love to another as long as it doesn't promote sin.

Always remember, God is the Creator while Satan is simply a counterfeiter. John 1:3 says, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

HEAVENLY SOUNDS

Have you ever wondered what music in heaven will sound like? People who go to mainline traditional churches might assume they will listen to organ music or choirs for eons. Others believe they will hear Black & Southern Gospel like they do now in their congregations. On the other hand, individuals who received glimpses of eternity testified of angelic sounds unlike anything heard on earth.

There's some truth to the old saying, "Music soothes the savage beast." Songs played by God's people can dramatically change the atmosphere we are in. 1 Samuel 16:23 mentions *"...that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him."*

Music has many uses but I believe it's highest purpose is to glorify the Lord. Many songs you hear this holiday season talk about the Lord's birth to make salvation available to us. Yet for many people, the new birth is not a reality to them. Some attend churches that don't even mention Jesus' commandment that we must be born again (John 3:3,7).

Romans 10:9 says, *"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* If you need to make certain you will spend eternity in heaven when your life ends, then I encourage you to say a prayer like this one out loud (and mean it in your heart):

"God in Heaven, I know I'm a sinner and I need Your help. I believe in my heart that Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins and rose again from the dead. Jesus, come into my heart, make

Yourself real to me, cleanse me and protect me with Your precious blood, fill me with the Holy Spirit, keep me away from sin, make me a soul winner, be my Lord and Savior. Amen."

Congratulations! You have just reserved a place in heaven by making Jesus Christ your Lord and Savior. God has an awesome plan and purpose for your life that will manifest if you take the time to build a relationship with Him. For more information on how to do that, please log onto the "seekers and new believers" section in the Signs & Wonders website.