

"Should A Christian Listen to Secular Music?"



Many Christians struggle with this question. Many secular musicians are immensely talented. Secular music can be very entertaining. There are many secular songs that have catchy melodies, thoughtful insights, and positive messages.

In determining whether or not to listen to secular music, there are three primary factors to consider: **1) the purpose of music, 2) the style of music, and 3) the content of the lyrics.**

1) The Purpose of Music

Is music designed solely for worship, or did God also intend music to be soothing and/or entertaining? The most famous musician in the Bible, King David, primarily used music for the purpose of worshipping God (see [Psalm 4:1](#); [6:1](#); [54:5](#), [61:1](#); [67:1](#); [76:1](#)). However, when King Saul was tormented by evil spirits, he would call on David to play the harp in order to soothe him ([1 Samuel 16:14-23](#)). The Israelites also used musical instruments to warn of danger ([Nehemiah 4:20](#)) and to surprise their enemies ([Judges 7:16-22](#)). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul instructs Christians to encourage one another with music: "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" ([Ephesians 5:19](#)). So, while the primary purpose of music does seem to be worship, the Bible definitely allows for other uses of music.

2) The Style of Music

Sadly, the issue of music styles can be very divisive among Christians. There are Christians who adamantly demand that no musical instruments be used. There are Christians who only desire to sing the "old faithful" hymns. There are Christians who want more upbeat and contemporary music. There are Christians who claim to worship best in a "rock concert" type of environment. Instead of recognizing these differences as personal preferences and cultural distinctions, some Christians declare their preferred style of music to be the only "biblical" one and declare all other forms of music to be unwholesome, ungodly, or even satanic.

The Bible nowhere condemns any particular style of music. The Bible nowhere declares any particular musical instrument to be ungodly. The Bible mentions numerous kinds of string instruments and wind instruments. While the Bible does not specifically mention drums, it does mention other percussion instruments ([Psalm 68:25](#); [Ezra 3:10](#)).

2) The Style of Music cont'd.

Nearly all of the forms of modern music are variations and/or combinations of the same types of musical instruments, played at different speeds or with heightened emphasis. There is no biblical basis to declare any particular style of music to be ungodly or outside of God's will.

3) The Content of the Lyrics

Since neither the purpose of music nor the style of music determines whether a Christian should listen to secular music, the content of the lyrics must be considered. While not specifically speaking of music, [Philippians 4:8](#) is an excellent guide for musical lyrics: ***“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*** If we should be thinking about such things, surely those are the things we should invite into our minds through music and lyrics. Can the lyrics in a secular song be true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy? If so, then there is nothing wrong with a Christian listening to a secular song of that nature.

However, much of secular music does not meet the standard of [Philippians 4:8](#). Secular music often promotes immorality and violence while belittling purity and integrity. If a song glorifies what opposes God, a Christian should not listen to it. However, there are many secular songs with no mention of God that still uphold godly values such as honesty, purity, and integrity. If a love song promotes the sanctity of marriage and/or the purity of true love—even if it does not mention God or the Bible—it can still be listened to and enjoyed.

Whatever a person allows to occupy his mind will sooner or later determine his speech and his actions. This is the premise behind [Philippians 4:8](#) and [Colossians 3:2](#); establishing wholesome thought patterns. [Second Corinthians 10:5](#) says we should ***“take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ.”*** These Scriptures give a clear picture of the kind of music we should not listen to.

Obviously, the best kind of music is that which praises and glorifies God. Talented Christian musicians work in nearly every musical genre, ranging from classical to rock, rap, and reggae. There is nothing inherently wrong with any particular style of music. It is the lyrics that determine whether a song is “acceptable” for a Christian to listen to. If anything leads you to think about or get involved in something that does not glorify God, it should be avoided.