

Some Notes on Music

A Discussion with Bill Fortenberry

A friend of mine posted a comment criticizing Dr. Frank Garlock's position on the dangers of rock music. My friend quoted Dr. Garlock as saying that the orbits of the planets correlate with the intervals of the musical octave. My friend then made the comment that Dr. Garlock's supposed error in this point casts doubt on his entire position against rock music. Many people expressed their agreement with my friend, and I eventually joined the discussion in Dr. Garlock's defense. This is the conversation which ensued.

Bill:

Like many of you who have commented, I have long recognized the logical flaws abundant in most arguments against rock music. However, like many others, I also recognized the truth of the conclusion. So I decided to do something about it.

First I followed the biblical mandate by contacting Christians using false argumentation directly and requesting clarification. What I discovered was an amazing amount of "zeal without knowledge." So I decided to attack this root problem and began my own study of rock music.

The results of that study are presented in my article, "Rock and Roll: The Sound of Music or the Noise of War." I would like to present that study as evidence for a proposal that perhaps Dr. Garlock came to the correct conclusion, but simply did not know how to adequately support that conclusion.

Here's the link to the article: http://increasinglearning.com/Documents/Rock_and_Roll.pdf

Oh, and by the way, Dr. Garlock is correct in his reference to the planetary octaves - he just didn't use the correct scientific language. His comments were a reference to Johannes Kepler's "Harmonices Mundi" in which he observed that the apparent daily motions of the the moon and the planets can be arranged in nearly perfect consonant intervals. This observation is perfectly consistent with modern astronomy. Here is a review of Kepler's work: <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/2003JRASC..97..259G>

Nathan:

Bill, I think he is referring to Bode's Law.

Bill:

Kepler's work matches his comments closer than Bode's.

Nathan:

Could you defend that? I'm not seeing it. Bode's work clearly places the planets in "octaves," though in relation to Mercury, and not the Sun.

Adam:

Well thought out article. You have wrestle with the issues, did some study, and hold to your conclusions. A few questions though. You point out, and this seems to be the main point, and strongest argument, that the downbeat is not natural. You say that rock music cannot be found in nature. Fine, but so what? Is not all of creation cursed? I know I am marred by sin and cannot trust my logic, emotions, or even my conscience. The ultimate appeal should

be to scripture, for that is God's Word, and like him, it is fully trust worthy and not corrupted. I think you have placed too much weight on "what is natural," and not enough on scripture. I know the heavens declare the glory of God, but it God's Word that gives the clearest light. Your follow up that since rock music is not natural then it must come from Satan is a bit of a shaky conclusion for the above reason. I will point out as well the Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 are not talking about Satan directly. Look at the context, these are pagan kings. These chapters can be applied to Satan, but do not directly speak about him.

Also I think the American Churches, especially in fundamental circles, have enough problems being labeled as racist. Why make the connection between rock music and Africa? This is way too easy to misinterpret. Even if this is true I think it is best to drop this argument completely. If rock music is truly unbiblical then you don't need that argument any way.

Since so much of your argument is built on the norms of a flawed creation, the scripture support must be very strong. This is where the disconnect happens with so many of us young Christians. We did not grow up the world where rock 'n' roll was the medium of rebellion. For us rock is as much a part of the culture as baseball and apple pie. The wicked associations exist, but are not as pronounced, and sometimes completely absent. The allusions to Exodus 32 are very good, but from there...

There is no denying that rock music was and is used to promote fornication, rebellion and drugs. I have no problem with anyone who chooses to totally remove all rock music, as much as possible, from their lives. In the same way I have no problem with someone who totally abstains from alcohol, which is my position. But here is the problem, and I will use alcohol as an example. It is not a sin to consume alcohol, in fact, alcohol in and of itself is not evil, but the way it is used can be. Alcohol, like any drug, affects the body, as does music. God says drunkenness is sin, not drinking alcohol. Christ himself drank wine, (and if you say it was grape juice I might have to hit you over the head with a few hundred pounds of historical evidence) :) The wine he drank was always diluted at least 2 to 1 or more. The point is this, and chose alcohol on purpose, for many of us in fundamental circles we have been taught that drinking alcohol is evil, biblically wrong, and out right sin. Yet the Bible does not say this. Drunkenness is sin. Drinking alcohol leads to drunkenness so where do you draw the line? For many reasons, biblical, and personal I draw the line at zero tolerance. I understand that alcohol is easily abused, American culture typically identifies alcohol with a lifestyle that is not Christian, and many Christians see alcohol as sinful. The point is this, alcohol is not the problem, but the sinful people abusing it.

It is not so much the music, rock, classical, country, etc, that is the problem, no more than the instruments used to play the music, it the hopelessly flawed individual strumming the strings or hitting the keys.

To sum it up, I don't think it is wise to place so much of the argument on natural revelation. The scriptural support tends to be out of context, and not addressing the style or type of music.

Bill:

Nathan,

Kepler's work is a direct parallel to what Dr. Garlock was trying to say - that there is a direct correlation between the positions of the planets and the harmonies of the musical scale. Bode's Law is only indirectly related in that it produces certain similarities to the mathematics discovered by Kepler nearly 150 years earlier. The primary distinction between the two is the presence of a musical correlation. Since it is this correlation that Dr. Garlock emphasized and not just the mathematical precision of the planetary orbits, it only seems reasonable to conclude that he was referring to Kepler. Nevertheless, the point still remains that Dr. Garlock's claim is not without scientific basis.

Adam,

I do not recall ever claiming that rock music is from Satan just because it is not natural. To do so would be to claim that God Himself is from Satan, for He is most definitely not natural. I did claim that "the idea of a musical style developed by Satan is consistent with the Bible," and I am certain that you would agree with that statement. The Bible clearly teaches that our foe is deceitful (II Cor. 11:14), cunning (II Cor 2:11), contentious (Eph 6:12), ravenous (I Pet 5:8), subtle (II Cor 11:3), infiltrating (Matt 13:38-39), lying (John 8:44), a hindrance to the work of God (I Thess 2:18), and an instigator of evil deeds (John 13:2; Acts 5:3). Surely you would agree that such a being is more than capable of developing a deceitfully harmful style of music. This section of my paper dealt primarily with the possibility that the claims of certain rock musicians about their own music could be true. The absence of a natural source for rock music and the lack of a biblical limitation on Satan's ability to develop a musical style both prove that the claim of a Satanic source for rock music is plausible.

(By the way, I did not make any correlation between rock music and Africa. That correlation was made by Robert Palmer of Rolling Stone Magazine. However, his statement was no more racist than a similar claim that the history of the Noh dramas can be traced back to Japan.)

The real crux of my argument is contained under the two headings "The Evidence of Rock Music" and "The Effects of Rock Music." It is from the facts presented in these two sections that I derived the Satanic nature of rock music, and you do not seem to have found any error in these sections of my article.

And finally, you have objected to my reliance on natural revelation as a guide for Christian conduct, but your objection is not consistent with the teachings of God's Word. You have already mentioned the proclamation of Psalm 19, but did you not notice that this declaration from nature is powerful enough to produce faith in God (Rom 1:19-20) and in His gospel (Rom 10:17-18)? But aside from this, we have in I Corinthians 11:14 an example of God Himself rebuking a group of Christians for not learning a rule of conduct from the natural world. If God expects us to learn about conduct from the natural realm, then surely I cannot be faulted for having the same expectation.

Nathan:

1. Apologies. I apologize for the offense this has obviously caused so many of you. I admit what I said may have been too severe toward Dr. Garlock. I meant neither him nor any of you any personal offense.
2. Bio. Those of you who know any think about me know that I am made of clay. You know that I am very irenic. You know that I am concerned most with anything that opposes the heart of the Gospel. And you know that I am more than willing "to contradict the sins of the company [I am] in" (Richard Baxter), no matter how unpopular.
3. Intentions. My intention is to expose an error that is very common among many of my friends. Dr. Garlock has contributed much to church music within Fundamentalism. But he has also contributed much to the Fundamentalists philosophy of music, which under the guise of purity has been the cause of much pride. He stands in the pulpit and preaches what many of us have felt in our hearts: Thank God our music isn't like those people's music! We put ourselves in judgment over the sincere worship of fellow believer. We cast the adulteress into the public marketplace to expose her sin and demand judgment. Under the pretense of upholding righteousness judgments, we make ourselves the enemy of Christ. All our music is of human composition; none of it is worthy of God. To say that it is worthy of God is to say that Christ is not ALL our righteousness. If we make people's music right, it doesn't mean their hearts will be right. Spirituality does not work outside in. But if people's hearts are right before God, it is impossible for them to sing bad music to him! I preach to see peoples hearts changed, not their music! Don't you know the scripture promises that? It doesn't say, "Don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and you'll be walking in the Spirit." It says, "Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh!" That's the promise of God! Ceasing the sin is no longer the requirement; it's the blessing. It's not the

prerequisite but the consequence. But we fear the flesh more than we trust the Spirit. And that sets us up for legalism. Fundamentalism's music philosophy has long opposed this biblical truth. Fundamentalism, through its externalism, has been guilty of neglecting and negating the power of God. To me, that is the issue here.

4. Observations.

4.1. Inconsistency. Some of you hold that I should not have posted something critical of Dr. Garlock if I had not first gone to him.

4.1.1. You say this is the biblical thing to do, and I disagree. You have taken a specific teaching of Scripture beyond its biblical parameters. I will not get into the exegesis of that here. I believe that in the case of continued public teaching, it is right to publicly refute it.

4.1.2. If you are correct, then why did you not contact me privately to tell me my fault?

4.1.3. If that were the biblical thing to do, then why have you not pointed this out whenever I have posted things critical of other Christian teachers who you don't approve of?

4.1.4. Some of you have questioned me because of your concerns regarding people like Mark Driscoll from whom I occasionally offer quotes. Did you approach them to correct them of their errors and attempt to restore them before you voiced your criticisms to me?

4.1.5. Do you really believe that Dr. Garlock has personally gone to privately restore all the people who's recordings he uses as examples, or whose viewpoints he openly criticizes?

4.2. Many of the posts I put on Facebook have to do with Spirituality, the Christian life, and even Christ himself and the very Gospel. Thanks to those of you who comment on of "like" those. It is sad to me that those matters of greater importance usually attract so little attention. It is also sad that a post on something of such secondary importance as this excites so much attention. I did not think it would. I do not think it should. You have justified my concern with the effect of Garlock's teaching. If we comment on posts about secondary issues, then our criticisms should be couched in much greater charity.

4.2.1. Then, you say, why have I not shown more charity toward Dr. Garlock? I deal with him severely because I believe he has done a great disservice to the church in taking what may be important but is certainly secondary and making it of primary importance in the minds of Christians. Your fervor in these comments tells me he has done his job well. The gospel and Christian charity are not well served by it.

4.3. Some of you defended Dr. Garlock by observing that even godly, sincere men make mistakes. That is true. I know I do. But did you complain when he failed to exercise that charity toward others?

4.4. Several of you shared your concern with Dr. Garlock (and Fundamentalism) for poor use of Scripture. But few defended him for his use of Scripture. In fact, some of you said or implied that you know in your heart what he says is true, or abusing Scripture is less important than sowing discord, or generally excused him on this point. If I had to judge from these comments, I would have to conclude that Dr. Garlock's supporters put less stock in Scripture than his detractors. Whatever your intention, think about how those words come across.

4.5. You say that I cause division. But when matters of orthodox doctrine and biblical morality are not in question, is division caused by the one who is more willing to receive the variety of practice among the people of God, or the one who insists on being more restrictive, resulting in the exclusion of a great many believers. Garlock insists that the worship of many for whom Christ died and who have received the gift of Salvation by faith is unacceptable on grounds entirely apart from the condition of their heart. I have contended that if the condition of the heart is correct, the worship is acceptable to God, and we can exercise charity in the music, knowing it is always an unworthy offering for all of us.

4.6. As always, I see both in Dr. Garlock, and in some of the comments, an "us-them" mentality. Some will conclude that since I object to his philosophy, then I must approve of everything that he preaches against. This is as untrue of me as it was of Jesus and the Pharisees. Try not to misjudge me. Thanks.

4.7. Do be careful with these discussions. This discussion was very courteous despite serious disagreement at the beginning, and I thank you guys for that. But as it continued, some of you became more personal and harsh. Such comments can be hurtful and discouraging. I know because some of them were directed at me. Other were directed at each other. Be sincere. Be humble. Be able to be corrected. Be willing to ask people to clarify what they meant, or why they think something. It's okay. Be charitable, and forgive each other. Pray for each other. See each other as those for whom Christ died. That's how much we should love each other.

Sorry this is so long. Love you all,
Nathan

Bill:

Thank you, Nathan. I appreciate your sincerity and openness. However, I think that you are mistaken on a few points.

1. You claim that none of our music is worthy of God, and I agree for none of our music is perfect as He is. I believe, however, that this statement misses the point. Nothing that we do in life will ever be worthy of God not even our submission to His Spirit; for if we were worthy of Him, then we would not need to submit. One of the greatest joys of the Christian life is that God accepts our unworthy attempts to please Him much as a father accepts the pitiful attempts at art from his child. This does not mean, as you seem to imply, that God accepts all of our works, for then there should be no wood, hay and stubble to be burned when those works are judged (I Cor. 3:10-15). While none of our works will ever be worthy of God, yet we know that our works will be judged and that only some of them will be found acceptable in His sight. The question then is not whether our music is worthy of God but whether it will be accepted by God, and to that end we must take heed.

How do we determine if our music is acceptable? "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." (I Tim. 2:15)

2. You also said that it is impossible for one whose heart is right with God to sing bad music to Him, and again I must disagree. Galatians 5:16 does not say that if we walk in the spirit then we cannot fulfill the lust of the flesh. It simply states that we shall not do so. This verse does not eliminate our ability to sin if we are walking in the Spirit, it merely predicts the outcome of choosing one option over the other. I could illustrate this by saying, "Drive on the road, and you will not hit any street signs." This prediction does not eliminate our ability to choose at any moment to swerve off the road and hit a street sign. It does not predict that our current position of being on the road guarantees a continuous future condition of being on the road. It does not even tell us how to get on the road nor how to stay there. It simply states that if we are on the road at any given moment, then we will not also be hitting any street signs at that same given moment. The same logic applies to music and our walk in the Spirit.

How do we stay on the road? How do we walk in the Spirit when it comes to the area of music? "Walk circumspectly" (Eph 5:15)

3. You came to the conclusion that those who support Dr. Garlock's position seem to have a lower opinion of the Bible than those who oppose his views. You arrived at that conclusion based solely on the comments in this particular discussion about a particular segment of a single message presented by Dr. Garlock. I find this response rather confusing since neither the link that you provided nor your own, original comments made any direct reference to the Scriptures. You stated that you doubted the validity of Dr. Garlock's message because of his errors in the realm of science and theory. Why should it surprise you, then, if those who agree with his conclusions focus more on science in this discussion than on Scripture?

4. In your statement about division, you again claimed that man's worship will always be acceptable to God if it is from a heart that is right with God. You seem to be overlooking the fact that men cannot judge each other's hearts.

Neither of us can point to one person singing one style of music and say that his heart is any more right with God than another person singing a different style of music. Therefore you have, in effect, stated that all forms of worship that are not specifically forbidden by the Bible are acceptable. Let me ask you, then. Does this also apply to the use of drugs in the worship of God? Since the Bible does not expressly condemn the use of narcotics, should it be acceptable for Christians to make them available in the church? If there was a church in your area that had such a practice and a teenager were to ask you if he should attend an event there with a friend, would you tell him that no form of human worship is ever truly worthy of God and that as long as his heart is right with God he can worship Him in any way that he chooses? Surely not. The dangers of narcotics are sufficiently evidenced in nature that their use in worship can be condemned regardless of the absence of a specific condemnation within God's Word. I have demonstrated that the same can be said about rock music. As I mentioned to Adam above, God expects us to learn from nature and live our lives accordingly (I Cor 11:14).

Adam:

Nathan, good defense, well put, and I agree with many of your points. Especially that it is the heart and the spirit of the law that is more important than the externals. I think there are some strong parallels to the sermon on the mount. Not that externals are pointless, but that the internal needs to be right first, and then the external follows.

Bill, in response to your post after my questions / suggestions on your article I am still a little confused. Do you believe rock music (or musical style if you prefer) comes from Satan or not? I read your article for the fourth time and noticed the many quotes, but it was presented as if you believe for certain that the rock style comes from Satan. I pulled two quotes from your article:

"Since rock music is not found in nature but is attributed to Satan and since the idea of a musical style developed by Satan is consistent with the Bible, we are left with a question. Is rock music really the devil's music?"

The rest of your article builds the argument to prove this style comes from Satan, and your conclusion paragraph states:

"the unnatural and indeed satanic rhythms of rock music are pervasive throughout many different genres."

In reference to rock music having its origins in Africa, I did notice it was a quote, but you chose to include it. I humbly suggest (no sarcasm) to not include this. It is too easy to misinterpret, especially by the unsaved world. It sounds as if you are saying Africans have a satanic music style and Europeans somehow escaped any satanic influence; in other words my white culture is better than yours. You can keep the argument in there, for it has validity. My point is that it may cause an unnecessary offense.

"The evidence of rock music" was an elaboration on two points you had already made. The first is that rock music is absent from nature and therefore fundamentally different from God. Here is a quote from your post:

"I do not recall ever claiming that rock music is from Satan just because it is not natural. To do so would be to claim that God Himself is from Satan, for He is most definitely not natural."

To be fair it is the cumulative weight of all the arguments in the article that lead us to believe that rock music might come from Satan, not just its absence in nature. Nonetheless, by your own logic we cannot label rock music as coming from Satan solely of the fact of it "unnaturalness."

Your second point is guilt by association. I will admit that rock music lends itself easily to godless activity. I fall back on the point I made earlier and Nathan made clearer. It is not the instrument that is evil, but the person wielding it. It's not that music is amoral, but in my opinion much of this is personal conviction. I don't know much about music, but I do know when music is bringing me closer to God or further away. I don't know what effect a

song may have on you, but you do. This a matter of conscience and individual choice. I am honestly glad that you have developed a whole musicology, but I caution you that not every Christian will fit into your box of convictions. We need some Romans 14 in this issue. When needed, and for the purpose of spreading the gospel I am more than happy to restrict my "liberal" tastes of music. I am sensitive to other Christians around me and I have close friends on both sides.

Before I finish I will address the issue of natural revelation. I will split the hairs very fine. Natural revelation is enough to begin regeneration in a person, but ultimately falls short of the saving knowledge of Christ, which can be found only in God's written Word. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." A person is guilty of Hell even if they have only had natural revelation as a witness. My point, as I stated, is not that natural revelation is useless, but that it is a dimmer light. It is not as clear as Scripture. Much of your argument rests on natural revelation, and I feel your scriptural support is greatly lacking. Are there verses specifically labeling a rock style as coming from Satan? Are the specific verses warning is to avoid this particular music style that comes from the Devil?

As far as Paul mentioning that nature teaches us that long hair on men is shameful and long hair on women is her glory, well how long is long? There are cultural norms and we are wired certain ways. It's natural, because of the curse, to be ashamed when naked. It's natural for a man to love a woman, and for a woman to love her children. I don't think Paul's intent here is to set up a principle that we are to look to nature for rules of conduct. Again, not to sound like a broken record, but it is scripture that is the ultimate authority.

I have said what I wanted too. My goal is not to insult, or insist that everyone sees it my way. The more I write out and defend my views, and read others the closer I come to the truth, at least that is my goal.

Bill:

Thank you for responding, Adam. I apologize for any confusion that I may have caused, and I hope that I can explain things

more clearly for you. I will try to answer your questions and challenges directly and in simple terms.

1) You requested clarification on whether I believe that rock music comes from Satan.

Yes, I do believe that the style of music currently labeled as rock music is satanic. I believe that for four reasons:

- a) Rock music is fundamentally different from the musical rhythm which God instilled in every aspect of His creation.
- b) Rock music is very palatable to Satan's demons.
- c) Rock music has an extremely destructive effect on God's creation.
- d) Rock music produces bad fruit within the church of God.

As far as I can tell, you have not challenged the truth of any of these statements. On the contrary, you have actually agreed

with several of them. Therefore, I see no reason to change my conclusion.

2) Thank you for your suggestion regarding the possible misinterpretation of my quotes on the history of rock music. I have considered your suggestion, but if I had to refrain from mentioning every fact which

might be misconstrued by one group or another, then it is doubtful whether I would ever be able to write anything at all. My statement was not racist, and no one who takes the time to honestly evaluate it could conclude otherwise.

3) Your assessment of the section of my paper entitled "The Evidence of Rock Music" is somewhat off the mark. That section is actually the first of two sections which present the proof of the four statements mentioned above.

4) You claimed that natural revelation "falls short of the saving knowledge of Christ," and I could certainly make the argument that the very next verse after the one you quoted states the opposite, but we are not discussing the message of salvation. We are discussing a point on Christian conduct, and the inclusion or the exclusion of the gospel message in/from natural revelation is of no consequence to this discussion.

5) You also claimed that natural revelation is a "dimmer light" than Scripture, and again I could make an argument to the contrary, but this also is not the issue in our discussion. Whether dim or bright all light is still light. If lost in a cave, you would not refuse to use a flashlight just because it is not as bright as the sun. In like manner, we must not reject natural revelation just because we think that it is "dimmer" than that of the Scriptures.

6) As for your question about how long is long hair, let me point you to Ezekiel 44:20 which states: "Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads." This verse gives us a definition of long hair. It is hair that is no longer polled. To poll the hair is to trim it to an area defined by the tops of the ears the base of the neck and the eyebrows. In modern usage, it is only used in this sense in reference to livestock, but this word is the original from which we derive our modern "poll" or "polling place."

Nathan:

Bill. Sorry I haven't gotten back to you sooner. Thanks for your responses. I offer a little clarification, not so much to convince, but so you can understand a little better.

Objection 1. I appreciate your clarification of "worthy" and "accepted" here. I did not mean that which you said I implied. Sorry if for lack of clarity on my part you were led to infer it.

Objection 4. I skip to this one because I can respond shortly. Like the first, I don't have much complaint with what you said. I think again you built too much on what you took me to imply. I agree that your analogy is as ludicrous as you intended it.

Objection 3. To clarify, I do not believe that Scripture is less important to those who disagree with me here. But you make two claims I should answer. First, you are right that I did not introduce the subject of his use of Scripture. But someone else did (several, actually). They alleged that he does not use Scripture well, and from that time, that allegation was a legitimate part of the discussion. Several responded to that charge, but none did so by actually defending his use of Scripture; rather, they proceeded as if his alleged misuse of Scripture were established (which in this discussion it has not been). I brought this up under what I called "Observations," and clearly stated that it was based on the comments that had been made. I mentioned it because other people commented about it. I don't know why that confuses you. I did not say that that had anything to do with the video or my original post. Second, you rightly point out that my original post regarded his science and theory. You said

I should not be surprised if those who defend him focus rather on that. That sounds good, except for two things. 1. I did not make this observation because his defenders did not talk about the Scriptures, but because they did. 2. If my memory serves me well, you were the ONLY person who sought to defend him on the basis of science and theory. Thus, I encourage you to do two things. 1. If I make an observation that doesn't apply to you, don't think I meant you. 2. If you make a certain line of argument, don't assume that all Dr. Garlock's defenders did the same and can therefore be excused on that basis. Your confusion confuses me.

Objection 2. This is the one to which I must respond most passionately. You fairly seriously misrepresented me. My belief is, as you admit, that if we walk in the Spirit, we WILL not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, we WILL not sin, we WILL not offer in praise to God anything that is unacceptable to him. If the Bible says it WILL not happen, then it CANNOT happen. There is no sense in which I implied that once you start walking in the Spirit, you cannot at any moment begin to do otherwise, or that you will never sin again. The context of what followed amused that one continues to walk in the Spirit. This is a continuing reality. I will again assert what I did there: "But if people's hearts are right before God, it is impossible for them to sing bad music to him!" The verb tenses and connectives are clear that the heart's being right with God is prerequisite and by necessity simultaneous to their music being acceptable. I did not state what I believe to be an obvious and necessary corollary to this: if you are NOT walking in the Spirit, it does not matter what you do or what music you sing, it is always always always unacceptable to God. All such righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

To summarize: if I am in fellowship with God, I will (because of the immediate and active work of his Spirit) only do what is pleasing to him (though not excluding the possibility that I might at any moment cease to walk with him); and if I am not in fellowship with God, then I cannot do anything or offer anything that is pleasing to him. This leads me to several conclusions (expect some overlap here): 1. The greatest necessity is the necessity of being in right fellowship with God, walking in the Spirit. 2. If I commit an act of sin (which can often be objectively judged), then I should know that I had already been out of fellowship with God (the state of being out of fellowship with God is a logical prerequisite to being able to sin). 3. If I was already out of fellowship with God before I committed the noticeable act of sin, then I was already in sin. 4. My concern should be not primarily with the act, which was just the eventual and perhaps inevitable fruition, but rather with my state of disfellowship with God. 5. If I see people listening to objectively bad music, then I know they are out of fellowship with God, and since that cannot be fixed by correcting their music, my concern should not be to correct their music (though I might be able to use that to demonstrate the reality of their sinful condition), but to compel them to fellowship with God through repentance and forgiveness. 6. If I focus on correcting their music, I am only doing what God would do much better (in fact, perfectly) if they would just return to fellowship with God. 7. If I ignore their music, but see them return to the Lord, their music will change. 8. If I correct their music but don't correct their hearts (which I can't do anyway), and they remain in their state of disfellowship with God, then their music, however good, is still unacceptable to God, and it is not worthy of my praise or commendation either. 9. If I correct their music (or any behavior) but do not emphasize the much greater necessity of returning to the Lord, then I set them up to be deceived into thinking that since their music (or behavior) is correct, then they must be right before the Lord. 10. If I insist on doing what God guarantees he will do if people's hearts are right with him, then I do not know if the change I see in people is the Lord's work or mine. 11. Externalism promotes a defective hamartiology, in which sin is seen as something outside of me, and not something in me. 12. Externalism promotes legalism.

Dr. Garlock promotes an externalistic approach to music. I am seriously convinced that this promotes legalism in the church. Galatians 5 is clear that if the work of the Spirit is duplicated by means of external laws, it renders Christ useless to us, and excludes the believer from grace.

I hope that clarifies for you a little what I believe. Sorry for the confusion. I do not expect you to agree with much of this, but I am compelled to it by Scripture, and unless compelled by Scripture and sound reason that I am wrong, here I stand. I can do no other.

Thanks, Bill

Bill:

Thank you for the clarification, Nathan. I agree with much of what you said, and I think that the few areas in which I disagree would be illustrated very well if you were to answer the question I asked about a church using drugs as part of their worship of the Lord. Would you mind taking a moment to write out an answer?

Nathan:

Sure. Short answer. You assert that I "seem" to be saying something which in fact I am not saying. Then you ask me a question on the basis of your assumption regarding what I believe. If I believed what you assumed I believe (anything is acceptable unless expressly forbidden in Scripture), then the answer to your question should reasonably be "yes" (drugs are acceptable and should be deprived by the church), at least, if we agree that drugs are not explicitly forbidden. However, since the question's validity is not based on what I said or believe, but on what you extrapolated (at least one step removed from what I said), and since I do believe that position you extrapolated, then the answer is "no" (I do not have to conclude that drugs are valid and worship or that churches should provide them). Thus, "no" is the simple answer to the two questions in that paragraph.

Bill:

You claim that if one is walking with God, then he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh, and I agree. But let's put this into a practical scenario. Let's imagine that I am walking with God, and I am approached by a pastor who tells me that God wants me to steal a car and sell it in order to support the work of the church. At this point I am faced with a decision. Does God want me to steal the car or does he want me to refrain from stealing? There are two methods that I can use to find the answer to this question. I can either search within, or I can search without.

To search within, I must examine my own heart which is in perfect fellowship with God to see if the proposed theft would be grievous to my heart. To search without, I must examine the Scriptures and the laws of nature and men to see if the proposed theft would violate any external restriction upon my life. Which method is more dependable, internal or external?

If I apply the internal method, then I must rely on the accuracy of my own heart in communicating to me the will of God, but we know from Jeremiah 17:9 that "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." By this method, I would have no guarantee that my heart is not deceiving me into doing something contrary to what God would have me do. I may tell the pastor that my heart is right with God and therefore will not allow me to steal a car to support the church. To which he may reply that his heart is also right with God but does not have any reservation against thievery for a good cause. He may even go so far as to suggest that my heart is deceiving me perhaps because I have not grown in the Lord as much as he has. What defense would I have against this logic? If I am relying solely on the internal method, then my spiritual life must always be in a state of limbo: forever halting between two opinions and unable to determine whether I am truly right with God or just under the influence of my own deceitful heart.

If I apply the external method instead, then I am able to rely on the unchanging accuracy of the Word of God and the laws which He has instilled within the very fabric of His creation. We know from II Peter 1:19 that the Scriptures give us "a more sure word of prophecy" than our own heart and mind; and in Romans 1:20, we are assured that the power and authority of God are clearly seen and understood from His creation. We have no such

assurances regarding our hearts. Did not Christ Himself teach this when he said that if we love Him we should keep His commandments (John 14:15)? In applying this method, I can provide unwavering resistance to the supplications of the pastor because of God's unchanging command, "Thou shalt not steal." In order to persuade me otherwise, the pastor must demonstrate that his request is in line with an exception that is expressly permitted by the Word of God. By relying on this external method, I can be assured that each step I take is directed by God and is in line with His will regardless of the wavering of my heart (II Tim 2:13).

Now let's apply this to the scenario that I asked you about previously. A teenager has approached you and asked about attending an event at a church which encourages the use of drugs to in their worship. Should you tell this impressionable young man that he needs to focus on the internal by spending time in prayer and searching his own heart to see if God will speak to him about going, or should you explain to him all the external reasons that he should avoid the danger posed by this philosophy? Can he trust his own heart to give him the right answer? No. Can he trust the laws of nature and nature's God to give him the right answer? Yes. Thus he should rely on the external revelation of God in matters of conduct rather than the internal relationship, and the same application can be made in the realm of music.

Indeed, this is why the external revelation was given to us in the first place. The purpose of the law is to reveal sin, for as Paul said, "I had not known sin, but by the law" (Rom 7:7). Does this statement mean that God is not able to reveal sin through His Spirit? Not at all. It is merely the recognition of an all wise Creator that His creatures are incapable of perfectly communicating with Him through flawed hearts.