

Music in the Home: “Cleaning Up” CCM and Southern Gospel

Jeremiah 13:23 “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”

The church I was saved in at the age of 14 received a new pastor shortly thereafter. Our new pastor was a godly preacher who wanted to change the low music standards in our church. New songs were to be checked and “okay'ed” by authority. A number of people, including myself and family, were upset. I submitted one of my CCM songs to our pianist one day to be sung by me as a solo. I figured if anything needed cleaned up, she could do it since she was so skilled at the piano. She hesitated, played a few notes, and stopped. She then kindly explained to me some basics about CCM and Southern Gospel and how the music couldn't just be changed.

God through Jeremiah gives this picture of evil people and their works trying to be changed and made clean. It seems man is always trying to make their bad good. **Friends, you can't take rock music and try to make it godly, which is exactly what CCM and Southern Gospel do.** Both genres openly admit taking rock, jazz, pop, rap, easy listening, country, etc... and try to make it fit for God's people while at the same time palatable for the unsaved. It can't happen, friend. An Ethiopian's (African) skin cannot be changed. A leopard's spots can't be changed. **Satan's music is rotten to its roots and can't be changed.**

Some common CCM and Southern Gospel songs you will hear in independent, fundamental, Baptist churches that believers like “cleaning up” are:

- Amy Grant (“El Shaddai”, “Grown-Up Christmas List”, “Thy Word”)
- Andrae' Crouch (“The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power”, “My Tribute/To God Be The Glory”, “Soon And Very Soon”)
- Bob Carlisle (“Butterfly Kisses”)
- Carman (“The Champion”, “Lazarus, Come Forth”)
- Cathedrals (“Champion of Love”, “Wedding Music”)
- Dallas Holm (“Rise Again”)
- Jack Hayford (“Majesty”)
- Mark Lowry (“Mary Did You Know?”)
- Michael Card (“Heal Our Land”, “El Shaddai”)
- Michael English (“In Christ Alone”)
- Michael W. Smith (“Friends Are Friends Forever”, “Above All”, “Our God Is An Awesome God”)
- Ray Boltz (“Shepherd Boy”; “Watch the Lamb”; “Thank You”; “I Pledge Allegiance to the Lamb”, “The Anchor Holds/The Storm”, “The Altar”)
- Sandy Patti (“Via Dolorosa”)
- Stephen Curtis Chapman (“His Strength Is Perfect”, “Be Still and Know”, “Cinderella”, “I Will Be Here”)

- Steve Green (“People Need The Lord”; “Broken and Spilled Out”, “Find Us Faithful”, “God and God Alone”)
- Twila Paris (“He Is Exalted”, “We Will Glorify”, “Lamb of God”, “We Bow Down”, “How Beautiful”)
- Wayne Watson (“The Touch Of The Master's Hand”, “Watercolor Ponies”)

Some contemporary hymn books contain songs from Bill Gaither (“He Touched Me”, “Because He Lives”, “There's Something About That Name”, “The Longer I Serve Him”, “The King Is Coming”, “It Is Finished”, “Jesus, There's Something About That Name”,), Steve Green (“People Need The Lord”; “Broken and Spilled Out”, “Find Us Faithful”), and other CCM and Southern Gospel artists. Some of the older songs are easier to play in congregational style since they weren't too far off from proper music structure, but some of the “new” ones like “People Need The Lord” cannot. Why? The chord structure and the rhythms are different. **The songs still carry their jazz or discordant chords, and syncopated back beat.** As a matter of fact, I have had song leaders ask my wife or another pianist who only play godly music to try playing one of these CCM songs. It is interesting to see the song leader attempt to keep proper timing and sing the discordant chords to the pianist's proper hymn playing. I've been there many times when the pianist is asked to stop while the congregation keeps singing.

By the way, there are many more reasons why you shouldn't “clean up” CCM and Southern Gospel.

- Bad example. **If you are playing and singing CCM, others assume you listen and enjoy CCM.** I Thess. 5:22 “Abstain from all appearance of evil.”
- It is a potential bridge to full CCM and Southern Gospel. **It just takes one puff of a cigarette or one sip of alcohol to get someone hooked.** I, for one, can readily attest to this. So many times as a teen I tried to free myself from my addiction to CCM and Southern Gospel. Just as soon as I was close to being free, someone would sing or play one of those songs “cleaned up” and I was pulled right back in. Just like any other addict, the “cleaned up” sin only pulled me in more fully. **“Cleaned up” cigarettes only pull the addict into smoking the real sin.** For this reason, Solomon told his son in Pro. 4:15 “Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.” Don't mess with CCM and Southern Gospel. Get far away from it.
- Dumpster diving taints you. You do get dirty when you wallow in the filth. **The person “fixing” the song is having to delve a little or a lot into fixing the musical issues.** Even the best of us is a sinner, and are pulled towards sin. Gal. 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”; Jude 1:23 “And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” **Believers should pull sinners from their sin, but nowhere in the Bible does God tell believers to pull sin out of sin.** Don't “clean up” the sinful song. Leave it, and write a clean, “new song”.

- Desensitization. **You become desensitized to what makes the music so bad.** It gets harder to discern good music from bad music. **Banks don't train their clerks to discern fake money by giving them fake money.** No, they train them with the real thing. Otherwise, the fake money would desensitize the clerks. Even those who endorse wicked music have pointed out how it desensitizes you to feeling the “natural” (correct) style of music.
- “Cleaning up” CCM and Southern Gospel begins a downward slide that doesn't stop. **Allowing any kind of CCM, even “cleaned up” CCM and Southern Gospel, into a church or home consistently leads to lower standards in other areas eventually resulting in a compromised, worldly, fleshly, neo-ecumenical home and church.**
- One CCM song always leads to more. **If you allow just a little crack, people always push for more.** Gal. 5:9 “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”