

Christian Music - Spirit or Soul

Over the last few years I have been uncomfortable with some of the new Christian music coming out today. I've not been able to understand why until I sought the Lord and received an understanding.

I believe that many, but certainly not all, of the Christian artists today are conforming to the sound and style of the world. This shouldn't come as any surprise, since even in the days of the early church that was a problem. In Romans 12:2 we read

“Be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

We are not to conform to the world. This applies to every area of our life starting with our belief in God, how we live, our way of life, our thoughts and our conduct. For example, We believe in a sovereign God who created the universe in 6 days. The “modern world” today believes that there is no God and the world evolved over millions and billions of years. The church, God's people, have recently become blurred in their core belief and have compromised in the absolute truth of God's word. Many have conformed to the modern view by believing that God did create the world, but perhaps it was created in an evolutionary fashion that lasted millions and billions of years. Do you see how easily Christians can be conformed to the world and it's way of thinking?

In 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 we read

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God and they will be my people. Therefore come out from them and be separate,” says the Lord.

In the Bible God speaks of a distinction between His people and the world. There is to be a marked difference between God's people and the world. This difference is meant to be clearly and easily seen in every area of our lives. As Christians, we are not to readily receive the world's views, philosophies, habits, entertainment, etc. as acceptable without first discerning their source.

Movies, music, fashion, entertainment are all tainted with the sin of fallen man. Movies that are evil in nature are being praised and lauded by men. Musicians writing music inspired by demonic forces are in the top 100 list in popular music. Even computer games, violent and blatantly wicked are selling out at the stores.

The church has lost it's influence on society. The church is to influence society and culture. So many Christians today, who are meant to be an influence, are themselves being influenced by the world. We are to be the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13) . We are to be the salt and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14).

As Christians we are to be the ones making the movies that shape and influence society. We are to be the ones creating music and leading the culture in a Godly and acceptable form of entertainment. Sadly, for many it's the other way around. They are blindly lead by the prevailing attitude of today's popular culture which is leading people down the path of destruction.

Even in the fashion industry we see the church conforming. Today, especially for women, clothes are

designed to be seductive in order to attract men. Women's fashions over the last few decades have become less modest. What was once considered shocking has now become acceptable. I think of the lyrics to an old song from the 1920's that goes "In olden days a glimpse of stocking was once considered something shocking; but today anything goes." What's even more shocking is how today Christian women are taking on the same attitude toward their attire.

What has caught my attention is how Christian music has slowly been conforming to the world's music. God gave me a revelation and an understanding of this:

The world's music comes from the soul. Christian music comes from the Spirit.

When I say "Christian music" in this context, I am referring to music that has been inspired by the Holy Spirit. Music that was written, recorded and performed under the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In order to understand the difference in music coming from the soul and music coming from the spirit, we need to understand the difference between soul and spirit.

Soul: Soul is made up of our mind, will and emotions. From the soul we have desires, we want things, we think and we feel. We sometimes refer to the soul as the heart of man.

Spirit: The spirit in the unregenerate man is dead. The Holy Spirit brings a person's spirit to life once they accept Christ as their Lord and Savior and are born again (John 3:3). Only the born again man truly has a spirit.

To apply this definition to music, the world creates and performs their music through their soul. Their spirit not being alive, it is impossible for them to create music through their spirit. As such, their music is driven by worldly desires and emotions. The Bible tells us in Jeremiah 17:9 that the heart is desperately wicked and deceitful. This being God's truth, how then can anything good come from a song written from the worldly soul?

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that all worldly music is evil. What I am saying is that we need to use wisdom and discernment when choosing the music we listen to. We need to judge with the guidance of the Holy Spirit whether a song is acceptable or not.

However, we all must agree, that much of the music today is more outrageous, aggressive, angry, lustful. Much of today's music is written from passions, desires and emotions that are out of control, or should I say, under the control of the flesh. Musicians and performers are raising the bar on how far they can go with being lewd, crude and outlandish. Sadly, the companies and agencies that package and sell these products are lowering their standards. What was once censored and not allowed, is for them a huge money maker. And so they give in to the pressure of the almighty dollar and sell whatever the public wants to buy.

In Hebrews 4:12 we read of the word of God acting as a 2 edged sword dividing spirit and soul. Man cannot discern or judge the difference between spirit and soul. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. This is why it is critically important that we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the music that we listen to, the movies that we watch, the books that we read. Any and every form of entertain we might indulge ourselves in must first be approved by the Holy Spirit. We must be willing to let go of anything that does not meet with the Lord's approval. We must shun evil and have nothing to do with it.

Relating all this to my point about Christian music conforming to the world, I believe that many Christians are writing music from a worldly soul and not from their born again Spirit.

Let me point out something very important: A Christian can certainly write blessed music from their soul. A person who surrenders their life fully and entirely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ will allow the Holy Spirit to influence their soul - their mind, will, emotions. In so doing, their wants and desires will conform to God's desires for them. Their entire being - spirit, soul and body, will be under the controlling power of the Holy Spirit. Such a person can write songs from the soul, but it is not a worldly influence that they write from. Rather, their soul is influenced by the Holy Spirit. With this, a song can truly be a "love" song and not a song driven by "lust". A person can play a song for a congregation without the need to impress the human listener, since they are playing their song for the Lord.

When speaking of Christian music conforming to the world's music, I'm not speaking of any particular sound or style. It cannot be so easily defined. Nor can it be detected simply by the lyrical content. It cannot be described in words that the mind can understand. It must be discerned by the Spirit so that the spirit can understand.

Music that originates from the worldly soul is expressed differently in men and women. For example, in women singers and musicians a worldly soul might have a seductive edge. Words are not so much sung, as they are seductively purred with a breathy and passionate expression. They use their sexuality as a means to convey the song, some intentionally and some unknowingly. This could even apply to a Godly inspired song that happens to be performed from by someone with a worldly influence.

For men, the expression of a worldly soul generally comes off as more of an aggressive edge designed to impress and be "cool". For example, in one song I heard from a "Christian artist" instead of singing his words he growled them. It sounded no different than the heavy metal music from groups that profess to worship Satan. For men who write and perform, their music might have an aggressive edge contrived to get the approval of the "cutting edge listener" of today's popular music. In whatever we do, we are to work as unto the Lord, not to men (Colossians 3:23).

Proverbs 29:25 tells us that "Fear of man is a snare." The Bible instructs Christians are not to seek the approval of men, rather we are to fear the Lord and seek His approval. When Christian musicians seek the approval of men they compromise their integrity and conform to the world. If this continues then good and evil become blurred. Where once there was a distinction there is confusion. Then complacency sets in and many Christians become comfortable with the world's influence all far for the sake of being popular.

In Isaiah 5:20 we read

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.

As Christians we need to be pure and Holy, just as God is Holy (Leviticus 11:44, Ephesians 5:27). Only the Holy Spirit can search our hearts and expose any sin and weakness and make us holy. If we, as Christians, have been seduced by the world, and drawn away by the sinful nature of our hearts, then we must repent. To be Holy means to be set apart. This needs to be seen in our music, our movies, our entertainment, even the very clothes that we wear.

Music written from a worldly soul is powerless. It is not infused with the power of the Holy Spirit. Whereas music written from the spirit, influenced by the Holy Spirit can and will reach into the hearts of men and women and accomplish what God intends. Whether by conviction or blessing, the word of God in true Christian music will be powerful and affective. This should be how we measure the music we listen to.

You may ask if there is a checklist a person can follow to determine whether a Christian song or artist is from the soul or from the Spirit. The answer is "no". To devise a list would almost certainly lead a person to being judgmental. Music is the expression of the inward man. Only God can see the inward man, or the

heart. Man cannot, therefore he is unable to judge someone's intentions. For example, you may look at the CD cover of a Christian artist and he may appear to have a scowl on his face which maybe wrongly judged as an attitude. Perhaps, in fact he was only squinting his eyes because the lights were too bright. We can't tell what was going on inside his heart. The rule for us is to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in all truth and to allow Him to be our umpire (John 16:13, Colossians 3:15) .

Let me say that there are several Christian artists today who are being used by the Holy Spirit to write wonderful songs of excellence that God is using to bless and refresh and draw people to Him. The world cannot write this kind of music. This music can only come from God. It is this kind of music that will draw sinners to a Holy, merciful and loving God.

In closing let me quote from Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
He set my feet upon a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

God's people are to write a "new song" designed to praise Him, designed for many to see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

I pray that all Christian would humbly and fearfully approach music, whether in writing and creating, performing or listening with the attitude of heart as described in Psalm 40.

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