

Christians in the World of Popular Music.

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## Christians in the World of Popular Music

Why is the world making a bigger impact in music than the people in the Kingdom of God? Why is it that the music that has negatively shaped the young generations morally is the music that is taking the world by storm? Where are God's people? God gave a specific command to his people in Matthew 28:19 "to go out into all the world and make disciples." When God said the world, He meant every nook and cranny of the world. He meant the low income neighborhoods, the low and dirty places, the Las Vegas strip, Iraq, in the presence of crooked politicians, and everywhere. This includes the popular music world. Pastor Curtis Allen puts it this way, "God wants us, his witnesses, present in every area of life as a redemptive influence, so that by the manner of our lives we can demonstrate to the world that there is One who rules over the affairs of men."<sup>1</sup> (Allen 2013). Where are the Christians who are operating and making wonderful music in the popular music world? The world needs musicians who love the Lord and stand firm in Him, even in a world that is trying to push them to the left or right. Are there any musicians who have made it to the top and have stayed with Christ?

For this paper, the term Christian musician is being used to refer to a Christian who happens to be a musician, not necessarily a Christian in the Christian music genre. Many Christian musicians have become well known in the popular music scene, even as bold declaring Christians. They have come in with music that is popular, appropriate and even liked by a secular audience. However, the Christian musicians who have made it big eventually have turned from the Christian life and have become like the world. Can Christian musicians be in the popular music realm, have great excellent music and still have and live out their faith? Is it possible?

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, Curtis "Voice". 2013. *Does God Listen to Rap?* Maryland: Cruciform Press.

“.. God has always been intentional and strategic about placing his people in all kinds of contexts that may not appear especially Christian. And that’s the point. That’s how the gospel spreads into new areas, relentlessly infiltrating the darkest corners of society, shining the redemptive light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup> (Allen 2013) How then can a Christian artist who finds themselves in the popular music scene stay popular, while still being grounded in Christ? Christian musicians who find themselves in the popular music scene must have the ability to create excellent music, without diminishing the gospel that they have been commissioned to share; and still live the life that they have been called to, as followers of Christ. Excellent Christian musicians are needed in the popular world; it is time for them to stand up and be excellent.

This paper will begin by explaining what excellence is artistically, especially in music. Then it will go on to examine and give examples of different ways a musician can work on being excellent. It will go on to question what the purpose of the gospel is in a Christian musician’s life. It will also take a look at the Word of God and examine what the Bible says about how Christians in general should live. The paper will also give some examples of some Christian musicians who are in the popular music world who have failed in keeping a firm foundation in Christ, and a couple of artists who have stayed popular in the popular music world and are still founded in their faith. The paper will then explore what it takes for a Christian musician to stay grounded in the popular music world.

### **What is Musical Excellence?**

The first area that needs to be addressed is musical excellence. What is musical excellence? This is a difficult question to answer, because to many, musical excellence is

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<sup>2</sup> Allen 2013

subjective. Most would believe that musical excellence depends on what a person's musical preference is. However, within each genre or type of music, there is a definite excellence that can be seen, even to someone who is not so fond of that genre. For example, a person who does not like country music can still hear an excellent country song and recognize the musical excellence that was put into it. This means that there has to be a set of qualifications, without bias, that can measure musical excellence across the board. There are specific aspects that separate excellent music from the mundane. In Dr. Allen Schantz's book *Music, the Arts and the Bible*, he explains what he believes artistic excellence is in the music, art and creative world.

Schantz gives four categories that identify artistic excellence: aesthetic excellence, functional fit, ethical integrity and worldview integration. Aesthetic excellence according to Schantz is "how the raw materials or elements of the arts are used or put together."<sup>3</sup> Schantz starts by explaining what aesthetic excellence is not. He says that aesthetic excellence is not just liking something, it is not style and it is not function.<sup>4</sup> Excellence is not liking, it is learning to appreciate.<sup>5</sup> Schantz breaks the first category, aesthetic excellence, into three sub-categories: unity, variety and fittingness-intensity. When it comes to unity in excellence, Schantz asks this question, "Do the elements work separately and together to bring unity in a work?"<sup>6</sup> There are six different elements in music: melody, harmony, rhythm, tone, form, texture and dynamics. Melody is the horizontal pitch. It is a single line of pitches that is the foundation of a piece. Harmony is the vertical pitch. This is added pitches on top of or below the melody that are different pitches than the melody, but work together with the melody. Rhythm is the element of

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<sup>3</sup> Schantz, Dr. Allen. 2015. *Music, the arts and the Bible 2nd ed.* Lakewood: Aesthetic Arts Press.

<sup>4</sup> Schantz 2015

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

time in music. Tone is the color of the pitch. A single pitch can sound different in the voice than it can on the piano. Form is the flow or structure of a piece and how the pitches are arranged to create that piece. Form is the storyteller of music. Texture is how the lines in music work in relationship to each other. Dynamics is how soft or loud the music can be. So, for music to be excellent these six elements must work together in unity, to create that excellent sound. Schantz then states that, to be excellent, music must also have variety. The theme must have more than an A section, one must have an A A' B etc. Music must be like a stew, each bite should taste different and new. The third category he talks about is Fittingness-Intensity. "This is describing how strongly the use of the raw elements and form reflect patterns that are built into human experience."<sup>7</sup> In the form of a work in the arts, this may be accomplished by skillful attention to the dramatic shape of a work: rising tension, climax (focus), and release.<sup>8</sup> When a piece of music is listened to, excellence will make it feel like a journey. Every song has a story; meaning that the song is taking the listener to a certain place, whether there are words to it or not. The rising tension, climax and release of a piece, take the listener on a journey through the story presented in the song. Fittingness-Intensity takes the six elements of music and mixes it with human emotion and experience to create a story, and with that story, it creates excellence for the listener.

The next aspect of artistic excellence, according to Schantz, is functional fit. Functional fit is asking the question of whether a piece of music is fitting into a specific category. Schantz lists three categories that music fits into: folk art, fine art and popular/commercial art. Schantz defines folk art as participatory art that is intended for faith, family, and community.<sup>9</sup> It is

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<sup>7</sup> Schantz 2015

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

spontaneous and heart-felt art that reflects joys and sorrows, relationships and romances, and events and circumstances.<sup>10</sup> The Folk song's main purpose is to gather the community. Hymns are a good example of the folk category. The next category is fine art, which is sometimes called "classical art" or "high art".<sup>11</sup> Classical art is the art that is intended for aesthetic study and delight.<sup>12</sup> An example of this category would be Beethoven's Ninth symphony. The third category is popular/commercial art. This is art that is intended to be sold, or used to be sold to sell something else, to the largest number of people.<sup>13</sup> Popular music is used by the largest number of people.<sup>14</sup> Popular music is art that not only concentrates on the art itself, but on outside areas as well, for example: the personality and life-style of celebrities, the social activities that are part of artistic activities, social, Economic/political associations and the memories of friendships and romances.<sup>15</sup> An example of this category would be "Billie Jean" by Michael Jackson. According to Schantz if music is to be considered excellent it must fit in one of these categories. He believes that all music, in one way or another, fits in these three categories. Schantz also states that in today's world most of the music that is listened to blurs into one or more of these categories. Fine art music is beginning to be used in the popular music world and so on. Schantz states that "all the categories are beginning to overlap, blur into each other, and exchange function..."<sup>16</sup> Even with the blurred lines, music still fits in one of these categories. An example of this would be when modern pop songs use pieces from fine art songs in their music. The song is still in the popular category; it just uses elements from the fine arts category.

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<sup>10</sup> Schantz 2015

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Ultimately music has a purpose and to be excellent the music must operate in the category that it is meant for, or it is not fulfilling its purpose.

The third qualification for artistic excellence is ethical integrity. This qualification is a bit tricky to understand. To better understand, it will be explained from a Christian point of view. One must always remember that creativity comes from the Lord. Humans are made in God's image and God is a creative God. Music that is being created is nothing compared to God the creator. Schantz uses two examples to explain this. His first example is the Israelites who God delivered from Egypt in Genesis. The Israelites began to worship a beautiful golden calf that was made with aesthetic excellence. They worshiped the calf as their god and God became angry. Schantz says that the problem with this is, "They have mistaken YHWH for his creation."<sup>17</sup> His second example is found in Amos. The people were concentrating so much on the aesthetics of their music that they forgot to give the people justice. Amos 5:23-24 states "Take away from me the noise of your song, to the melody of your harp I will listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream". Aesthetic excellence is not more important than God or his people. Music with a lack of ethical integrity does not have any purpose, but to glorify the musician. To be musically excellent, the music should glorifies God.

The fourth qualification that is necessary for music to be excellent according to Schantz is worldview integration. This fourth point asks the question, "Does the tonality of my work in the arts and/or my use of the arts fully reflect a fully-orbited biblical worldview?"<sup>18</sup> This question is more directed towards a Christian artist, but can easily be translated to a non-Christian artist. As a non-Christian artist, does the music that is created reflect a broad

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<sup>17</sup> Schantz 2015

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

worldview? For a Christian artist, Schantz is saying that to have excellent music, there must be a full spectra of human experience. The music must talk about the broad spectra of human reality, from the pain in this world to the joy that God brings. For a Christian, the gospel is worldwide, and if Christians are going to reach the world through their music, their music must realize the whole gospel. He is also saying that the music that is created should reflect the worldview of the one who is creating it. A Christian's world view is a biblical one. "A biblical worldview is based on the infallible Word of God. When you believe the Bible is entirely true, then you allow it to be the foundation of everything you say and do."<sup>19</sup> If a Christian musician is not reflecting a biblical worldview then their music is not excellent, it is mundane.

So, for Christian musicians to be excellent they must be artistically excellent. Their music must be aesthetically excellence, have functional fit, have ethical integrity, and have worldview integration. These aspects will help a Christian musician to succeed in their music making. The music, however, is not the only area for a Christian musician to excel in. A Christian musician is a well-rounded person who not only excels in his music, but in his personal life as well. There is more to musical excellence than just the music; the whole person and message plays a part in that excellence.

### **Christians Applying Excellence:**

In light of the information above, the question arises: are Christian artists operating in excellence? According to Schantz's four elements of artistic excellence, what should a Christian

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<sup>19</sup> Tackett, Del. n.d. "What's a Christian Worldview?" *Focus on the family*. Accessed 4 26, 2016.  
<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian-worldview/whats-a-christian-worldview/whats-a-worldview-anyway>.



musician look like in pursuing that excellence? Let us start with aesthetic excellence. When Christians are crafting a song, they should make sure that all the pieces that make up their song work together in unity. The song itself should also have variety. Christian musicians need to give the people something invigorating to listen to. The melodies and harmonies should be pleasing to the ear. The rhythms, dynamics, texture and so forth must be intricately put together to create an excellent masterpiece. A theme should be picked and then variations of that theme should be added and the song should be built off of that. After this, fittingness-intensity should be thought about. Are the materials being used to “reflect the pattern of human experience?”<sup>20</sup> Once these three aspects of aesthetic excellence are met, a Christian artist is ready to build from there onto the next three elements.

Next is functional fit. For the purposes of this paper, the function that is being concentrated on is popular/commercial music. A little mix of folk music is in there as well, because a Christian artist should be concerned about how their music is touching the community. A Christian’s music is meant for community purposes. However, if a Christian musician finds themselves in the popular music scene, the music that is created needs to be able to fit within the popular music function as well. Therefore, it must be known that the music that is being made, though it is meant for worship, and the enjoyment of music, is ultimately a product. A Christian musician in the popular scene is selling their music to the audience. This means that the music that is being made must be worth selling. Now, though the music must be appealing to the audience for it to sell, it does not mean that the artist should conform to the audience. This is where the blurred lines between popular music and folk should be made. A Christian musician’s main purpose is to serve the community. The music that a Christian musician makes should

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<sup>20</sup> Schantz 2015

foster the community and uplift the community. A Christian artist has a unique and separate calling, and more responsibility than a non-Christian artist. This means that a Christian artist in the popular music scene should try their hardest to make their music a balance between these functions. In other words, this is where it is good to note what is popular all the time is not always right. Music being made by a Christian artist must foster the community, not tear it down.

Christian musicians must then begin to apply ethical integrity. This is quite a task for a Christian artist in the popular realm. Popular artists often fall prey to the fame and success of the popular world. They begin to live for their music, themselves and sin. A Christian musician must remember that it is God who should be praised, not his creation. The Israelites in Genesis began to worship the creation and forgot to worship their God who delivered them.<sup>21</sup> Toby Mac, who is a Grammy award winning gospel artist, puts it this way, in his song *Lose my Soul*, “I don’t want to gain the whole world and lose my soul.” A Christian musician must realize that it is only because of the grace of God that they are in the position to create great music that has become popular. A Christian musicians must never put their music, creativity and lifestyle over their God. It must be realized that the music that is being made is not the ultimate goal. Schantz says this;

It is easy for us to see how the people of ancient Israel worshipped their aesthetic creations rather than their creator who made these possible, but it is often difficult for us to realize how easy it is for many of us today (even in Christian schools of arts) to exalt our esthetic works and performances over loving other people and over loving the Lord through our aesthetic works and performances.<sup>22</sup>

This is important for a Christian musician to realize. They must constantly fight to glorify God over their music making.

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<sup>21</sup> (Schantz 2015)

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

The last aspect of excellence is worldview integration. Christian musicians must be real with their audience. Many aspects in life can be put into music. A Christian artist can make an impact by opening up about real life with their audience. When speaking about the gospel, they must approach the good and the bad. They can talk about love, friendships, sin etc. The question that needs to be asked is, “Does the music that is being made cover the full Christian worldview, and does it align with it?” If the music that a Christian musician is writing does not line up with the Christian worldview, then it is not excellent. Again, what a Christian musician writes should line up with the word of God. Music that opposes what a Christian believes and supports does not reflect the Christian worldview.

So, what is a Christian world view? According to William A. Young, all religions have seven basic questions that they must answer to explain their world view. These seven questions are: What does it mean to be Human? , What is the Basic Human Problem? , What is the Cause of the Problem? , What is the End or Goal of transformation?, What are the means of transformation? , What is realty? and , What is the sacred, and how may the sacred be known?.<sup>23</sup> Young answers these seven questions for the Christian belief. However, this paper will use Matt Jones professor at Colorado Christian University revised Young’s answers to the Christian worldview. He states that humans are created by God in Gods image. The problem in the world is that there are severed relationships that cause sin. These severed relationships were caused by disordered loves. What Christians live for in the end is the restoration of these relationships. The way to reach those restored relationships is through the trinity, atonement and the incarnation. The reality of this fallen world is that God made it and the universe. The God who made this

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<sup>23</sup> Young, William A. 2013. *The World's Religion "Worldviews and Contemporary Issues*. Pearson.15-16

universe is a triune God, and he has revealed himself to humanity. With this in mind, a Christian musicians' music must fit within that worldview. This allows for many broad topics to create music with.

### **Are Christian musicians reaching excellent standards?**

So the question is asked again, are Christian Musicians in the popular scene operating in excellence? Christian artists appear to be making excellent music for only Christians, but not for the world, which is what they are commissioned to be the light in. The Christian music genre has musicians like Toby Mac, Mercy Me, News Boys, etc. These musician are excellent, but their music is not heard on the popular music stations or on the television music awards stages. The Bible says in Mark 2:17, "On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners.'" There is nothing wrong with the Christian music genre. Christians need encouragement, and need to praise God and they need that music. But, why only make music for people who have already found the Lord? In the scripture above, Jesus is explaining that it is the people who do not know the Lord who need the gospel the most. Christian musicians are giving medicine to people who are already healed. It is the sick world who needs the Christian musicians to stand up and bring the medicine to them, in artistically excellent music.

Music in the Christian genre good and operates in excellence. Their music however, is not reaching the popular world. This is partially because they concentrate on the lyrics more than they do the music. "Contemporary Christian Music has nothing to do with musical style. It has only to do with lyrics."<sup>24</sup> There has to be more than just good lyrics to reach the popular world.

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<sup>24</sup> Romanowski, William D. 2005. *Religion and Popular Culture in America: Revised Edition*. University of California Press

It is impossible to reach a world that does not know the Lord without knowing what reaches them and touches their inner being. It is not just enough to have good lyrics, “in addition, the Christian music art world places spirituality and morality over aesthetic and cultural considerations, a feature with little correlation in the mainstream entertainment business.”<sup>25</sup>

People who do not know the Lord are going to be drawn in by the music initially, not the spiritual aspect. What makes music appealing and likeable to the audience? Christians can begin to look at what makes music function and work. The questions should be asked: what melodies work better? What tempo makes people bob their heads? Etc. Christian musicians have to know how to read music and write it, so that they can make it. There is true talent mixed with hard work and wisdom, which goes into making music. Many artists who are secular make great music. They are smart and they know what sounds good, is good, and what functions together in the musical process. They know their art and they use it to its full potential. This is how a Christian artist in the popular world should operate when making music. This does not mean leaving out the spiritual part. This just means the spiritual part of the music is metaphorically being wrapped in beautiful wrapping paper that draws people in and causes them to unwrap it. Part of this wrapping is knowing your audience.

Would it be effective to tell a person who does not speak English about a fun event that they should come to, in English? This is the same with witnessing in the popular music world. The Christian musicians must know the musical language of the people listening to popular music. “As we seek to reach the lost, we must begin speaking to them in a language they will understand.”<sup>26</sup> What is popular and what is not? If Christian artists want to write music that is

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<sup>25</sup> Romanowski 2005

<sup>26</sup> Allen 2013

considered pop music, then they must know what is trending in pop music at the time, and have a vision of what will be popular in the upcoming future. This does not mean that the Christian musician must copy and be a replica of what popular culture is, it just means that as Christian musician, it is important to be aware of their surroundings. Part of the reason that Christians are not being successful in the popular realm is because they are not speaking the language of the people. A Christian artist must be discerning of its audience. What is the audience wanting? If the audience that a Christian musician is targeting is pop, then the language that their music must speak in, is pop. A person must remember that as the generations start to filter in new ideas, preferences start to filter in as well. There is only a handful of people who love the way music was done in the past and these are people who have a true appreciation of music. The rest of the generation follows the trend and evolves into liking what is popular. “So if you want to reach a certain kind of people through music, it is pretty simple\_ you had better use music they like or they probably won’t listen to you. On that basis, it is unrealistic to say that God-honoring music must not borrow from the culture.”<sup>27</sup>

This does not mean that a Christian artist should blend in and become like everyone else. To be a great artist, an artist needs a unique approach. Some of the greatest musicians of the times past and present have been great, because they stood out and were unique. Michael Jackson is one of these people. It is unclear whether Michael Jackson died a believer or not. He was born into a Jehovah witness family.<sup>28</sup> He however did not like the religious label.<sup>29</sup> He did claim to read his the Bible daily, and pray to God daily to thank him and ask for guidance.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Pise, Kiwi. n.d. *True Micheal Jackson* . Accessed 4 25, 2016. <http://www.truemichaeljackson.com/>.

<sup>29</sup> Pise n.d.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Some believe that he died a believer, others do not. This is a fact that will never be known, and is not necessary to know for this paper. Whether or not someone likes Pop or RnB music, they cannot deny that Michael Jackson is a genius when it comes to music.

“No single artist-indeed, no movement or force-has eclipsed what Michael Jackson accomplished in the first years of his adult solo career, Jackson changed the balance in the pop world in a way that nobody has since. He forced rock & roll and the mainstream press to acknowledge that the biggest pop star in the world could be young and black, and in doing so he broke down more barriers than anybody.”<sup>31</sup>

Michael sold over 75 million albums in the United States alone; this does not include the rest of the world.<sup>32</sup> In 1984 he was the first artist to receive eight Grammys in one night.<sup>33</sup> He actually received 11 Grammys during the 80's.<sup>34</sup> His music was so popular that his first album generated seven Top 10 hits on the Billboard's Hot 100.<sup>35</sup> One of the great things about Michael is that he was not afraid to be who he was in his music. He was odd, but it made for great music. That great music caused the pop world to change. Michael's first music video for his hit "Thriller," changed the music video world for good.<sup>36</sup> The 14 minute long video unlocked the unlimited possibilities of music videos, while helping to cement the viability of the medium.<sup>37</sup> He put all that he had in his music, and his music was excellent. He was talented in the fact that he was not afraid to do impossible and creative things. He stretched the limits of harmony, beat and tone. His songs were "well-conceived body of passion, rhythm and structure that defined the

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<sup>31</sup> editors, Rolling stone. 2016. "Rolling Stone." *Michael Jackson...Biography*. Accessed 4 25, 2016. <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/artists/michael-jackson/biography>.

<sup>32</sup> Grammy's, The. 2014. "Michael Jackson: 10 Achievements That Made Him The King of Pop." *The Grammy's*. June 24. Accessed March n/a, 2016. <http://www.grammy.com/blogs/michael-jackson-10-achievements-that-made-him-the-king-of-pop>.

<sup>33</sup> Grammy's 2014

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Grammy's 2014

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

sensibility-if not the inner life-of the artist behind the emotion.”<sup>38</sup> Michael also was very wise with his use of synthesizers and instruments. He used saxophones, pianos, keyboards, harmonics etc. His songs were full of unique and body moving beats. He did not just make the mark in pop music, he became the king of it. Many of his songs were also loud moral statements. His music was a cry for a cause. For example, his song, “Black or White,” was meant to open up the door to talk about racism. He had songs about police brutality, racism, love, justice, the poor, the needy, politics and much more. His songs were war cries for the generation. His overarching theme is to change the world. He was bold, even though he was living in a time that considered what he was saying to be controversial. He was unique and was not afraid to stand out and make the music he wanted, and he changed the world; even after his death. The week after Michael died, he became the first artist to sell more than one million digital tracks; precisely 2.6 million tracks were sold.<sup>39</sup> When he died it seemed as if the world stopped for some time after. Mass amounts of people attended memorials for him all around the world. What an impact he made. There are plenty of talented Christian musicians in the world, who are unique and can make just as big of an impact as Michael did. What if a talented Christian musician decided to stand out and be unique? What kind of impact could be made; especially with the fact that they would be carrying a truth that could change the world?

Christian musicians are never meant to blend in. The Bible says in Matthew 5:13-16 that, “You are the salt of the earth. But if that salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” Christians are to be the salt in the world. So, as musicians, Christians should be adding a little bit of flavor to

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<sup>38</sup> R. s. editors 2016

<sup>39</sup> Grammy's 2014



the music world. They should try new things, invent new things and create new things. There has to be a uniqueness that will draw people in. Part of this uniqueness is not being afraid to be who they are and not be moved by the opinions of others. So, a Christian artist should know their audience, but also be unique.

### **Christian Musicians and the Gospel:**

So, once a Christian artist has excellent music, what is next? Does a Christian artist need to reflect the gospel in their lyrics? Do they need to reflect the gospel in their lives? “If to be in a healthy state of mind is to be whole (not divided into left and right), and if to be whole means to be holy, then wholeness is what the Christian artist seeks.”<sup>40</sup> If a person is truly a Christian and follower of Christ, there is a need for the gospel to be reflected in their lives and in their careers. “To say this positively, we must listen for the voice that always pulls us beyond our current career and toward the mission of God, toward finding our identity in Jesus and advancing the kingdom first.”<sup>41</sup> God has to come first in everything that a Christian does. This fact applies to the life of the Christian musician. “The commonly held viewpoint is that the sacred and secular worlds are separate and distinct. Worship is for Sundays but on other days one’s thinking and behavior is set to conform to a secular world. We make distinctions between someone who is ‘religious’ as opposed to someone who is ‘non-religious.’<sup>42</sup> It is important for a Christian musician’s life to reflect the Gospel. It is important for them to live a Christian life no matter

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<sup>40</sup> L'engle, Madeleine. 2002. *Walking on Water*. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press.

<sup>41</sup> Waalkes, Scott. 2015. Rethinking work as vocation: From protestant advice to gospel corrective. *Christian Scholar's Review* 44 (2): 135.

<sup>42</sup>David Kim, David Mccalman Dan Fisher. 2012. "The Sacred/Secular Divide and the Christian Worldview." *Journal of Buisness and ethics* 203-205.

what arena they are in. Being a popular musician does not exclude a Christian from living the Christian life. Being a Christian is not just a title that can be claimed and not lived. The Christian life should be lived by a Christian in every aspect of their life. Christianity is not a title, it is a lifestyle.

But instead of leading whole and integrated lives, they find they must put aside their beliefs at work and instead put on a “secular” mindset. They have been taught that faith is strictly personal and that it has no place in the public arena. Furthermore, the purpose and meaning of career is defined in secular terms. It is all about climbing the corporate ladder, seeking prestige that comes with the job title, and making decisions solely on highest salary or compensation. Sometimes, it is doing what is best for the company even if it goes against one’s deeply held beliefs.<sup>43</sup>

Christian musicians cannot give away their beliefs and faiths for the purposes of their job. There is a need for them to stand firm in their foundation in Christ. The Christian worldview must also be present in a Christian musician’s lyrics.

If lyrics are used in a Christian musician’s music, those lyrics must be honoring to God. This does not necessarily mean that they have to use scripture in all their music and talk about God in all of their music. This does mean that their music must operate under a Christian worldview. “The difference between a song that honors God and one that doesn’t is not style, but content. Music made by Christians can and should be influenced by faith, but exactly what that looks like and sounds like cannot be conveniently defined or compartmentalized. Again, I believe that the only style God cares about is the life style behind the music.”<sup>44</sup> So, for example, a Christian musician writing about a relationship with the opposite sex should make sure that it is in accordance with a Christian worldview, and so on. It is important that a Christian musician’s music honors God in every aspect of life they choose to write about. “God-honoring music is that

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<sup>43</sup> David Kim 2012

<sup>44</sup> Allen 2013

which has been written to highlight truths about God. Such songs often remind of us who God is and what he has done.”<sup>45</sup>

Songs that honor God do not need lyrics or words either. There are many musicians in the popular music scene whose music is not song lyrics based, but operate in different areas like instruments or being a DJ. That music can also be used to honor God. “But they don’t always need words. Christians have to recognize that even instrumental music can glorify God, so let’s realize that various kinds of vocal music might do the same- even if in some songs God is never personally mentioned.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Music as Ministry**

For a Christian artist music is a ministry. Matthew 28:18-20 states, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very ends of the age.” It is the part of a Christian’s mandate that everything they do should be to the glory of God. “If we work to the glory of God in our positions, we are living out our calling.”<sup>47</sup> In the above scripture from Matthew, Jesus commands all of his disciples to go make more disciples. He tells the disciples to baptize these people in the name of the father son and Holy Spirit. He tells them to teach the nations to obey his command. Romans 12:1 states, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God-this is your true and proper worship.” Therefore, it would seem that disciples of Christ are required to live according to the commands that they must teach. He told the disciples to teach the nations. 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 Paul states, “Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Waalkes 2015

myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” Paul is saying that he must make himself live according to what he believes and what he teaches. So now the question is, what does this have to do with being a Christian in the popular music realm? It would seem that the purpose for a Christian musician in the popular music realm is to spread the gospel, live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, love others and declare the name of the Lord. “The point is that we must understand our work and all of our relationship’s first and foremost in response to the call of Jesus to follow him and ‘fish for people’ (Matt 4:19). The calling for Christians is always first conversations, lifelong as a disciple, and the carrying out of the Great Commission.”<sup>48</sup> Matthew 10:32 says “Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my father in Heaven” (NIV). So, secretly being a Christian in the popular music scene is not what God has called for Christian musicians to do.

It is important to know that the call as a Christian is greater than the call as a musician. God and his will should be the most important thing and deciding factor in a Christian musician’s life. It seems that many Christian artists who have made it to the popular music realm tend to start to live for the music and the fans, instead of for God. Recall that in Schantz book, he talks about how the people of Israel began to worship their creativity and their creation over the God who fed them those creative ideas.

So whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the Church of God- Even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1)

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<sup>48</sup> Waalkes 2015

Putting God to the back burner is not an effective way to be a Christian musician. God does not come second, he comes first. It must not be forgotten that creativity comes from the Lord.

Without him there would not be a music industry. Above all God is the one who needs to be pleased.

So, does this mean music that does not talk about the Lord is bad, and unacceptable for a Christian artist to write? No. There are many songs to write: love songs, political songs, songs about hanging with friends, songs about a beautiful rainy day and the list goes on. However, those songs should be glorifying to God. Somehow the music has to point the listener to their maker. This is important, because it is another part of the mandate on a Christian artist's life.

### **The Life of a Christian Musician**

How are Christian artists supposed to live their lives? Romans 12:2 says this. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good, acceptable and perfect." The gospel should be reflected in the lives of a Christian musician, even if it goes against what is popular. It seems that many musicians become famous and begin to be transformed by the world instead of transforming the world.

One of the best known pop stars in America is singer and songwriter Nick Jonas. Nick started his career when he was young. He starred on Broadway as a child. His first album was also a gospel album, as a child. He later became famous when he and his two older brothers, Kevin Jonas and Joe Jonas, came out as a band called The Jonas Brothers. "In early 2007, Disney's Hollywood Record picked up the trio and by the summer's end their songs were heard

all over Radio Disney and their videos could be seen on the Disney Channel".<sup>49</sup> The Jonas brothers became a huge success. Their songs were heard everywhere. The brothers made history when they were the first artist to have three albums on the top billboard charts all at one time.<sup>50</sup> They released four albums altogether, all of which gained great success.

The Jonas Brothers were not a normal boy band. They actually came in with a faith foundation. The boy's father, Kevin Jonas Sr., was a worship leader and head pastor at a Pentecostal church. The boys were unusual, because they became famous and maintained their fame, even with their professed faith. Their boisterous faith actually drew a greater crowd. Many of the Christian parents of pre-teens approved of their children listening to the Jonas brothers and even encouraged them. One of the greater things that the Jonas brothers were known for, were their purity rings. The boys vowed to keep their virginity until they were married. They were public about this decision and held fast to that decision for many years.

In 2010 Nick Jonas ventured out with a solo album called *The administration*. He toured with this album on the side. The boys also began to start acting. They were on Disney Channels movies, Camp Rock, and Camp Rock 2. They also had their own TV show, called Jonas. He did guest appearances on shows like Mr. Sunshine, ABC's Last Man Standing and Broadway Drama Smash.<sup>51</sup> While Nick was busy with his brother's album and touring he also starred in many Broadway musicals: How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Hair Spray and Les Miserable.

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<sup>49</sup> —. 2016. "Nick Jonas Biography." *The Biography.com website*. April 8. Accessed April 6, 2016. <http://www.biography.com/people/nick-jonas-21265437#personal-life>.

<sup>50</sup> Editors, Nick Jonas Biography 2016

<sup>51</sup> Editors, Nick Jonas Biography 2016

The brothers broke up in 2012, and Nick started his solo career. His solo career became successful and he is one of the most well-known pop stars in this time. His music began to become racier and his life reflected less and less of the Christian worldview. Nick also stopped wearing his purity ring. He began to emphasize that he was now a real adult and sex was a part of that.

“I had the time outside of the public eye to develop my own belief system and figure out what is important to me and what I believe in relation to sex and God and all those kind of things you do as you grow up, and now I'm happy," Nick explained. "I'm a man and I do what men do."<sup>52</sup> He does still claims to have a relationship with the Lord, he states "I've had an incredibly intense journey with faith and religion and my own growth," Nick told Huff Post Live. "My belief in God is still very strong and important to me as a person and I think that's all that should matter. I grew up in a church environment and still have love for the church. What's important now is my relationship with God, and that I not judge and that I not be judged."<sup>53</sup>

His newest album *Chains*, came out in stores with a parental advisory sticker on it. His new songs are full of sexual materials and foul language. Nick has also kept up with acting and has been starring in a television show called *The Kingdom* where he plays a homosexual boxer and even participates in some homosexual sex scenes. Nick is in the public eye and people look up to him. His lifestyle could lead observers to conclude that a Christian can do whatever they want and it will be okay.

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In those you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander and obscene talk from your mouth. So not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices. (Colossians 3:5-10)

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<sup>52</sup> Martin 2015

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Living a life that is pleasing to God is important. Putting aside the things of the world is how God wants a Christian to live, this also goes for Christian musicians.

Another famous popular music star who started out as a Christian is Katy Perry. Katy Perry, who was born Katheryn Hudson, is a pop music sensation who is known for her over-the-top fashions, quirky stage props, and catchy songs.<sup>54</sup> She was raised by her mother and father who were both pastors. Katy showed an interest in singing at the age of nine.<sup>55</sup> She began her singing career as a Gospel singer. She had put out three gospel albums that were not successful. She then began to change her style and how she approached music. Katy was raised in a very conservative home.<sup>56</sup> She was not allowed to listen to certain music like rock. This upbringing caused her to rebel. Katy became famous after her song "I kissed a girl" was debuted. The song was about her sexual experiences with a girl. From then on her music was associated with sexual references and experiences. Katy Perry is well known. She too has made a huge impact in the popular music world, but by conforming to the world, not by changing it.

It would seem that these two artists chose to go with what they thought was popular, for whatever individual reasons, over what was Godly. They put who they were aside to obtain what they thought was true fame. Both of these artists have aesthetically excellent music. They are popular, because the world considers their music to be good. However, their music and their life styles do not reflect a Christian worldview. When Nick Jonas became famous his life reflected a Christian worldview and he was still popular in the secular popular music scene. He and his

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<sup>54</sup> Editors, Biography.com. 2016. "Katy Perry Biography." *The Biography.com website*. n/a. Accessed April 7, 2016. <http://www.biography.com/people/katy-perry-562678>.

<sup>55</sup> Editors, Katy Perry Biography 2016

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.



brothers showed that it was possible to be a Christian in the popular music world and still make excellent popular music. He however decided to give that up for the world. 1 John 2:15-17 states,

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him, for all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the father but from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Christian artists have to put God first in their lives. The world offers fame and fortune and it delivers temporary satisfaction. A Christian artist has to be aware that the popular music scene is not going to be easy to work in. There is going to be a temptation to fall away from the things of the Lord and cling to the things of this world. This is not an invitation for fear. Christian musicians do not need to run from the popular music scene. It is important for them to be there, just the way that they live their life has to be different.

So the question remains, how a Christian artist can remain rooted in their foundation in Christ.

But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions. (Galatians 5:16-26)

This above scripture states that if a person walks by the spirit they will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The popular music scene is full of “fleshly” desires. Being in the popular music world is a hard place to be. It offers so much and everything is easily attainable. There is sexual immorality, drugs, homosexuality, etc. There is a pull in the popular music scene for people to follow the desires of their flesh. Following after those desires are even encouraged and expected. To avoid this, the scripture above says to walk by the spirit. This means that the opinions of the fans and the critics are not what needs to guide a Christian musician. What would help is if a

Christian musician would stay deep in prayer and in the word. To walk by the Spirit a person must know the Spirit. A Christian musician in the popular world must learn to set boundaries that cannot be crossed so that they will not compromise on their beliefs. There has to be a foundation that is set in Christ so that when they are enticed by the world they can turn to the spirit for help. This is not saying that a Christian musician in the popular music scene should be perfect. There are going to be mistakes made. But, if Christian musicians do not go into the popular music world with a foundation firmly in Christ they will be lost.

Now, though there are many musicians who have fallen from the faith as musicians, there are some prominent ones who have not. One of those artist is the lead singer of the Grammy award winning band U2, David Hewson, also known as Bono. Bono was born in Dublin, Ireland to a Roman Catholic postal worker and a Protestant mother.<sup>57</sup> He joined U2 while he was in high school and became the main singer and wrote most of the band's lyrics. Bono focused on untraditional themes in his lyrics like politics and religion.<sup>58</sup> U2 is big on social activism in their music and in their life style. "Outside of music, Bono has used his celebrity to generate awareness about many global problems."<sup>59</sup> Bono is a well-known follower of Christ. "Some critics have called Bono 'Holier -Than-Thou' and have mocked him as 'St. Bono.' The most vicious attacks, however, came from other Christians who called Bono's faith into question because of his day job."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> B. editors n.d.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Falsani, Cathleen. 2013. "Marcu Mumford, Lead singer of Mumford and sons: "I wouldn't call myself a Christian". *Huffpost Religion*. April 3. Accessed April 9, 2016.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/03/marcus-mumford-lead-singer-of-mumford--sons-i-wouldnt-call-myself-a-christian\\_n\\_3009777.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/03/marcus-mumford-lead-singer-of-mumford--sons-i-wouldnt-call-myself-a-christian_n_3009777.html).

Bono is a world-renowned musician who has made an impact in the popular music scene and is known around the world as a great musician. Not only does he excel in music, but he also lives by what he believes. He knows he is not perfect. Bono said of himself in an interview “By the way, I don’t set myself up to be any kind of Christian. I can’t live up to that. It’s something I aspire to, but I don’t feel comfortable with that badge,”.....”It’s a badge I want to wear. But I’m not a very good advertisement for God.”<sup>61</sup> Bono’s life reflects the mandate of a Christian. “Bono’s actions and words tell a story of faith that is much more nuanced, and therefore truer, than any label they might pin over their hearts or have thrust upon him.”<sup>62</sup> Bono was named a “person of the Year” by Time magazine for his charitable work.<sup>63</sup> Instead of using his fame to promote himself and live for himself, he is helping the people in world. He and his family are honoring Christ.

Bono is not the only popular artist that is living a life honoring God. The band *Mumford and Sons* started in England, in 2007. The band was made up of Marcus Mumford, Winston Marshall, Ben Lovett, and Ted Dwane. The band quickly became a part of London’s underground folk scene.<sup>64</sup> They began to perform frequently and they put out four EPs before they signed on with Island Records.<sup>65</sup> In 2009 their single “Little Lion Man” was named the hottest record in the world in July of that year by BBC.<sup>66</sup> In 2012 their second album came out and went platinum in the U.S. after it top the Billboard 200.<sup>67</sup> They also received a Grammy for

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<sup>61</sup> Falsani 2013

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> B. editors n.d

<sup>64</sup> B. editors 2016

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> B. editors 2016

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

best album that year. The band toured all over the world and then took a break. They have come out with a well anticipated new album.

The band is known to be a secular band whose members happen to be followers of Christ. The lead singer of the band, Marcus Mumford, is even the son of John and Eleanor Mumford, who are the national leaders of the Vineyard Church in the U.K. and Ireland, and arm of the international evangelical Christian Vineyard movement. He was raised in a Christian home. “The music of Mumford & Sons, for which Mumford is the main lyricist, is laden with the themes and imagery of faith-often drawing specifically upon the Christian tradition. They explore relationships with God and others; fears and doubts; sin, redemption, and most of all, grace.”<sup>68</sup> Though Mumford and son’s lyrics explore God and their belief in him, they do not necessarily put God’s name in their music. Their music honors God and causes their listeners to question who the Lord is and to question life.

### **Conclusion:**

Christian musicians who find themselves in the popular music scene are called to make excellent music that honors the Lord and live lives that are pleasing to God. Christian musicians must have the ability to create excellent music, without diminishing the gospel that they have been commissioned to share; and still live the life that they have been called to, as followers of Christ.

Theologian Gary Badcock captures the gospel idiom of calling quite well. He argues that a calling does not stem from a non-specific sense of the rhythm of nature or from unfettered exploration of the inner self. It stems instead from an encounter with the holy, with God, with the transcendent source of all human hopes and possibilities - and more specifically, from the source as encountered in Jesus Christ and in the church as his worshiping community. This is why a vocation is always to be understood in terms of

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<sup>68</sup> Falsani 2013

bearing the cross: it is something we share with Christ in some small measure, a part of his mission in the world, something that requires a death to self for the sake of God and other people. It is not primarily about self-discovery or self-fulfillment at all, but about finding one's life by losing it for Christ's sake - that is to say, for the sake of his mission, for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Christian musicians share their job with Jesus. The purpose is to use music to draw the world to Christ. "Christians are called to the dual mission of evangelism and discipleship."<sup>69</sup> This call is not an easy one, it will take lots of work and lots of grace. "...we merely need to work to serve God in our various spheres, attending to the 'natural', God-given norms within them." The world needs Christian musicians who are making great and excellent music. The world needs to see these people living true Christian lives, so that through them they will see the love and truth of God. These musicians must lure the world in with the work that they put into their music. It is possible for a Christian musician to become popular and still stand firm in the Gospel. There are musicians who have done it, but there needs to be more.

"Go into all the World and preach the gospel"- Mark 16:15

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<sup>69</sup> Allen 2013

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