

Our Music and Our Morals

We all have our favorite music. In a crowd of people, there are headphones, ear buds, or air pods with music playing through them in those ears. Nearly every nice restaurant has music in the background. Music is comforting, soothing, invigorating, inspiring and influential. Someone once said, "Let me write a nation's songs and I care not who writes its laws." The person who said that knew something about the power of music to influence people's thoughts and behaviors.

We all have our favorite music artist or group. Because music is so powerful, we must be careful what we allow into our minds and hearts. Songs about drugs, alcohol, violence, and sexual immorality can lower our resistance to temptation in these areas. "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life", said Solomon in Proverbs 4:23. Some singing groups and artists have evil purpose in their musical lyrics. They want to change the way people think and feel about some things God does not approve. Today, we always have music videos we can watch, too. Some of these music artists dress, behave, and perform in ways which should embarrass them and also make us ashamed to even see them, much less hear their music. Do you ever find yourself excusing some immoral lyrics in a song just because it has a catchy melody? Those nasty words and thoughts can sneak into our hearts on the notes of a favorite tune! Satan is sneaky that way. He uses every available means to get his message into our minds. Jesus wants us to be pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). Be willing to change your music if it's causing trouble for you.

- by *Mark White*

"Preach, But Leave Others Alone"

The above caption not only represents the thinking great majority of people in the denominations, but unfortunately it reflects the attitude of some of our own brethren. It involves the idea that we should preach only what is agreeable to everyone, avoiding anything of a controversial nature.

First of all, it is impossible to preach the truth and leave other people alone. It does not matter what subject a gospel preacher may select, it will contradict the belief of somebody. For instance, suppose that I should decide to preach on the subject of God. In that sermon I point out that there is but one God and no other. I point out the attributes of God, showing the characteristics of God as taught in the Bible. That sermon would meet the approval of many people, but are we so naive as to believe that it would meet the approval of everyone? It certainly would not leave the atheist alone.

But suppose that I should decide to preach on the subject of Christ. I go to the word of God and prove His virgin birth, His divinity, His pure and sinless life, His example for us to follow, and the authority of His teaching. This sermon too would meet the approval of many, but even that kind of preaching would not be agreeable to the orthodox Jew who rejects Christ as the Messiah. Are we to cease preaching Christ because it offends the Jew?

But now I decide to preach on baptism. I simply preach what the New Testament says about it. I quote such passages as Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:27 and 1 Peter 3:21. However, when I do this I am not leaving a good majority of religious people alone. A good part of the denominational world would not be in agreement with my preaching on baptism because a good part of the denominational world denies the essentiality of baptism as a condition of salvation. Should I refrain from preaching on baptism because it does not leave others alone?

I preach on the one church that is revealed in the New Testament. I quote such passages as Ephesians 4:4; 1:22, and Colossians 1:18. But that kind of preaching does not please those who teach and believe that there are many churches and that one is just as good as another. Am I to stop preaching on the one church because there are people who disagree?

The truth is very plain that it is absolutely impossible to preach on any Bible subject and leave other people alone. God does not expect us to do so. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:10, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ."

People must know the difference between truth and error that they may be saved from their sins. Many are sincere, but wrong; many are honest, but they are misled. It is only when error is pointed out to people that they will know to leave error.

- by Hoyt Houchen

Did You Know? . . .

- That the apostles never used food, games or social activities to draw a crowd so they could preach to them?

Yet in many churches today, even some calling themselves "Church of Christ," the social programs are so extensive that a social director or a "youth minister" must be hired to oversee the social planning.

- Although schools existed in the first century, and the apostle Paul even taught in one for 2 years (Acts 19:9,10), no churches ever supported them financially?

Yet in many churches today, even some calling themselves "Church of Christ," the financial supporting of "Christian schools" or "Colleges" is a regular part of the budget.

- That the apostle Paul illustrated many of his epistles with analogies from sporting events (1 Cor. 9:24,25). Yet no church sponsored or had sporting teams?

Yet in many churches today, even some calling themselves "Church of Christ," the sporting activities are so much a part of the work that full scale gyms have been built.

If these things mentioned above were not a part of the early church and we do not find them in the Bible, WHY are churches doing them today? And who gave them the RIGHT to do it? These things ought not to be! "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17).

- by Roger Shouse

There is ONE Hope

When the Jehovah's Witnesses come knocking at your door, they will almost certainly discuss their peculiar doctrine of the 144,000. They claim that this number – exactly this number, not one more or one less – will be taken to Heaven to live with the Lord. According to them, the rest of the righteous will spend eternity here on the earth. Rather than destroying the earth (and the entire physical universe), the Jehovah's Witnesses teach that God will restore the planet to its perfect 'Garden of Eden' condition, and this will provide a wonderful existence for those who are not among the 144,000 that will go to Heaven.

Where did they get this strange doctrine of the 144,000? The only reference to such a number is in the Book of Revelation (7:4-10 & 14:3-4). In these passages, the Jehovah's Witness insist on an absolutely literal interpretation. When studying with them, it is interesting to ask them if all of the 144,000 will be Jewish (chapter 7 says so) and male virgins (chapter 14 says so). Their answer will be an emphatic NO. The devastating follow up question is this: If the number is literal, why isn't the description of that number also literal? They have no answer!

The Jehovah's Witnesses are also at a loss to explain how planet Earth will serve as the eternal abode of the majority of righteous souls, when the Scripture plainly teaches that the entire universe will be destroyed. Peter wrote: "*The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*" (2 Peter 3:10).

Finally, this doctrine of the 144,000 fails because it contradicts the statement of Paul in Ephesians 4:4 when he said there is "one hope of your calling." Do you see it? They argue for

two hopes (one for the 144,000 and another for the rest of the righteous) – but Paul says there is one common hope. Who do you think is right: Paul, or the Jehovah's Witnesses?

- by Greg Gwin