



...A Critical Evaluation

by Evangelist Ken Lynch

INTRODUCTION

- The following material was given to me by an unknown source. In carefully reviewing it, I found it to be very interesting and, at the same time, very troubling. There is a good deal with which I totally agree, especially under the section on the “power of music.”

- *my comments and observations in red.* It is my prayer and hope that this information will be a valuable help to those who, in order to be clear, *I have put the original material in black and* truly desire to develop a Biblically-sound and Christ-exalting music ministry in their local church.

- May I say that there is no place in the church for the world. Indeed, the church is in the world, but the world is not to be in the church. Our job is to go out to the world, win the world to Christ

by God’s grace and bring them into the church where they can be taught and grow spiritually. CCM music tends to stunt, rather than encourage, real spiritual growth.

- In Volume 5 in his DVD series on creation,¹ Russ Miller quotes from Saul Alinsky’s book *Rules for Radicals* from the section *Rules for Radicals in the Church*. Alinsky writes,

“Come into a church and set up conflict to divide by bringing in non-believers and compromisers.”²

Miller says that this practice ultimately leads into a compromise that takes one away from God’s Word toward secular non-biblical views. He goes on to

¹ *Creation, Evolution & Science Ministries*, Vol. 5, “By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them;” Lecture II, Part II. www.CreationMinistries.org.

² This is *exactly* what the “seeker-friendly” church, Rick Warren’s “Purpose Driven Church” and others have done and continue to do.

reveal surveys showing that 50% of pastors and 70% of seminary graduates hold to a secular world view. Alinsky continues in his diatribe,

“Marginalize non-compromisers [i.e. those who continue to stand on Biblical authority and won’t give in and cooperate] through ridicule; name-calling: mean-spirited, haughty, arrogant, intolerant and unloving...)³

Miller then goes on to refer to what he calls the “Christian industry.” Several years ago, World Magazine did an interview with Michael W. Smith. In the several page article there were multitudinous references to such terms as “consumer, fans, profits, bottom line, charts, market, etc.” all of which are business terms, not ministry terms. In

³ Interesting to note two terms in particular, “intolerant and unloving.” Yet, in reality, who is more intolerant and unloving of others with whom they disagree? It seems that religiously, as well as politically, “tolerance” is a one-way street. We must tolerate them, but they need not tolerate our dissenting view.

the entire article there was not one mention anywhere of a ministry-related term. The CCM “business” is a huge money-making business. Miller says, “Having sold out God’s Word, many churches have gone into business. Marketed at seekers [the subject of this booklet], the Christian industry has abandoned soul-winning and biblical knowledge. The *best entertainment, the shortest message* [emphasis mine] and get people out *feeling good* about themselves” [example: Joel Osteen] seems to be their main emphasis.

- Possibly my biggest concern about this material is the extent to which the “contemporary church” goes to make the unbeliever (i.e. unconverted sinner) *comfortable* in church. This pragmatic practice is extremely unscriptural and wrong. What the unbeliever needs is a clear gospel message that will bring him to conviction of sin and ultimately

conversion from sin. There is also a blatant disregard here for the principle of biblical separation as stated in Isaiah 5:20 where the Bible says “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*”

Romans 12:2 emphatically says to “be *not conformed* [i.e. to fashion or shape one thing so that it looks like or resembles another] to this world...” Yet, historically, this is exactly what CCM is all about (See Paul Baker’s book, *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music?*” It must be remembered that the whole purpose of Christian music is to glorify God and *edify believers!* (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

- It is my heart’s desire and prayer that the Lord will use this material to help many understand a difficult and extremely emotional issue.

They (the Contemporary Church)
say:

**Don't Underestimate the Power
of Music!**

Our observation presents a serious problem: Historically, the primary argument used in defending the use of “rock and rock-type” styles of music is that “music is amoral.” Amoral means without moral value, either good or bad. If music is, as “they” have said for years, amoral, it follows that music is *powerless*! However, those in the conservative music camp would agree 100% with the above statement! But for the CCM crowd to make such a statement is extremely hypocritical and dishonest.

- [They say:] “It [music] can soften people’s hearts.”

Our comment: Amen! Absolutely true.

- [They say:] “It can change people’s moods.”

Our comment: Agreed.

- [They say:] “It can help people focus and avoid distractions.”

Our comment: Absolutely right.

- [They say:] “It can prepare people to hear and understand a message.”

Our comment: Right on.

- [They say:] “It can present a message all by itself.”

Our observation is that this is by far the most interesting statement. If music is amoral, it can have no effect on anyone for better or for worse. And it certainly cannot convey any message. The problem is that music can and does convey its own message. However, worldly music coupled with a “spiritual” message sends a wrong message that only creates confusion.

[They say:] **“Why Must We Select Music Carefully?”**

According to the Contemporary Music philosophy,

Most Christian Songs...

- are written by Christians for Christians and were never meant for unbelievers.

Our observation: This is a true statement and should not surprise anyone. Colossians 3:16 makes it crystal clear that Christian music is, in fact, intended for Christians and not unbelievers!

- use Christian language profusely.

Comment: What other kind of language *should* a Christian song use?

This is one reason it is called “Christian music.”

- tend to use metaphors, biblical symbols and concepts that are not understood by outsiders, and not even by many Christians!

Comment: What else would one expect to find? Again, Christian music is not intended primarily for unbelievers and the unchurched. While it is true that even some Christians may not understand some of these concepts, could it be because they are new believers or young believers who need to grow in their Christian faith? Could it also be that such may be considered as “carnal” Christians? (See I Cor. 3) A Biblical Christian cannot become a spiritually healthy Christian if all he feeds on is the

“milk of the Word.” Milk is needed only for newborns and infants, both physically and spiritually! (See I Peter 2:2 and Hebrews 5:10-10)

- address spiritual concerns and issues far more than everyday life issues.

Observation: And so they should. Spiritual music *should* address *spiritual* concerns. Both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 use the term “spiritual” in describing the word “songs.” In the original Greek language the word translated “spiritual” literally means “as opposed to *carnal*.” Music that was originally intended to “copy the world” (CCM; see the book, *Why Should the Devil Have All the Good Music*” by Paul Baker), does not, indeed cannot, meet the Biblical standard of *spiritual*. CCM,

in its copy of and identity with the world is not spiritual music, it is worldly music, or, to use the Biblical term, carnal music that satisfies the flesh.

- address the perceived needs of unbelievers rather than their felt needs.

Comment: There is too much emphasis here on “feelings.” Frankly, unbelievers really are not even aware most of the time just what their spiritual needs are. The right kind of spiritual music can actually help them discover those needs rather than simple, superficial, sentimental, feeling-based music that is based upon a very worldly style whose primary appeal is to the flesh.

- are easy to sing by Christians who are accustomed to that style of music. Most hymns were written to be sung in SATB harmony – virtually non-existent in the secular music world today. Unchurched people are not likely to identify with, or appreciate, most of this type of music!

Observation: SATB harmony stands for soprano, alto, tenor and bass; typical of music found in any hymnbook. This statement is totally true, as are all of the above, but not without its problems. Just because this style of music is “virtually non-existent in the secular world” does not mean that it should be eliminated from the worship service. it must be remembered that *we are not dealing with “secular” music but with Christian music.* Just because the world does not appreciate or identify with this style of music does

not mean that the church should change to satisfy unsaved people who have no knowledge of why conservative churches use it. If it sounds too “churchy,” maybe it’s because it *is* church music.

MUSIC FOR SEEKER-SENSITIVE SERVICES

Guidelines for Selecting Music

[They say:]

- ***Avoid songs that use King James language.***

Rationale: Unchurched people do not identify with Middle [Elizabethan] English. It sounds both foreign and outdated to most secular people.

Comment: While it is true that we generally do not use old English in everyday common speech, there is a power in the old English that has been lost in contemporary English. Interesting that no one talks about wanting to “modernize” Shakespeare! Quite frankly, the number of songs that use “King James English is very limited.

- ***Avoid songs that use biblical terminology, metaphors or concepts.***

Rationale: Anyone (including a believer) who does not understand what certain words mean may miss the point of the song. Difficult concepts aren't likely to be understood, nor will they be relevant to the unbeliever's place in life.

A couple of comments are in order here. (1) Just because a person (saved or unsaved) doesn't understand a word here and there does not make the song invalid. One of the ministries of the pastor is to teach his people these biblical terms and metaphors. (2) Nothing in the Bible is going to be relevant to the unbeliever's place in life until he comes to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It needs to be emphasized that the church is *not* for the unbeliever, biblically, but for believers specifically.

- *Avoid songs with deep or obscure spiritual references, such as spiritual powers, mystical experiences or evil forces.*

Rationale: Seekers are not likely to understand these things as believers do and may conclude that Christianity is too hard to understand and too mystical for them. In addition, most of these concepts are not central to the Christian faith and they could, in fact, become a distraction to the message we are trying to communicate to seekers.

Comment: There is nothing mystical about biblical Christianity and it is *not hard*. It is understandable that the unsaved person will not “understand things as believers do” simply *because they are unsaved*. Again, very few, if any songs in the average hymnbook, have such “deep and obscure spiritual references such as spiritual powers” in them. Most are simply a reflection of

the songwriter's own experiences (gospel songs) and his understanding of God (hymns).

- *Select songs that address people's felt needs.*

Rationale: Songs that address loneliness, relationship problems, pain, uncertainty, and everyday struggles of life can set the mood for a message dealing with topics such as these.

Comment: May I say, as kindly as I can, that it is not the purpose of Christian music that is biblically sound to address people's felt and/or emotional needs. Rather, it is intended to be an expression of one's faith and experiences in Christ. A good song leader will attempt to use songs that go along with the pastor's message, thus undergirding the theme for that service.

- ***Select songs that express hope.***

Rationale: Seekers are usually looking for positive changes in their lives. Share songs that show how happiness, stability, security that can be found in knowing Christ, or that demonstrate how God can make a positive difference in their lives today.

Observation: Many songs and hymns do just that. However, CCM's worldly musical style undermines the message by conveying a message all by itself without lyrics (See above). For example, it is impossible to worship a holy God with unholy music. When one understands what "rock" *is* (by the world's own definition "rock is a blues euphemism for sexual intercourse" – *Rolling Stone's Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll*), the conclusion is that it [the music] is unholy and is incapable of truly worshipping God. God, through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ does indeed make a positive difference

in one's life. And the music should reflect that change (see Psalm 40:1-3).

- ***Select music that is celebrative, cheerful and positive.***

Rationale: A seeker-sensitive Program provides the unbeliever with a window through which [he] can observe how believers worship. If a song is slow, in a minor key, or seems to go on endlessly, the seeker may well have the impression that church is boring. Think about how the music will make unbelievers *feel* [emphasis in the original].

Observation: Slow music is not necessarily bad music. I have heard the classic gospel song *Wonderful Words of Life* sung by a large congregation, with no musical accompaniment, at a slow tempo, yet done so majestically as to bring tears to my eyes. A song in a minor key can be very moving such as

the song *O, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus*. Honestly though, very few songs are in a minor key. Too much emphasis is placed in this statement on how the unsaved person *feels!* While unbelievers are welcome in any service, it is hoped that they will not leave “feeling good” unless they have come to know the Lord as a result of that service. A sinner should never be left “feeling good” while still in his sin.

- ***Select music with a contemporary soft-rock beat.***

Rationale: Rock is the most listened-to and most widely accepted music in the world. People who have been burned by church will check out immediately if the music sounds “churchy” and formal. At the other extreme, a hard rock beat may be overbearing and offensive. Soft rock is widely accepted by both “boomers” and “busters.” It

does not appeal to everyone, but no music does; soft rock has the widest appeal.

Comment: Just because “soft rock” is the most widely listened to music in the world does not justify it or make it biblically legitimate. The purpose of the musical ministry is not to satisfy people’s tastes, but to glorify God. This statement is very pragmatic in its approach, i.e. do whatever will bring a crowd and make them feel satisfied and comfortable. Any service that does that has failed in its biblical purpose. The church’s responsibility is not to give people what they want, but what they need, based on biblical teaching.

- *Consider using songs that are already familiar to seekers; e.g., secular songs from contemporary albums, recent radio hits [emphasis*

mine], or very familiar hymns that they may have heard before.

Rationale: Using familiar contemporary music will communicate to seekers that our church is not buried in the past, nor is it “against” they kind of music they enjoy. Using a very popular, such as *Amazing Grace*, will very likely be acceptable for nostalgic reasons.

Comment: This statement boggles my mind. Whoever wrote it apparently has no concept of what a Bible-preaching church should be like. It is not the job of the church to convince an unsaved person that the “church is not buried in the past.” The use of conservative Christian music does *not* mean that the church is buried in the past! But a Bible-based church *will*, by virtue of the authority of the Bible itself, be “against the kind of music they [the unsaved] enjoy.

Truly Christian music should never be used only for “nostalgic” reasons. I fear that the vast majority of “unchurched and unbelievers” who enjoy *Amazing Grace* have absolutely no idea what they are singing. “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that *saved a wretch like me!* **I once was lost, but now am found; was blind [spiritually] but now I see** [a reference to Bartimaeus].” Think about that!

- *Perform music with joyfulness and genuine enthusiasm.*

Rationale: Worship can be a powerful witness to the unbeliever if God’s presence is felt. We need to evaluate our motive behind presenting music; are we praising the God we love or filling in the time gaps on Sunday morning?

Comment: I would totally agree here that one’s motive for using music, even

conservative music, should be evaluated. A good, lively conservative song service, followed by a strong Bible message can indeed make an impression on the unbeliever, perhaps bringing him under conviction of sin and seeing him saved.

- ***Music should be engaging – people should “feel” it and move along with it.***

Rationale: The more people are a “part of it” the more they will be interested. Use a band or at least instrumental backing tracks when possible. The PA system should provide full, balanced sound that can be heard throughout the hall.

Observation: Again, there is here an unbalanced emphasis on *feeling* and *moving*. Remember that the music of the flesh appeals to the body and is best expressed by bodily movement. Adding

to that some kind of “band” [with an obvious reference to the “drum set and rhythm], and you have a perfect setup for the flesh to take over. Music that causes bodily responses turns all the attention on the performer, his performance and the listener’s response, turning hearts away from the Lord Himself, Who alone is worthy of our attention and devotion. The use of a PA system is only to enhance the music, not blast out high decibels of sound.

- *People should not be made to feel like they have to sing along.*

Rationale: Most unchurched people are not accustomed to singing aloud but are open to it. Giving them the option will put them at ease.

Observation: Psalm 40:1-3, clearly indicates that God places a new song in the mouth even praise unto our God as

a result of conversion. People should be *encouraged* to sing but not made to feel like they *have* to do so. However, a person who is truly saved and walking with the Lord ought to *want* to lift his or her voice in song to the Lord. There is something spiritually wrong if a Christian has no desire to sing, even if it is just making a “joyful noise” unto the Lord.

- *Don't encourage them to clap or wave their hands.*

Rationale: Many believers feel uncomfortable in a service where this takes place; it will almost certainly make the outsider feel awkward and confused as to whether he should participate or just sit there.

Comment: With this statement I wholeheartedly agree.

- *Use live music whenever possible but don't be afraid of "canned" music.*

Rationale: It is much better to present excellent pre-recorded music than poor live music. Also, everyone who listens to music spends far more time listening to pre-recorded music than they do live music (for example: radio, albums at home, music videos, TV commercials, etc.). A well-done live performance gives it that extra touch but must be done well to be effective.

Comment: I would have to agree that the music in the church should be of the best quality possible. There is really no place for poorly performed music in the church. Better to have no special music, or little of it, than to have music poorly performed. Sadly, there are some churches and church "musicians" who

feel that, as long as it's for the Lord, nothing else matters. I am personally not opposed to the use of "pre-recorded or canned" music if it is well done and in a style that honors the Lord and not a mere copy of the world's style.

Evangelist Ken Lynch
309 Pebble Springs Dr., Taylors, SC 29687

evangelistkenlynch@juno.com
evangelistkenlynch.com

