

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: My 13-year-old son loves to listen to music. Unfortunately, he likes musicians who write terrible lyrics that are contrary to our family's Christian beliefs and values. He does just about everything with headphones on. I believe he does have a relationship with Jesus, but I worry about the effect of this music. Help!

ANSWER: With the advent of the personal stereo, our children (especially teens) have the opportunity to spend hours absorbing the **theologies** of their favorite groups in private...often without their parents' knowledge or approval. Kids memorize the lyrics and try to mimic the appearance, lifestyle, and theology of these people. Whole subcultures arise from these groups; their music becomes the **basis of a child's identity, independence and investment in life**. Why do our Christian young people find secular music so attractive?

1. Young teens are experimenting with **identity**..."Who am I? Who do I want to be like? How do I want to look? Behave?" These groups provide answers to these questions which is portrayed as exciting, powerful and attractive.
2. Young teens are seeking **independence** from authority. Frequently, teens hope to accomplish this through acts of defiance and shock...manifested in dress, language, and values. This "stance" is always a power-play. If they can shock and defy adults, they feel independent and strong.
3. Young teens are looking for a place to **invest** their passion. Their hearts are hungry for meaning and purpose. Their music is passionate, touching one of the deep longings of the heart. (Remember, the heart is driven by passion to find love, security and meaning. These are the basis of understanding all behavior.)
4. Sadly, secular music often has more passion, creativity, thoughtfulness, depth and honesty than what's available in similar Christian music. (How I wish this weren't true!)
5. Young teens (and everyone else) have damaged hearts. Music is both an **escape and an outlet**. Much of their music is angry, hurt, and filled with disillusionment.
6. Young teens (Adults too) have **ambivalent feelings about evil**. On the one hand, as Children of God, they want to shun evil. On the other hand, evil is seductive, attractive, and mysterious. (See Romans 7.) There is often something sensual and titillating about the music and its lyrics...not to mention the video accompaniment. (See #4)

To some extent, all teens are influenced by the music they listen to, but just as not everyone who takes a drink becomes an alcoholic, not everyone who listens to raunchy music will fall away from God. **Beware, however, this is just one of MANY tactics of the Enemy in his spiritual war for the souls of our teenagers.** What to do?

1. When it comes to secular groups, know what you are talking about, otherwise your criticism will be dismissed. Read the lyrics for yourself. Get to know something about these groups. You are entering their turf, be prepared for a counter-assault.

2. Offer alternatives. Not just different music, but new life in Jesus. As parents, we must live the Gospel in such a way that our identity, independence, and investment **are met in Christ**. "Who we are" must be attractive to our teens.

3. Be willing to struggle with your teen. Talk about the messages from secular music. Get to know the desires, hopes, fears, longings, values and struggles of your teen. He is longing for someone to show the way through the craziness of life by walking **with** him, not just criticizing him from the sidelines.

4. Have clear, talked about, standards of purity in behavior and language. Live them. Don't be naive about the spiritual war. **Changing behavior alone is not enough**. We can burn the CD's, but that might simply harden hearts and make our teens more careful and sneaky...evil might become all the more seductive.

Your task is to bring them into a relationship with Christ such that the things of the world become less and less attractive. The specifics of how you do that will vary with every teenager. Generally, through "who we are" and by the way we live, we parents must give our teens a true "taste of God"...flawed, of course, but a taste none the less. Ultimately, our hope lies in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, not in just changing behavior. Welcome to the front lines of war.

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