

## Open Letter on Music in Church Worship

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Music is a sensitive issue, because music and worship are very personal. However, there is more involved than just opinion and preference, likes and dislikes. I am very concerned about the kind of music being used in Sunday worship services. My main concern is the music (melody, harmony, rhythm) itself. There has been an increasing use of rock type music at church, where the emphasis is on rhythm and the use of certain musical styles used by secular musicians. While all music has rhythm, an overemphasis leads, in part, to an appeal to the physical aspects of our being, rather than the spiritual. This is interfering with my, and my family's, worship. It has become a stumbling block rather than an aid to worshipping God.

Our thoughts, beliefs, emotions, actions, etc., are distorted by sin. We cannot use our reasoning alone as the standard for decision making. We cannot base all our choices on just personal desires and pleasures. We cannot depend on human moral choices, but must depend on what the Bible says in all areas of our lives. This applies to the choice of music, in or out of church. Fortunately, there are some guiding principles that help us to understand God's purposes for music and to recognize the lies the enemy would have us believe.

The first Scriptural principle of music is that **there is no such thing as amoral music**; that is, it is not neutral. The world would love for us to believe that there are no absolutes, for then we would begin to give ground to Satan in the gray areas (2 Cor. 11:14). However, 2 Corinthians 5:10 explains, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* Our deeds are categorized as being good or bad; not good, amoral, or bad. God does not judge the amoral, but good and evil.

If music were amoral, a discussion of music would be reduced to a discussion of preferences; I like this style, you like that. Then we could include some music for everyone in our services. But that is not the issue. There really is good and evil music, and we must not employ that which is evil.

The second principle is that **music is a form of worship and is corrupted when mixed with carnality**. *"Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?"* (James 3:11) Likewise, good and evil cannot spring from the same source, for they are reflections of two polarized masters: the Lord God and Satan. As Christians, our music ought to give all glory to God (Is. 42:8, 1 Cor. 10:31) and be an expression of our holiness. *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."* (2 Cor. 6:17)

*"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"* (1 Cor. 5:6b) A 'tiny' bit of carnality will work to destroy His purpose for music. Music often communicates more than the lyrics do, and can give a message contradictory to the one intended by the lyrics. The music can nullify the lyrics. This is true even when the lyrics are a crystal clear presentation of the gospel. Unfortunately, many of the lyrics in contemporary songs trivialize God and the gospel message.

Adding the gospel to evil music will not make that music good; but adding evil to good music will make that music evil (Hag. 2:12-13, Gal. 5:9). Once a little evil music is tolerated, we become restless and bored with it and want even more, thereby consistently allowing greater footholds for Satan. If profanity is an unacceptable means of communication from the pulpit, why is carnal music an accepted means of communication to the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, His body, and the world?

A third Scriptural principle for music evaluation is to understand that **it is wrong to use carnal music to present a holy message**. “*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*” (2 Cor. 10:4-5) Using the world’s methods to present Christ is an invalid argument because our weapons are not their weapons. We must not fight with their tactics, (as David was required to learn the hard way - 1 Chron. 13), for God’s work is not to be accomplished with Satan’s methods.

Those who try to do this tragically discover they have become carnal Christians because carnal music pulls its victims back to their former evil temptations and sins. It is hard to believe that the “things of earth will grow strangely dim” with this type of music. Using the world’s methods to accomplish God’s best forces us to fall short of His high standards and goals. “*Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.*” (1 Cor. 15:33)

The principle of cleanness versus uncleanness also sheds light on this topic. Light cannot make darkness clean, but darkness will make light dark (Hag. 2:12-13). Christians cannot make worldly music clean, but worldly music will make Christians unclean (2 Cor. 6:17). Music that formerly was considered wild and profane is now considered mild and contemporary by today’s standards, even in the church. If we are to strive to be separate and holy, then our music should reflect that also. Our music should also be distinct from secular music. There should be a difference. If we are to worship a holy God, our music should strive to emphasize that. We should not compromise in the music used in church. The association of rock music with rebellion, drugs, illicit sex, and other sins, already taints its use, or a similarity thereof, as a foundation for church music. It does not glorify God.

One of the main problems in churches today, I believe, is the lessening of a sense of reverence for God, and solemnity while being in church. God has been reduced to only “my Friend” rather than an Almighty and Holy God. If we are coming before a holy God, our actions, attitude, speech, and so on, should reflect that. Rock music from its very inception is about rebellion, self-assertion, and sensual pleasures. One of the reasons that people enjoy rock music and the rock beat is because it elicits from them a physical or sensual response. Today, we have a great problem because Christians are responding to the rhythms of worldly music and opening their spirits to great deception (John 8:44). How can we believe that music that evokes a carnal response somehow also leads us into worship and reverence on our knees before the Great I Am? Reverence and rebellion are as opposite as light and darkness. No matter how much we “like” the music, we cannot justify worldliness as a form of reverential worship.

A fourth principle of Scriptural music evaluation is to recognize that **all parts of music must obey God’s laws of order**. “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*” (1 Cor. 14:40) Satan’s method of corrupting good music is to introduce imbalance, little by little, even to the point of changing the style of traditional hymns. Harmony and rhythm used in disproportionate amounts cause the melody to be confused or nearly non-existent. Melody, harmony, and rhythm work together; melody states one idea, harmony enhances the melody, and rhythm reinforces the melody to ensure that it flows smoothly. Because melody is an expression of our spirit and God’s Spirit, it must remain dominant (Eph. 5:19) to reflect truth about God and life.

The fifth principle for understanding music evaluation is recognizing that **sensual tactics have no place in Christian music**. Whereas worldly wisdom “*descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish,*” so also “*wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*” (James 3:15-17) Christians will be unable to stand-alone in the world today until they purify their music.

Imitation is the greatest expression of admiration. Do we then want to imitate the world and inadvertently demonstrate admiration of them? Similarly, do we really want them imitating us? “*Woe unto you, when*

*all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”* (Luke 6:26) As immorality increases among Christians because of carnal music, we proclaim to the world that Jesus approves of immorality. *“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.”* (1 Cor. 6:15) Christian youth are being lured into rebellion, immorality, and other sins because of rock music. One glance at the average youth group of today is enough to prove that they are very skilled at imitating the world. Why do we want that in our church?

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”* (1 John 2:15) We cannot obey this verse by using the world’s methods in music. Carnal singers and musicians convey their messages through the use of breathy tones, sliding of notes, volume, backbeats, microphone grip, flirting, and many other techniques appeal to the lusts of the flesh because they are sensual expressions and demonstrate our love for the world. Adding sensual attributes to music is dishonest, for it conveys one message with the mouth and an opposite message with body language. How can we flirt while singing about the purity of God? We are kidding ourselves to use music designed to promote rebellion, immorality, and other sins and think that we do not love the world.

The sixth principle is that **musicians must see themselves as ministers, not performers**. In fact, singers and musicians in the Old Testament were first required to be qualified priests before they could lead music (1 Chron. 15:16). Today, many are being placed in positions of music leadership when they themselves have not yet experienced victory over worldly music and its partners of rebellion, drugs, and immorality. Yes, we agree that their hearts may have been changed, but their music has not.

In addition to the choice of rock music for congregational singing, my concerns include special music, such as the offertory, and with the “youth band.” Many vocalists have chosen special music selections that use recorded accompaniment soundtracks that certainly have an overemphasis on rhythm and entertainment. The youth band also has an emphasis on musical beat, both with the drum set and through guitars. Although these have been entertaining to some people, they do not constitute an appropriate ministry. This also applies to music used in evangelistic and outreach events.

Since the emphasis should be on God during a time of singing, then any emphasis on “performers” should cause them not to be used in a service. That is the reason my family and I do not applaud after special music at church. The emphasis should not be on the performer at that time; a simple “Thank you” or “Amen” is more appropriate.

The seventh principle of music evaluation is understanding that **spiritual results do not justify carnal music**. Humanism, the plague of today, is founded on the belief that Man’s reasoning is foundational, and that the end justifies the means. Humanists view murder as an acceptable practice if the mother will be happier or healthier, and theft as simply a result of cultural disadvantage. Christians indoctrinated in this reasoning will see no harmful effects of worldly music. In fact, even demons witnessed for Christ (Luke 4:34, 8:28), but He rebuked and silenced them (Mark 1:25, Luke 4:41) because Christ does not want to be witnessed by demons or demonic music.

Again we must ask, do we take drugs to win addicts; do we use curse words to witness; do we steal to identify with robbers; do we draw lewd pictures to present Christ? Are we even supposed to use music to win the lost to Christ? No! Preaching is the primary method of proclaiming the gospel (1 Cor. 1:21 and others). Music was designed to edify believers and glorify God, not to win the lost, and especially not to employ sensual, carnal, or worldly methods (Eph. 5:15, Col. 3:16). Evidence indicates that very few long-lasting commitments are made at concerts and other settings where rock music is used for evangelism. So why do we use carnal music to gain a hearing?

An eighth principle is that **the church is to be a place of worship and not to be an entertainment site.** Music on Sunday mornings is not to be for entertainment, but for worship. A Sunday service should be for the equipping and building up of believers. Although unbelievers are not to be ignored, the music and sermon are primarily for edifying, teaching, encouraging, and strengthening believers, and facilitating their worship of God. Nonbelievers may be reached to some extent during a service, but the goal should not be to entertain and lure in the world with worldly imitations. Too many churches are going down this path.

Finally, a ninth Scriptural principle of music evaluation is realizing that **loving the world's music deadens our sensitivity to evil.** "*Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*" (Rom. 12:9) If one argument against carnal music were to be chosen, this one could be it, for our whole yoke of Christianity lies here. Even those who have no interest in music *per se* must understand this bedrock truth. Young believers (especially in youth groups) along with mature believers are deadening their consciences by wholesale involvement in carnal music.

*"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."* (Acts 24:16) As we gain dead consciences through carnal music, we lose our spiritual discernment. With a loss of alertness to evil, we are ill equipped to drive out darkness with light (Rom. 13:12), to gain clear spiritual direction (Ps. 16:11), to have a dynamic ministry (2 Cor. 6:3), or to strengthen weaker brethren (Rom. 14:15).

In closing, music can be used either for the ministry of the saints and the glory of God, or for the work of Satan and his followers. Christians must take a stand for Christ by refusing to join with the world in its music, and instead apply 1 John 2:15-17:

*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."*

I'm not suggesting that anyone is deliberately or intentionally leading people astray with music at church. The effects of music on a church service and the church body cannot be overlooked. I would ask you to help me and others not to stumble in our corporate worship. I also would ask you to seriously investigate and consider the issues from a Biblical viewpoint, and be fully convinced in your own minds what is appropriate and what is not. Please consider whether we, by having rock music in our church, are causing our weaker brothers, and particularly the youth, to stumble by offering them a false or distorted worldly gospel.

Just as the Bible calls us to a higher standard of behavior and character, we should have a higher standard than the world has for music. We should not settle for passable or questionable music. We should not let inferior and damaging music crowd out better music. We should "*hold fast to that which is good.*" (1 Thess. 5:21-22)

Sincerely,

Michael Cook  
October 2003

### Some Further Reading

(At this time, I have read many, but not all, of the books listed here.)

John Blanchard, *Pop Goes the Gospel*, paperback 203 pages, Evangelical Press (England), 1992, ISBN:0852342632. A good examination of the topic, but explicit quotes and discussion of rock and roll may offend some readers.

Tim Fisher, *The Battle for Christian Music*, paperback 211 pages, Sacred Music Services, 1992. A readable book on the topic.

Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel, *Music in the Balance*, paperback 204 pages, Majesty Music, 1992. A recommended book that covers several main points regarding music.

Dan Lucarini, *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of a Former Worship Leader*, paperback 141 pages, Evangelical Press (England), 2002, ISBN:0852345178. A very readable book with rebuttals to some of the arguments presented in favor of Contemporary Christian Music. I would recommend this short book as an introduction to some of the CCM issues.

John Makujina, *Measuring the Music: Another Look at the Contemporary Christian Music Debate*, paperback 369 pages, 2nd edition, Old Paths Publications, 2002, ISBN:1889058149. A more scholarly approach to the subject.

Peter M Masters, *Worship in the Melting Pot*, paperback 148 pages, Wakeman Trust, 2002, ISBN:1870855337.

Kimberly Smith, Lee Smith (contributor), *Oh, Be Careful Little Ears: Contemporary Christian Music*, paperback 143 pages, WinePress Publishing, 1998, ISBN:1579210457.

Kimberly Smith, *Let Those Who Have Ears to Hear*, paperback 216 pages, WinePress Publishing, 2001, ISBN:1579213189.

Jack Wheaton, *Crisis in Christian Music*, paperback 183 pages, Hearthstone Pub., 2000, ISBN:1575580624.

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*(Letter to church leadership regarding our departure from Oak Grove.)*

Mike Cook  
January 4, 2004

Dear Brothers,

As many of you are aware, there have been some conflicts between my family and the church in the area of music. I have been in discussions with Larry and Jason regarding our concerns about the direction and style of music at Oak Grove. My family and I have very strong convictions that certain music is not appropriate for worship. I have included a letter detailing the biblical basis of our position for those of you who are interested in a further explanation. Please read and consider the warning found in that letter. Larry has informed us that our responses have been an offense to some of you. That certainly has not been our desire and we apologize for that.

If this were only a matter of preference, such as over the color of carpeting, we'd gladly submit to the will of the majority. However, we strongly believe this is a critical biblical issue and we simply cannot compromise our convictions any longer. My family cannot participate in worship that employs worldly or irreverent music.

Oak Grove is designed to be governed by an elder and deacon board. Because of that, we feel it is appropriate and necessary to bring this issue before you. It is not biblical for Oak Grove to have a division in the leadership over this issue. It seems at this time that we cannot find a place of agreement. It is also not right for my family and me to be unable to worship together in one accord with you. We don't want to create widespread division among the church or to turn this into a full-scale dispute among brothers. If any one of you has counsel or reservations we would be glad to listen. If you, as a board, agree that Oak Grove Christian Church and our family are not going to come together on this, then I ask you as a board to accept my resignation as a deacon and to release my family from this fellowship.

During the past 5 years we have grown to love our brothers and sisters at Oak Grove. It has been a blessing to serve, fellowship, and worship with our neighbors here. We deeply regret having to leave, and we desire to continue to build our relationships with this body of Christ with whom we will share eternity. We separate over the conviction on music but are trying not to reject any one of you. We value, and will continue to value, your friendship. Our prayer is that we may continue to exhort, encourage, and love one another as our Lord has commanded us.

With love and concern,

Mike

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Mike Cook  
February 8, 2004

Dear Larry,

This letter tries to make another presentation of my family's and my views on music in church. I will also try to make some clarifications to previous discussions on ideas that may not have been clear at the time, or have been misunderstood.

We are not against up-beat or up-tempo music in general, in fact, some music should be played at a reasonably fast tempo. Church music should be sung enthusiastically and with feeling, as appropriate for the song. The music should not be dry and lifeless because we are worshipping a living God. We do object, however, to the use of rhythm that dominates over melody and harmony. "Jazzed up" worship music for the sake of change or popularity is not appropriate.

We don't object to the use of drums, *per se*, but there is a tendency and temptation to use drums inappropriately in church music. And, the churches with drums that we've visited over the past few years have tended towards a rock beat in their music. Other instruments can be fine to use, too, if played appropriately. Even the organ and piano can be misused in church music.

This is more than a hymns-are-good, praise-music-is-bad discussion. There are some fine contemporary songs. And there are hymns that are not great music or even have bad theology. It is not a matter of how old a song is, or how long or short it is. Good hymns can be played in a wrong manner and contemporary songs can be played well. We're not advocating singing just Psalms without instruments or some similar approach, as others do elsewhere.

Our thoughts, beliefs, emotions, actions, and so on, are distorted by sin. We cannot use our reasoning alone as the standard for decision making. We cannot base all our choices on just personal desires and pleasures. That might lead to any set of noise or sounds to be considered as "music." We cannot depend on human moral choices, but must depend on what the Bible says, either directly or indirectly.

I don't think our differing views on music are just the drawing of different lines of acceptance. I believe that we have differing foundations for our views. There are some types and styles of music that you would not allow to be used in church, but is that based on preference or principle? Is it just past association with, or knowledge about, certain songs or kinds of music? Is it based on what people in our area listen to, or based on biblical principles guiding selection of music?

In our first meeting with Jason there was some discussion that music is not amoral, but I think we got into a discussion that emphasized rhythm too much at the expense of other arguments against certain types of music. While the book *Music in the Balance* by Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel makes many good points, much more than rhythm is involved in a discussion on music (even Garlock and Woetzel don't confine themselves to just that topic).

In our second meeting together after Christmas, the emphasis seemed to be on the association of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) with secular rock music. This is a better argument than

rhythm. Even those who have not grown up with rock music have still been exposed to it over the years. However, even without any association with secular rock music, we believe that most of CCM is still wrong to use in church, as outlined below. And if the association of rock music and immoral lifestyles does not influence some believers, certainly other believers and many non-believers are aware of the association and will not be neutral about it.

A view of music in church should be based on the character of God. God is holy, righteous, merciful, compassionate, Creator and Sustainer of man and the universe. Music in church should reflect God's attributes, not worldly attributes of rebellion, immorality, physical reaction, or entertainment. Much of contemporary music dishonors God because it is inconsistent with His character and His holiness.

“Since man's aesthetic endowment is an attribute of God, not only does it obligate him to seek his aesthetic standards from God, but it also minimizes relativism and uncertainty in the aesthetic enterprise. God is absolute, not relative. He creates things for a purpose, according to his divine counsel and wisdom. He has instituted the arts and music within human culture, not to be developed according to fluctuating human passions, but analogically as a covenantal expression of his glorious nature. As [William] Edgar puts it, ‘Our art is offered up to God in covenant response.’ Divine attributes such as righteousness, love, holiness, purity, majesty, order, reason, harmony, balance, and goodness should govern our evaluation and production of music. It is undeniable that variety and creativity are characteristics of God; yet whatever variety and creativity we exercise in the arts, our workmanship must reflect divine qualities if it is to glorify God.” [John Makujina, *Measuring the Music: Another Look at the Contemporary Christian Music Debate*, pp.154-155]

Although there are no Bible verses directly against cigarette smoking, there are still principles in the Bible that should steer us away from smoking. There are several verses on taking care of the bodies that God has given us (e.g. Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 6). Smoking is one behavior that would violate these warnings and admonitions.

“*And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtle of heart.*” (Proverbs 7:10) Here the Bible does not explain or describe what the attire of that harlot was. However, it would have been clear to an Old Testament reader, as well as a reader today, that there was some difference between the clothing of a harlot and the clothing of a typical woman. The difference would have been clear then and is still often clear today. A plain roll of cloth is amoral (assuming any print or design on the cloth is neutral), but once a designer starts cutting and sewing to make a garment, that garment communicates something. Fashion designers know this and take advantage of it to their benefit, and often to society's detriment.

In language, truth plus a little lie equals untruth; in chemistry, water plus a little cyanogen equals poison; in math, a correct solution plus one equals an incorrect answer; and in art, a figure plus a little nudity equals pornography. As evil mixes with good, even in small amounts, evil results. “*Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?*” (1 Corinthians 5:6b)

So, why all the comments about smoking, attire of harlots, and chemistry?

Because similarly, no Bible verse directly condemns rock music, but there are still biblical principles at work. Even though the Bible does not contain actual musical notes, that does not mean that any organization of notes is acceptable. Christian liberty in musical preference does not mean that all music is edifying or profitable.

Music is not amoral. That is, music is not free of values or morals. All of the “fine arts” are moral. Individual musical notes in some piece of music are amoral by themselves, but once a composer begins composing, he has an intended purpose for creating that piece of music. Composers for TV, theater, and movies certainly know this. Music has the power to influence our character and conduct, to influence us morally for good or for evil. It has the power to make us happy or sad, frenzied or calm, lonely or comforted. It is not just the lyrics that can influence us, but the message of the music itself communicates something to us. What is the spirit of the music? Is it communicating the character of God or of the world? Is the music drawing us away from understanding or concentrating on the lyrics? If profanity is an unacceptable means of communication from the pulpit, why is worldly music an accepted means of communication to the Creator of the Universe and His church body?

Music has a moral component and it does have an effect on our spirits. And if music really were amoral, we would have to be willing to accept any and all styles and kinds of music, even those styles that are outside our preferences.

*“And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.”* (1 Samuel 16:23) David’s music for this occasion is not described in the Bible. It did not have lyrics; at least 1 Samuel 16 does not describe any singing. However, we can observe that the music alone had a moral effect on Saul.

In chemistry, there is precision in the order of elements; in astronomy, there are regular cycles of days, months, and years (Genesis 1:14); in physiology, there is rhythm in the heartbeat and organs; in art, there are set principles of light and color. Likewise, there are patterns of vibration and chords in music that must also be kept in order and balance. It has been shown that our bodies will sympathetically vibrate to music that is being played around us; either we will be in harmony with the music or we will adversely react to it. Today we have a great problem because Christians are vibrating in harmony with wrong music and opening their spirits to great deception (John 8:44). We are embracing the humanistic lie that man decides what is absolute, and neglecting to search out God’s truth for all areas of our life.

In one meeting on music with Jason, the attitude of performers was discussed. The attitude of people making music is not a sufficient factor in accepting any particular music as a legitimate part of worship. *“That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David”* (Amos 6:5). These people thought they had the right attitude, but the music was wrong. In their debauched state, they either thought they were producing acceptable music (like David’s), or they were making fun of it. In either case, their music was not acceptable.

Many Hebrews in the Old Testament thought they had the right attitude for worship, but they were not worshipping as directed by God and were judged harshly for it. When David brought

the Ark back from the Philistines (1 Chronicles 13), he had the right goal (to retrieve and restore the Ark) and seemed to have the proper attitude (a reverence for God), but he used the wrong method and Uzza died as a result. Saul worshipped God with his heart but with the wrong method, and as a result lost his kingdom (1 Samuel 15). We are not under the OT regulations, but God has not declared that “anything goes” if you think your heart is right. God can’t accept sin even if we think we’re doing something right with a right attitude and right goals.

Not only does our attitude (heart) have to be right, we must also worship in truth (Joshua 24:14). *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9) God doesn’t accept our actions just because we are sincere. Many sincere people are on the road to hell, as you know.

Why use the world’s music anyway? They don’t use our music with respect because it doesn’t communicate their messages or fulfill their purposes. When the Christian message and symbols are used by the modern “fine art” world, they are almost always used in a disrespectful, confrontational, mocking, vulgar, and blasphemous way. Why would we want to make the non-believing world’s music our own? It conflicts with the message of a holy God. We should not admire or imitate music that is opposed to God (James 4:4). We should not conform to this world’s music (Romans 12:2).

Since World War II, “pop culture” has been a great anti-Christian force in Western society. Music is a large part of that powerful force. Secular music today probably has a greater influence on our culture than television has had in recent generations. It could easily be believed that the demand for and use of secular music has reached idolatrous proportions. Why should we bring that into our churches?

The youth and new believers of today have been greatly influenced by music. It may be that their focus and absorption of music will distract them from various areas of Christian ministry. With the emphasis on music, areas such as mission work, personal evangelism, doctrinal study, help for the needy, etc., will suffer because of a misdirection of attention. “I get all the doctrine I need from my stereo” may be all too true for the youth and new believers of today.

We should worship with mind and spirit, not by physical reaction (John 4:23-24). Our flesh already wars against our spirit; we should not let church music work against us in that battle (Galatians 5:17). The fruits of the world’s music cannot be part of worship (Galatians 5:21-22). The spirit of the world’s music cannot be part of worship (1 John 4:3).

Because of our great salvation and deliverance, we should sing a new song (e.g. Psalm 40:3, 96:1-2, 98:1-2). Shouldn’t this new song be different from the old song of the sinful and sorrowful world?

Again, music is not amoral. Sinful man is making the music. Is it God honoring? Does the music glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31)? Is God being exalted, or the musician? Does the music bring us closer to the glory and majesty of God, or is it distracting us from worship? Is the music encouraging and edifying? Does the music help us separate from the world, or bring us

closer to it? Would God be pleased with this music, or is it offensive to Him? Do performers represent Christ appropriately?

Shouldn't the church be distinct and not look like other social or charitable organizations? Churches should be different so as to be a refuge and source of comfort and help for people looking for solutions to their spiritual needs. Why seek a church if it is just like other groups? Shouldn't our music be distinct, also?

To those who have been given much, much is required. We as believers are called to a high standard, in music as well as other areas, and should not rely on worldly music styles to worship a holy God. Contemporary music can create a deviant form of worship because it has borrowed from the "worship" music of the world. This is what the world uses to worship its "gods."  
*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* (1 John 2:15-16)

I am glad to know that these discussions on music have made you more aware of its power in the church. I hope, though, that the ideas put forth here and elsewhere will help convince you of the importance of musical selection in church. I know you don't agree with all our views on music, but I will continue to hope that you'll be alert to the damage that is being done in churches today in the name of music.

Sincerely,

Mike

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## **Postscript:**

Here are three personal observations on what has happened as a result of this discussion on music in the church, aside from the discord it has produced in the Body of Christ by our leaving the local congregation and my leaving church leadership.

1. According to one person who went to a leader at Oak Grove to ask about us, we are “mishandling Scripture.” We are sorry to hear that this is the explanation given for our views on music and our departure from church, since we went to great effort to clearly state our reasons. Unfortunately, no one has pointed out to us a specific example of our mishandling Scripture. We would be open to concrete examples of how we have misused Scripture, because we don’t want to be wrong about that.
2. Another member was quoted as saying “The Cooks said ‘the congregation is sinning’.” That is a direct quote, written down as soon as it was spoken, to preserve accuracy. This was given as our reason for leaving Oak Grove. We have ***never*** stated that, either verbally or in print. This idea may be an incorrect conclusion from what the pastor gave as our reasons for leaving the church. My family believes that some music being used in churches today is wrong and inappropriate for worship, but that we do not claim that there has been an intentional misleading of the church by any individual in our local congregation. We do think that most folks have not thought much about the issue, but that they are not overtly sinning on this issue. We are all sinners.
3. One of the most disturbing and discouraging aspects of this whole situation is that no one has come to us directly to ask us about our position and actions. Several people have gone to the pastor to essentially ask, “What’s up with the Cooks and music?” But no one has come to us to hear our view directly. We would be more than willing to discuss the issues with anyone honestly wanting to know. We have talked with some people, mostly outside our local congregation, about music in the church. One couple in the local church, over a period of several months, has asked us what we thought about particular music pieces or worship music on a given Sunday morning. But no one in the local church congregation has come to us to ask us why we left the church, or whether what they’ve heard is true. After making many friends in church, and attending for 5 years, we find this dismaying and saddening.

-- Mike

revised: February 11, 2004