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by Rev. Ben Squires

Growing in Faith Through Christian Music

Faith, Music, & Mountains: What's This All About?

Matthew 17:20

Jesus said, "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." (ESV)

Faith to move mountains? Such faith I do not have. While I do not seek to have faith just so that I can make a mountain jump into the sea, I do ask God to increase my faith. Through studying His Word, the Holy Spirit works in us to strengthen our faith, to grow our understanding, and to constantly remind us of God's forgiveness, love, and grace.

Is it possible for Christian rock music to be a part of that studying, strengthening, teaching, and reminding? Could the Holy Spirit use Christian rock music to help us grow in the faith? Certainly. If the songs speak God's Word in truth, if the songs point to Christ, if the songs turn our attention on God, then like a preacher, a Sunday School teacher, a piece of art, a hymn, or the words of a Christian friend, Christian rock music can help us grow in our faith.

The Holy Spirit works whenever God's Word is spoken, and His Word is spoken in many forms. And Christian rock music comes in many forms—pop rock, praise songs, hard rock, and mainstream rock. However, beyond the form of these rock songs, this study will help you and your students have "word-focused eyes" that look for the Word in the world.

In other words, this study doesn't just ask you to listen to a song, talk about it, and then go on your way. This study urges you to compare songs with Scripture and discover whether the songs provided speak God's truth. Using the skills you acquire here, you and your students can then venture into the secular music world, seeking to find reminders of God and our need for God outside of contemporary Christian music.

So can music move mountains? No, of course not. Music itself cannot have faith. However, can music move us toward a deeper, richer faith in Christ? Can music grow a mustard seed-sized faith to the size big enough to command mountains? That is for you and your students to decide, but do watch for how these songs can illuminate Scripture, pointing to Christ through melody, rhythm, poetry, and rock-classic-pop-dance-funk-distortion-smash-rap-punk-surf-electric passion.

In Christ,

Pastor Benjamin Squires

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For You Leaders...

SESSION OUTLINE

Each session has the following parts. The structure is flexible, allowing you to adapt it to your situation.

1. Discussion of Type of Music (Leader's Guide)—gives you a brief description of the type of music into which the session's song falls.
2. Opening Activity (Leader's Guide)—describes an activity to begin the study
The activities have goals of getting students to engage with Christian music, identify something of the session's type of music, and/or see how Christian music interacts with secular music. Some opening activities include an activity sheet.
3. Discussion Guide (Leader's Guide—outline/Discussion Guide sheets)—following the outline given on the Leader's Guide, the discussion section includes the Bible text, the song, and a section called "The Connection" where both Bible and song are discussed together.
4. The Eyes: Word-Focused Eyes Look for the Word in the World (Leader's Guide)—each session gives two options for application activities in which students can begin to find ways to identify Gospel in music, make their own connections with songs, and/or teach others through music. Some activities include an activity sheet.

PREPARATION TIPS

- Preview all songs and videos before class.
- The activities and discussion questions are designed for use in smaller discussion groups. Depending on your Bible study setting, try to have no more than 5 people in a group for activities and sharing. Obviously, as a leader, you will want to offer guidance, direction, and large group reviews at various times.
- Make sure that everyone has a copy of the discussion guide, including the lyrics. For a profitable discussion, it is necessary that everyone can follow the lyrics and refer back to them.

REPRODUCIBLE DISCUSSION GUIDES/ACTIVITY SHEETS

- Everything in this Bible study is reproducibly for classroom use in your local congregation only.
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Throughout this study, additional resources are suggested as a tool for leaders of this study in deepening the material with their youth. These additional resources have not been through the process of LCMS Doctrinal Review. It is assumed that leaders connecting with these additional resources are equipped to make decisions about their use in the LCMS congregational setting.

Track 11: Moving on the Charts Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN POP ROCK

As you take a look at the artists on the Christian charts, look for the one that has the number 1 hit, biggest sales, and most plays on Christian radio. When you find him or her, you're looking at the kind of Christian music that provides the connection for the most students. It's pop rock, so it sounds a lot like what youth expect to hear on secular Top 40 radio. It's the most accessible. Students can easily find these artists on Christian radio, in most major CD stores (or discount department stores), and at festivals.

OPENING ACTIVITY: THE CD SHOPPER

Using a comparison chart of Christian music, ask students to find 5 Christian artists that they might like based on the secular artist that is listed.

You can find a comparison chart through Group Magazine's MinistryandMedia.com (<http://www.ministryandmedia.com/CCMchart/default.htm>).

Other comparison charts:

<http://interlinc-online.com/free/> (Adobe file)

You can also ask at your nearest Christian bookstore. Sometimes they have charts/posters available.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Text: Isaiah 51:11-23

The Song: "Come on Back to Me" by Third Day

Audio track available on the albums *Wire*, *Live Wire*, and *Chronology*, vol. 2

Video track available on the album *Live Wire* (DVD)

THE EYES: WORD-FOCUSED EYES LOOK FOR THE WORD IN THE WORLD

(Application Activity)

Activity Option #1: Music Fest!

Have students brainstorm ways to hold a "Music Fest!" where they could introduce their non-Christian friends to Christian music. This would be some kind of event, Bible study, fellowship time, opening activity, etc. where students would be able to hear different kinds of music, match up their favorite secular bands with Christian bands they might like, etc.

Activity Option #2: Come on Back!

Third Day's song, "Come On Back to Me," focuses on God's invitation to us to be in fellowship with Him again through Jesus. How could your youth group extend that same invitation to youth from the congregation who aren't active, youth in the community, or even adult congregation members who aren't active?

Have students brainstorm in groups ways to invite people to "come on back to God." OR

Identify an upcoming activity in the church as the time to invite people to "come on back to God." Get the students to design a way to make the invitation. OR

Have the students discuss how they might use the Third Day song/video to invite people to "come on back to God."

Additional Resources

Interlinc produces a subscription service called Youth Leaders Only (YLO). There are different tiers of service, but subscribers receive Christian music, videos, and Bible studies based on the music. YLO will give you many ideas on how to utilize music in your youth ministry. However, you will find that you have to add Gospel messages, since a majority of the songs featured focus on our actions. Find YLO at www.interlinc-online.com.

Track 07: Moving on the Charts Discussion Guide

THE TEXT: ISAIAH 51:11-23

1. What will the faithful do when they return to the Lord? (51:11)
2. How can we trust that God is able to comfort us, protect us, and help us? (51:12-16)
3. What is God saying that the faithful have been doing instead of trusting Him? (51:12-16)
4. What promise does God make to the ones who return to Him? (51:17-23)
5. In many ways, Christians continue to suffer in this life, so it doesn't seem like God is fulfilling this promise. When will He completely fulfill this promise?
6. Why can you be confident that you will not have to drink the cup of God's wrath in the end?

THE SONG: "COME ON BACK TO ME"

by Third Day



Chorus: Come on back to me
Come on back to me
Come on back to me
Come on back to me

1. You've been hiding out for so long
I never understood why
Running far away from the truth
and all along chasing after lies

2. I have loved you from the beginning
Long before you were mine, yeah
And even though you've broken my heart
I'll love you just the same
I'll love you anyway

Bridge: Never mind your worries
Never mind your fears
They can only take you far from me
when you feel there's nowhere left for you to turn
I got all you want
and everything you need
come on back to me

3. Do you believe in second chances
With a love that never fades
Put your faith in what you can't see
just put your hand in mine
I'll show you the way

Bridge
Come on back to me (3x)

Bridge
Chorus

7. The song is like words God speaks to us. When in your life would God have said something like stanza 1 to you?
8. Where does this song sound like God's invitation in Isaiah 51:11-23 for the faithful to return to Him?
9. What does this song mention as the things that distract us from trusting in God? Where are similar distractions mentioned in the Isaiah passage?
10. Stanza 3 of the song says, "Just put your hand in mine/I'll show you the way." Where does Isaiah 51:11-23 mention God's hand of protection? Taking God's hand means to not hold onto something else. Where does Isaiah 51:11-23 mention something God removes from our hand?
11. What are you holding onto instead of holding God's hand?
12. If you were feeling far away from God, would this song give you comfort?
13. Does this song emphasize God's action or our action in being back together in a relationship? What about the Isaiah passage, does it emphasize God's action or our action? If you feel that the song doesn't emphasize God's action enough, how would you change it to make it even more clear that God brings us back into a relationship with Him?

Track 02: Moving in Worship Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN PRAISE MUSIC/WORSHIP ROCK

Having its beginning as far as the 1960's, contemporary worship music brings together rock and folk music (read here: guitar) creating a different song form than the traditional hymns. Rock/folk songs are often structured around stanza-refrain-stanza-refrain-refrain-refrain. While some of our hymns have refrains, most rely on a single melody line being repeated for multiple stanzas.

Christian praise music has actually become its own genre since the 1960's. Many praise songs use repetition and borrow heavily from the Psalms. In contrast to rock songs, praise music is very singable by a large group.

The subject of many debates in the Church, this session based on a Christian praise song isn't about solving the conflict between contemporary versus traditional worship. Rather, the goal is to help us understand what is being taught in worship music, how that compares with Scripture, and what concerns a Christian must have when deciding whether a worship song is speaking the whole teaching of God, Law, and Gospel.

OPENING ACTIVITY: DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE ROCK BAND AND THE HYMNAL?

Using the enclosed list of contemporary Christian artists and their songs, find those same songs in a hymnal. (All are in Lutheran Worship, but you may also be able to use other hymnals for this activity.)

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Text: Hosea

The Song: "Who Am I" by Casting Crowns

Audio track available on the album *Live in Atlanta*

Video track available on the album *Live in Atlanta* (DVD)

THE EYES: WORD-FOCUSED EYES LOOK FOR THE WORD IN THE WORLD

(Application Activity)

Activity Option #1

Using what you've studied together about how "Who Am I" emphasizes God's grace, provide the students with examples of other praise and worship songs—ones you might use in your congregation/youth ministry, others from Casting Crowns, and others from popular Christian groups. Ask the students to find examples of songs that emphasize God's grace (Gospel) and songs that put more emphasis on our action, lacking Gospel.

- Ask someone from each group to share examples of both kinds of songs.
- Why is it important that the songs we use have Gospel in them?
- If our worship songs didn't have Gospel, how might that change how we viewed God and worship?

Activity Option #2

Perhaps your youth or congregation often uses a praise and worship song that may not emphasize God's grace strongly enough. Provide the students with the lyrics to this song. Ask the groups to try to write additional lyrics to make sure that the song is Gospel-filled—God saves us by what He does.

- If you have brave youth, ask each group to sing their new version of the song.
- If not enough of your youth are singers, ask a select group to sing each new version.
- Even if you don't sing the new versions, ask each group to explain their changes and how their new version emphasizes the Gospel.

Additional Resources

Singer-songwriter Jonathan Rundman created a 2-disc album called *Sound Theology*, which contains 52 songs that follow the Church Year. These songs combined with Scripture help to teach about what the church focuses on during each week of the Church Year. For examples on how to use this album as the basis for devotions/Bible study, go to Ben Squire's site, songdevotions.blogspot.com. Click on "Artist Index" and you'll see a number of entries under Jonathan Rundman.

Track 02: Moving in Worship Discussion Guide

THE TEXT: HOSEA

1. What is Hosea supposed to go find? (1:2-3)

Read Hosea 1:2-11

2. Why do you think God wanted Hosea to marry a prostitute?
3. What do you think other people thought about Hosea and Gomer's relationship?

Read Hosea 3:1

4. What are some common reasons people give for leaving a marriage? Which ones seem like good reasons? Which seem like excuses?
5. God uses this relationship to explain the problem with God's people. Match up the following:

Hosea the Husband

Our Sins

Gomer the Wife

God's Grace, Forgiveness, Love

Gomer's Unfaithfulness

God the Father

Hosea's Faithfulness

You

Read Hosea 2:14-20

6. Make a list of the kinds of things that God planned to do to win Israel back—many of these things are like a husband wooing a wife.
7. Make a list of what God does to try to win you back. How does He make you realize that He loves you?
8. We just admitted that we're not always faithful to God. Why is it surprising that God would want to win us back?

Track 02: Moving in Worship Discussion Guide



THE SONG: "WHO AM I"

by Casting Crowns

1. Who am I, that the Lord of all the earth,

Would care to know my name,
Would care to feel my hurt.
Who am I, that the Bright and Morning star,
Would choose to light the way,
For my ever wondering heart

Bridge: Not because of who I am.
But because of what You've done.
Not because of what I've done.
But because of who You are.

Chorus: I am a flower quickly fading,
Here today and gone tomorrow.
A wave tossed in the ocean,
A vapor in the wind.
Still you hear me when I'm calling,

Lord you catch me when I'm falling,
And you told me who I am.
I am yours, I am yours.

2. Who am I, that the eyes that see my sin
Would look on me with love
And watch me rise again
Who am I, that the voice that calms the sea,
Would call out through the rain,
And calm the storm in me.

Bridge

Chorus

Repeat

2nd Bridge: Whom shall I fear?
Whom shall I fear?
'Cause I am yours.
I am yours.



9. Where does this song sound like it could be what Gomer said to Hosea when he said he wanted to keep her as a wife?
10. Where does this song sound like what we learned from Hosea about God wanting the Church (and us as members of the Church) to be His "wife"?
11. Where does this song emphasize that we are saved only because of God's gift—not because of what we do?

Track 02: Moving in Worship Opening Activity

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE ROCK BAND AND THE HYMNAL?

Using this list of contemporary Christian artists and their songs, find these same songs in a hymnal. List the hymn number and the first line.

1. Michael W. Smith, "Agnus Dei" (Worship)
2. John Tesh, "Lord Have Mercy" (Worship at Red Rocks)
3. Michael Tait, "How Great Thou Art" (Bridges: Classic Hymns, Modern Worship)
4. Flatfoot 56, "Amazing Grace" (Knuckles Up)
5. Peder Eide, "It is Well with My Soul" (Still I belong)
6. Echelon, "A Mighty Fortress" (Music for a Life of Worship)
7. David Crowder Band, "All Creatures" (Illuminate)
8. Jonathan Rundman, "Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word" (Sound Theology—Disc 1)
9. Lost and Found, "Lift High the Cross" (Speedwood Hymns, a whole album of adaptations)

HYMN CONNECTION:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

Track 03: Moving Through the Distortion Leader's Guide

ANGRY CHRISTIAN MUSIC?

"Angry Christian music? Isn't that an oxymoron?" my friend asked. On the surface, I suppose it does seem that way. Christ is peace; Christ is love; Christ is hope—so why would a Christian band take on the angry music of heavy metal to proclaim this Good News of Jesus?

If you are seeking something REAL, this is real music, talking about real life, with real pounding bass and guitar solos. This is music about faith in Christ that as loud passion. It gives us a very direct glimpse into what it means to be a Christian in the alleys, in the school halls, in the ghetto, in the "REAL" world.

Jesus isn't just sing-songy, happy go-lucky, close-your-eyes-to-all-the-nasty-stuff. Jesus is here to walk with us even on the days when we want to crank the stereo, band our heads, pound a fist, and rap with our brothers in Christ.

ARE THEY REALLY CHRISTIAN?

When artists are on Christian music labels, playing at Christian music festivals, talking freely about being Christian, you can be fairly sure that they are Christians. Of course, there are always accusations of some bands faking their Christianity in order to tap into the Christian music market.

However, with Evanescence, the Christian music market assumed them to be Christian. At the onset, there was some association, plus Wind-up Records distributed their debut album, *Fallen*, to Christian retailers. Since then, though, Wind-up has recalled Evanescence merchandise from Christian retailers, saying, "Despite the spiritual underpinning that has ignited interest and excitement in the Christian religious community, the band is now opposed to promoting or supporting any religious agenda" (CMCentral.com—Christian Music Central—<http://www.cmcentral.com/news/1271.html>).

The band now tries to distance themselves from a direct Christian connection, as singer Amy Lee told *Entertainment Weekly* (April 2003): "There are people hell-bent on the idea we're a Christian band in disguise, and that we have some secret message. We have no spiritual affiliation with this music. It's simply about life experience."

Therefore, Evanescence may not fit a strict definition of Christian music. However, even if Lee wants to deny that her Christian background influences her music, the themes and symbolism are definitely there. Any art is open to interpretation. Interpretation goes beyond just what the artist intended. It also includes how the listener perceives it. As Christians, we should be aware of Evanescence's denial of being a "Christian band," but that does not mean we can't use their art in order to illuminate the truths of Scripture.

OPENING ACTIVITY: EVERYONE WANTS TO SING ABOUT GOD

Even in the secular music world, artists are often talking about God and spiritual themes. Provide music singles charts for the discussion groups. Have them look for song titles that seem to be about something spiritual. (Bonus question: Ask them to list any Christian artists on these charts.)

You can find charts of popular music in *Billboard*, *Spin*, or *Rolling Stone*. Make sure you get the singles charts, not the album charts, since you want the individual song titles. Billboard.com provides the Top 20 or Top 50 in many categories without requiring a subscription. Go to http://www.billboard.com/bb/charts/singles_index.jsp.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Text: Jeremiah

The Song: "Taking Me Over" by Evanescence

Audio track available on the album *Fallen* or *Anywhere But Home*

Video track available on the album *Anywhere But Home* (DVD)

Track 03: Moving Through the Distortion Leader's Guide

THE EYES: WORD-FOCUSED EYES LOOK FOR THE WORD IN THE WORLD

(Application Activity)

Activity Option #1: What Are They So Angry About

Give the enclosed lyrics from hard rock Christian bands to the discussion groups

- Which line(s) matches what you feel as a Christian when you're going through something difficult?
- Which line(s) matches what you feel as a Christian when you're struggling with sin and temptation?
- In what kinds of situations might these songs be helpful?
- Would any of these songs match what a non-Christian friend might feel? How could you use that song to tell them something about God?

Activity Option #2: You Mean the Bible Talks This Way?

Ask each discussion group to look at one of the following Psalms. Have them talk about the following questions and be prepared to report their answers with the whole group.

Psalm 6

Psalm 22

Psalm 88

Psalm 137

Psalm 142

- What does the writer seem to be upset about?
- If you showed this Psalm to your friends at school, without telling them it is from the Bible, what do you think they would say about it?
- What kind of music would you use to make this Psalm into a song?
- What band/artist would you like to heard do this song?
- What would the music video show (story, images, people, etc.) so that the Psalm connects with real life?

Track 03: Moving Through the Distortion Discussion Guide

THE TEXT: JEREMIAH

Answer these questions for each passage:

What does Jeremiah report about God's pursuit of us?

What does God want to happen?

Jeremiah 7:12-13

Jeremiah 25:4-7

Jeremiah 32:32-33

Jeremiah 29:11-14

Jeremiah 31:3-4

Think about a relationship that you've had that's been one-sided, a relationship wherein you've been more interested, invested more time, and given more than the other person. Describe what that relationship was/is like.

Do you think our relationship with God is ever once-sided, with God putting in all the time and energy?

Do you think God pursues people throughout their lives?

Do you think God ever stops trying to bring someone into a relationship with Him?

THE SONG: "TAKING ME OVER"

by Evanescence

1. You don't remember me, but I remember you.
I lie awake and try so hard not to think of you.
But who can decide what they dream?
And dream I do.

Chorus: I believe in you.
I'll give up everything just to find you.
I have to be with you to live,
to breathe...
You're taking over me.

2. Have you forgotten all I know and all we had?
You saw me mourning my love for you
and touched my hand.
I knew you loved me then.

Chorus

3. I look in the mirror and see your face,
if I look deep enough.
So many things inside that are
Just like you are taking over.

Chorus



THE CONNECTION

1. One way to interpret this song is that these are words of God describing His search for us. Where does this song sound like Jeremiah's descriptions about the passionate way that God pursues us?
2. Does the chorus illuminate what Christ did for us?
3. Does this line work in the mouth of God: "I have to be with you to live/to breathe.../You're taking over me"? Why or why not?
4. Stanza 3 probably aren't God's words. Is there a way God can see us in Himself, such as in stanza 3?
5. Another way to interpret this song is that these are our words, talking to God from our distress. When might we feel like God has forgotten us? (See Psalm 13 for an example of a Biblical text talking about this feeling.)
6. Stanza 2 talks about mourning our lost relationship with God when we feel forgotten or separated from Him. How does God reach out to us in those times to help us know that He loves us?
7. As in Stanza 3, how is God "taking over"? Can you see God in you? Can others see Christ in you?

Track 03: Moving Through the Distortion Activity Sheet

WHAT ARE THEY SO ANGRY ABOUT?

For each of these below, respond to the following four questions.

1. What line(s) would describe what you feel as a Christian when you're going through something difficult?
2. What line(s) would describe what you feel as a Christian when you're struggling with sin and temptation?
3. In what kinds of situations might these songs be helpful?
4. Would any of these songs describe what a non-Christian friend might feel? How could you use that song to tell them something about God?

"WATCHING YOU DIE"

by Jonah33

Smell the despair in the air tonight
Filling up your lungs as you cry for help
It's like guns in the middle of streets
Pointing at your head, I don't care to speak
Won't you understand my apathy, my insanity

CHORUS: Watching you die, watching you die
Your blood is on me, I'm
Watching you die, watching you die
Your blood is on me, I'm watching you die
Watch as your life fades away
Your pain is masked by your decay
It's like acid dripping in, I see it burn but don't wipe the skin
It's not my fault once again...but there's blood on my hands

CHORUS

I see the faces in my head
I hear the screams from the walking dead
Do you know about true regret
To know you lived your life for self
To think of all the chances I let go...I let go...I let go

"SAVIOR" by Skillet

i'm everything you've wanted
i am the one whose haunting you
i am the eyes inside of you, stare back at you

B verse: there's nothing left to lose
there's nothing left to prove
surrender your love, it's all you can do yeah

Chorus: what you got, what you want, what you need

gonna be your savior
everything's gonna crash and break
but i know, yeah i know
what you got what you want, what you need
gonna be your savior
everything's gonna crash and break
your savior

v2: it's time to redefine your deophobic mind
don't hesitate, there's no escape
the secrets on the inside

(B verse)

(Chorus)

Bridge: i am the eyes inside staring back at you
i am the eyes inside staring back at you
you need you need
me yeah

(what you are is what you need
everything is going to crash and break) X2

(Chorus)

I want to save you
cause you yeah yeah you need me
Uhh Watching you

"THROUGH THE FIRE"

by Day of Fire

Walk in the flame again,
I'll be there to hold your hand,
Keeping you safe until the end
And when the flood begins,
I'll be there with you to stand,
Walking in faith until the end

Chorus: I see you through the

flood,
See you through the fire,
See you through the storms-a-
raging.
Walking the darkest rain
I cover you by my name,
A shelter inside your world of pain
Step on the waters waves
Coming to me by faith
I am the light of better days

(Chorus)

I see you through the flood,
I see you through the fire,
I see you thorough,
the storms are raging
don't be afraid
I'll never leave you lying
Forever yours
Forever yours
Forever yours I am

Track 04: Moving into the Mainstream Leader's Guide

CHRISTIAN ARTISTS IN THE MAINSTREAM

There have been some artists who have been accused of "selling out" in the past in order to get their music in the mainstream (e.g. Amy Grant). However, this section of the Bible study focuses on those Christian bands who have remained Christian but have garnered attention in the mainstream press, radio, etc. Examples include Jars of Clay, Switchfoot, P.O.D., and Sixpence None the Richer. These aren't Christians making secular albums; these are Christians doing what they've always done but finding that the mainstream music market likes what they hear. Some, not all, have moved from Christian labels (imprints) to the major label, which owns that Christian label.

OPENING ACTIVITY: COMMITTED2ROCK!

Using the attached activity sheet, have students identify the Christian artists on this mainstream compilation album released by Time-Life.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Problem: You're Not Christian Enough!

The Song: "The Beautiful Letdown" by Switchfoot

Audio track available on the album *The Beautiful Letdown*

Video track available on the album *Live in San Diego* (DVD)

The Text: Psalm 39

THE EYES: WORD-FOCUSED EYES LOOK FOR THE WORD IN THE WORLD

(Application Activity)

Activity Option #1: Christian Bands Playing in Bars?

Using the attached discussion sheet, listen to Christian rapper Agape's "Life Imitates Art" from the album, *Many Rooms*. The album is available at www.hiphopoutreach.com

Activity Option #2: Getting More Committed!

Purchase or borrow a copy of *Committed2Rock!*. Choose a number of the songs from the disc, and get the lyrics (Internet is a good resource).

Select one to begin. While the song plays, challenge the student groups to identify five different positive statements in the song. When each group thinks they've got the lines, they stand up with a "committed pose" (fist held high, finger pointing to the sky, group hug, etc.). When all groups have found five lines for the song, stop the song. Check the answers from the groups, comparing what they say they heard with the actual lyrics of the song. After hearing from each group, give them a few minutes to find how any of those lines describe something God teaches us. Share again as a large group. Play next song; repeat as time allows.

Additional Resources

Aimed at college students, *Relevant Magazine* is a Christian magazine which has a broad focus when it comes to music, film, and pop culture. The writers at *Relevant* allow the secular artists interviewed to express their spiritual opinions, thereby allowing Christian readers to understand those coming from outside of the Christian world. Music reviews include commentary on spiritual content, not just morality. See www.relevant.com for more information on the magazine, as well as their publishing arm, which is producing some very interesting emergent church literature.

Track 03: Moving Into the Mainstream Discussion Guide

THE PROBLEM: YOU'RE NOT CHRISTIAN ENOUGH!

Jon Foreman, lead singer and rhythm guitarist for Switchfoot, said on their Web forum, "The people who throw the first stones don't sound like any hero of mine. I do have a hero. My hero is the most forgiving person I've ever met. My hero is the one the religious circles wanted to take out with the trash.

"My hero didn't play clubhouse games. He didn't start a clique where we invite the people who fit the bill. He invited the sick, the prostitutes, the weak and the screw-ups like myself. That's why everyone is invited to listen to our songs.

"No, I don't write music for the people who are in the cool club or the self-righteous club. This music is for the recovering failures who know they need a savior. Why does the church shoot the wounded? Why think the worst of people?"

*Link: <http://forums1.sonymusic.com/eve/ubb.x?a=tpc&s=8581093&f=716102313&m=234103834&r=379100805#379100805>

1. This quotation is apparently in response to people saying that Switchfoot isn't Christian enough; their lyrics aren't enough about Jesus. What is the problem that Jon is identifying in that attitude?
2. Who does Jon say they write their music for? Would you agree with his position? Would you include yourself as a member of his intended audience?
3. How could Jon's description of Switchfoot's music be a good description for your church or your youth ministry?

THE SONG: "THE BEAUTIFUL LETDOWN"

by Switchfoot

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| 1. It was a beautiful letdown
When I crashed and burned
When I found myself alone, unknown and hurt. | 7. We're still chasing our tails
And the rising sun
And our dark water planet
Still spins in a race
Where no one wins
And no one's one. |
| 2. It was a beautiful letdown
The day I knew
That all the riches this world had to offer me
Would never do. | 8. I don't belong here
I don't belong here
I'm gonna set sight
and set sail for the kingdom come.
Your kingdom come.
Won't you let me down!
Let my foolish pride forever let me down. |
| 3. In a world full of bitter pain
And bitter doubt
I was trying so hard to fit in,
Until I found out | 9. Easy living, you're not much like your name
Easy dying, you look just about the same.
Would you please take me off your list?
Easy living, please come on and let me down. |
| 4. I don't belong here
I don't belong here
I will carry a cross and a song where I don't
belong. | 10. What a beautiful letdown
painfully uncool
the church of the drop outs, the losers,
the sinners, the failures, and the fools.
What a beautiful letdown
are we salt in the wound?
Let us sing one true tune |
| 5. It was a beautiful letdown
When You found me here
And for once in a rare blue moon
I see everything clear | |
| 6. I'll be a beautiful letdown
That's what I'll forever be
And though it may cost my soul
I'll sing for free. | |



Track 03: Moving Into the Mainstream Discussion Guide

THE TEXT: PSALM 39

1. How is Psalm 39:4-5 like stanzas 1 & 2 of "The Beautiful Letdown"?
2. What in life would cause to "crash and burn" and realize that only God is our true hope?
3. Looking at stanza 9, what sorts of things does the world offer us that really aren't very good offers?
4. According to Psalm 39:12-13, why are we aliens or strangers in this world? How does "The Beautiful Letdown" talk about this same idea?
5. What does David, the psalmist, admit in Psalm 39:7-11? Where does Switchfoot's song admit this same thing?
6. In stanza 10, how does Switchfoot describe the church? How is that similar to what Jon Foreman said on the web forum?
7. How does stanza 10 help you to feel like you can come to church, hear God's Word, and worship Him, no matter what has happened in your life? How does the Church emphasize this message? Do you hear other Christian artists emphasizing this message?
8. What would your congregation do if you put up posters saying, "(your congregation's name) is a Church of losers!" or "(your congregation's name) is a Church of fools!?" What would you say to them by way of explaining the sign?

Track 04: Moving Into the Mainstream Activity Sheet

COMMITTED2ROCK!

1. Which artists on this mainstream compilation album are Christian?
2. Because these Christian artists have made it on mainstream radio, do you think it gives them unique opportunities to witness about Christ?
3. Are you surprised by any of these artists being on the same album together?

Producer David Pack told *USA Today* (November 14, 2003):

"I saw a void in mainstream products. I thought why not get the best acts in modern rock and contemporary Christian music on an upbeat soundtrack to inspire young people of any race, creed or color? This is an adrenaline rush of positivity, the kind of euphoria that inspires positive life choices. This is cutting-edge modern rock, but our filtering process excluded the dark and depressing images. People underestimate the power of music, and music is what runs through young people's minds more than all other media."

Which artists would you not have picked for this album—thinking that they're often not very positive or encouraging positive life choices?

"COMMITTED2ROCK!"

- 01 Alive -- P.O.D.
- 02 The Middle -- Jimmy Eat World
- 03 Higher -- Creed
- 04 Breathe -- Nickelback
- 05 Flood -- Jars Of Clay
- 06 Learn To Fly -- Foo Fighters
- 07 Hanging By A Moment -- Lifehouse
- 08 Heavy -- Collective Soul
- 09 Here's To The Night -- Eve 6
- 10 Wherever You Will Go -- The Calling
- 11 I Did It -- Dave Matthews Band
- 12 Friends & Family -- Trik Turner
- 13 My Own Worst Enemy -- Lit
- 14 Pinch Me -- BareNaked Ladies
- 15 Natural Blues -- Moby
- 16 Praise You -- Fatboy Slim
- 17 Supernatural -- DC Talk
- 18 Amber -- 311

Track 04: Moving Into the Mainstream Activity Sheet
CHRISTIAN BANDS PLAYING IN BARS?

"ART IMITATE LIFE" by Agape, from the album *Many Rooms*

1. They always tell me that Lenny Kravitz and DC Talk don't pray to the same God. What's up with that? Does life imitate art or what, come on!

Shine divine light suddenly a star born.
Want my life to imitate my art form.
Spiritual warfare I ain't tryin' to fight 'em.
I outgrow my songs quicker than can write 'em.
I mean, there must be some days when Cypress doesn't wanna smoke.

There must be some days when Busta doesn't wanna joke.
A preacher doesn't think about God all the time.
Just like DMX doesn't always think of crime.
Watch a seven minute interview on Letterman,
We decide whether heaven's gonna let 'em in.
Lauryn Hill's racist? You are too.
Ever said some dumb junk when you're clownin' with the crew?
What if I took the 10 worst thoughts you ever had
And put 'em in a song that would make you look bad.
If Eminem really did those things he said,
He'd be in an asylum, in jail, or he'd be dead.

Chorus: Does life imitate art? Art imitate life? (4x)

2. Behind the Music gives a real look at these stars.
It still has a filter and the filter is ours.
I used to like Jars.
Too bad they're not going to heaven anymore
Cuz they be playin' at the bars.
I wish we were God and we could make that call.
But after righteous pride you gonna take that fall.
This one dude told me that another dude told him this other dude
told me this one dude told him that Creed was a Christian band.
Who gives a dang what the title is?
Righteousness doesn't occur on the stage.
Or on the CCM front page.
It's what they do when they go home to their wives

Whether their art imitates their lives.

Chorus: Does life imitate art? Art imitate life? (4x)

4. See life's not just bass. It's also bass and treble.
Life's a beach but music's really just a sand pebble.
Singers in a glass house just to have at 'em.
God's used me some days even when I'm mad at Him.
Some folks are color blinded with the Christian palette.
If it's not labeled Christian, it must not be valid.
Some people never doubt their faith, and that's great.
They got like 14 songs of worship, I'm not tryin' to say they're fake.
I'm just saying that my art should reflect how I live.
Gotta have some negative with some positive.
No more life in a bubble.
What if Christian artists could be honest with their struggle?
A lot of people ask me, "Yo, Dave, what's your mission?
A Christian who's a rapper or a rapper who's a Christian?
That's so great that you're rappin' for the squad.
I saw Agape in concert. He's a real man of God."
Don't commit me to an asylum yet.
And don't make me a saint for a half an hour set.
Take my life.
Take my art.
Take my music.
Take my heart.
Take 'em apart.
But not for judgment weaponry.
Take 'em separately. (3x)
Don't confuse the two as the same.
That's like seeing one shot and think you saw the whole game.
So see what you wanna see and hear what you.
May life and art merge so that we don't fear.

Chorus

1. What assumptions might Christians make about secular artists? Upon what are these assumptions based?
2. How might you make similar assumptions about people in school?
3. What would happen if people made assumptions about you and your faith based on a sin they see you commit? Would they be right to make this assumption?
4. What assumptions do some Christians make about Christian artists who work in the mainstream (like Jars of Clay playing in bars, nightclubs, etc.)?
5. How does Agape say that we should judge whether an artist is Christian or not?
6. When people find out that you're a Christian, how does that change how they view your life? What does this mean about the ways you choose to behave? What are you communicating in your behavior?
7. Do you feel artists who classify themselves as Christian are called to a higher level of responsibility than those who do not? Why?
8. Do you feel that artists like Eminem are right to sing about the topics they sing about if they don't ever DO the things they sing about? Why or why not?