

December 2003: The Gift of Music

by Aaron Greenway

At Christmas time every year we hear the carols, the choirs, the Christmas bells, and the Holiday, Christmas music played in every store. By the fifth round of “Jingle Bell Rock”, we are about ready to go insane. But, do you know what? Music really is a wonderful thing, not just at Christmas, but all year round. Coming from a musician’s perspective, there is something special about sharing music with someone, music that you have written, sung, or even recorded. There is also something special about musicians. In many ways they are able to communicate musically what others have hoped to say their entire lives about issues in their lives and how they feel about God. Musicians (and most creative people in the Arts) are generally very sensitive people and when something comes out of them, it comes from the heart.

I remember when I was studying music in my undergrad, the “Concert Chorale” underwent the task of learning “Messiah.” What an incredible undertaking, a work by the composer, Handel, who wrote the piece in a very short time for the king. Since then, music by Handel, Bach, Mozart, Chopin, and many others have touched us to the very core, especially when that music lifts up Christ.

By the same token, music can have huge overtones of evil, that influence a culture. The lyrics on the new Britney Spears CD talk about explicit sexual things (as well as displaying it on the cover of magazines). Marilyn Manson is a Satanist. The band, Nirvana, sang about depression and things relating to

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hopelessness in life. On the other hand, we see people like Don Moen, Rachael Lampa, and Bob Carlisle singing about nothing but hope because they have experienced it firsthand. A musician who does not know Christ, because of the nature of their musical, melancholy heart, can be caught in a funnel of depression and hopelessness with no way out. Their life begins to spin out of control. We have even seen these things recently happen in the media in the personal lives of these “superstars.”

However, there are two potential misunderstandings with those on the outside of music circles, people who are gifted in other areas. One is idolatry. They become fixated on a musician because of the media circus that has occurred with Hollywood and musicians, turning them into “superhuman beings.” A musician, an artist, is not to be worshipped. God is to be worshipped. The second problem can occur just the opposite, where the person is seen as a threat, if they are gifted. I saw this happen where I went to college. My professor was and still is an international opera singer, with the kind of voice that can match Pavarotti, and the kind of singer that put everyone else to shame in that music hall. But he left after two or three years of dealing with the sneering and the terrible treatment he received from the other professors.

Many people in the church today tend to look at different ministries differently. The idea of one preaching is highly recognized. All kinds of people have different gifts, talents and abilities. And people will tell you how God has blessed them and burdened them. But for some reason, if someone says to people they know that they are musically gifted or that they are gifted in drama, that person will either get a fan club (that he doesn’t want) or he will be looked down upon as full of himself. I don’t want either scenario. It is almost as if preaching, teaching, and baking cakes for church fund raisers have to do with ministry, and singing and acting has to do with entertainment. That is false!

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there being a light. We need them! We welcome them into our church to serve, but we also don't put them on a petal stool.

David did not apologize for his abilities as a musician. He wrote most of the psalms, lyrics that used to have music to them. His music has been #1 for thousands of years. David played the harp like no other. He got himself a major gig in the king's palace. David was the Christian artist of his day. But he also tended sheep, and He loved God deeply, so much so that God called him a "man after His own heart." Interesting that God would call a musician that!

Are you a musician who needs a way to express your love for God? Get plugged into a church, or help create a program where you can begin to develop that. God may not be preparing you to be a major Christian artist (or maybe He is!), but you can be a blessing to those who are there sharing in your gifts. Are you a listener? You are no less for having the gift of service. Bake your cakes! Musicians have to eat! And we love you for it!! This is how the family of God nurtures itself.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!