

General Topics :: Viva Las Jesus!

Viva Las Jesus!, on: 2007/1/12 7:36

Well... I'm sure I'll draw the ire of some here for being critical and judgemental... but here it goes. This needs to be talked about...

The feature report in Toledo, Ohio's City Paper for December 6-12, 2006, was "Viva Las Jesus: Hitting the Entertainment Jackpot with Toledo's Churches." The paper's reporters visited several area megachurches "in an attempt to gauge the entertainment value of these salvation supernovas." The result was an enthusiastic appraisal by a secular publication. Note how the music at these contemporary churches was described: "kickin ... great sound system that wouldn't be out of place on a Vegas stage ... intense electric guitar jams, Bowie-worthy synth riffs and drum solos from a percussionist who could've been a member of the Blue Man Group ... area-like concert stage complete with booming speakers, fog, strobe lights and spotlights ... a rockin' Christian rock sextet that'll make even the most sin-happy soul shout 'Hallelujah!' ... light, folksy rock, like an unpretentious bar band ... loud and heavy on the electric guitars, yet strangely mesmerizing ... the guitar went straight to the soul, the drumming was profound ... everyone grooving to the music ... the atmosphere of a casual rock concert." The reporters even liked the sermons because they were "short but sweet" and "sprinkled with a dose of comedy" and "hilarious personal anecdotes" and especially because there was no "fire and brimstone." One preacher gave "props to that great theologian Eminem."

An objective of the contemporary church movement is to make unbelievers feel comfortable and entertained, and it is obvious that they have achieved that goal.

Lacking in the responses by the news reporters, though, was any mention of conviction of sin. They were entertained and satisfied with the experience but they were not converted. I have attended many of these churches and while there is power present, it is the power of the flesh and not the power of the Spirit. It is the power of a rock concert, not the power of holiness and the uncorrupted Word of God. It is blasphemy to yoke together a holy Christ with the things of this world. The Bible says that friendship with the world is spiritual adultery (James 4:4). Those are the type of strong words that are found throughout the Bible but that you will not hear at a contemporary church. The very idea of "Viva Las Jesus" is blasphemy, yet this shallow generation sees no problem with it. Jesus Christ would not be accepted in these churches for He preached more times than not on hellfire and judgment.

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Jesus Christ, Mark 9:43-48).

Krispy

Re: Viva Las Jesus! - posted by JaySaved, on: 2007/1/12 8:31

Quote:
-----An objective of the contemporary church movement is to make unbelievers feel comfortable and entertained, and it is obvious that they have achieved that goal.

Amen.

What we need are preachers like Paul.

Acts 24:24-26 (King James Version)

24And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

Re: Viva Las Jesus! - posted by Goldminer (), on: 2007/1/12 8:58

I for one have been to conferences that have contemporary christian worship music. I have purchased numerous CD because I love worship. The rule of thumb I use is it entertainment or worship. I'll use an example, I have a CD by Lindell Cooley called "Open Up the Sky" that was made years ago during the revival at Brownsville. It is really awesome because Lindell Cooley is worshipping God not entertaining. Recently in 2006 Mr. Cooley made a new CD that I can't get into because it is entertainment and I don't feel he entered into worship himself.

Another thing that has effected me on this subject is Don Potter's message "Face the Wall". He was a guitar player for the Judd's and Chuck Mangioni and others. He got saved and began to do worship music. God sat him down and told him he would not allow him to be an entertainer. He was made to face the wall in his own home and worship God between just the two of them until that is all he ever wanted to do. It took two years, I think, before God released him to minister in music again. When you go to one of his meetings the worship teams turn their chairs away from facing the audience because Don wants them to worship God and not entertain an audience. Because the people and the worship team are all worshipping I have found these meetings to be very powerful.

Also Jesus is lifted up as the one who saves and repentance is preached as well.

Having said all that I agree that most of what is called worship is just to entertain the flesh, but I do believe that there are those out there who use guitars and drums, but they are using them as the did in the Psalms to glorify God in praise and worship.

Re: Viva Las Jesus! - posted by enid, on: 2007/1/12 9:14

Krispy,
Have to agree with you on this. It's all around.

You said you would get some ire for this?

You will, wait for the avalanche.

But the ire will come from those who attend such churches, like it, and God or no one is going to tell them what to do, even if what they are doing, the way they are worshipping, is wrong.

I mean, who needs God when you feel so go in church?

God bless.

Re: Viva Las Jesus! - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/1/12 9:21

Quote:
-----Well... I'm sure I'll draw the ire of some here for being critical and judgemental... but here it goes. This needs to be talked about...

Not necessarily brother. Maybe that this is becoming so predominant that to address it is to spit in the ocean ... It is so overt and completely over the top as to be something quite foreign to Christianity at all ...

Quote:
-----It is blasphemy to yoke together a holy Christ with the things of this world.

There is a wiggle in all this that may be difficult to apprehend ... What of the hard rocking Christian bands that you are so mewhat fond of? It is not a criticism Krispy, it is a question. In part because I, like yourself and as more than a few know of our past ... 'love's' of this style of music. Even one of those bands (Swedish?) that you had linked to, gave a listen and

... yes, right up the old alley, very good, skilled, lyrically ... all that.

Surely having this detached from a church setting and in this present case with all the ... attachments and compromise and entertainment and *other-ness*, that is being described, grievous it is ... What I am trying to get at is, detached from a church setting, what do you still have? Is it still not a rock concert and all the things described in this particular 'review' ... is it still in some measure *blasphemy to yoke together a holy Christ with the things of this world*? Don't get me wrong but other, like I stated, even that particular band you mentioned is precisely what I would be listening to and playing, style wise if I was still doing both ... Again, that is not to state anything more than an honest question, it is not a particular knock on the sincerity on the part of the band members, nor a straight jacket legalism ... And to clarify that even further, hardly do I think a certain 'above it all' that I find myself unable to ... be entertained by this style of music, however the redeeming value or personal preference, it is something in the soul that is troubled or the spiritual tension that comes about. It well could be just the long past tenure of that life, that as it has been well put; "Others may, but you cannot". So that is not my point at all.

To put it another way, if this is acceptable 'outside' the church walls, all the;

Quote:
-----"kickin ... great sound system that wouldn't be out of place on a Vegas stage ... intense electric guitar jams, Bowie-worthy synth riffs and drum solos ... area-like concert stage complete with booming speakers, fog, strobe lights and spotlights ... a rockin' Christian rock sextet that'll make even the most sin-happy soul shout 'Hallelujah!' ... light, folksy rock, like an unpretentious bar band ... loud and heavy on the electric guitars, yet strangely mesmerizing ... the guitar went straight to the soul, the drumming was profound ... everyone grooving to the music ... the atmosphere of a casual rock concert."

... is it really all that much of a surprise when it does show up on the inside?

Short of all the overt ...

Quote:
-----The reporters even liked the sermons because they were "short but sweet" and "sprinkled with a dose of comedy" and "hilarious personal anecdotes" and especially because there was no "fire and brimstone." One preacher gave "props to that great theologian Eminem."

...

I am thinking of the 'yoke together ... things of this world'. Is it truly a clean cut between taking this aspect out of the church setting, yet perfectly acceptable just as long as it is not *in* there? See where I am going here?

Re: Viva Las Jesus! - posted by NLONG (), on: 2007/1/12 9:55

Church conformity to the world is absolute heresy! Thanks for the post. Must admit, I thought it was going to be about someone putting slot machines in their church building by the title.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2007/1/12 10:26

Quote:
-----this is becoming so predominant that to address it is to spit in the ocean

...and the church is drowning in it! Recently read the following paragraph from an article on why some American churches are growing and others are not growing...

Additionally, the character of worship largely affects growth. Congregations that describe their worship as "joyful" is more likely to experience substantial growth. At the same time, those that described their worship as "reverent" were more likely to decline. And churches that more often use drums in their worship services have experienced substantial growth from 2000 to 2005. That also applied to the use of electric guitars.

(<http://www.christianpost.com/article/20070104/24794.htm>) the complete article

Hey you can't argue with success. The central question for me in this trend is "Just which people is church for? The world or the church?"

The other day I was reading the first chapter of Pilgrim's Progress again. I simply don't think that Bunyan wouldn't even recognize our modern seeker sensitive spin on the Gospel. In his story Pilgrim (soon to be Christian) left not only the world but also his own wife and kids behind on the road to Zion. (spiritually speaking I'm sure)

If one of today's glitzy leaders wrote Pilgrims Progress, ole Pilgrim would not walk the lonely road with only one or two traveling companions. Instead he would walk right past Evangelist to go start a mega-church in the city of destruction, and then set up a franchise church in vanity fair. Mrs. Wanton would be his worship leader, Mr. Worldy Wisdom his marketing manager, and Mr. Legalist, Mr. Demas, and Mr. By Ends his board of elders. ;-)

MC

Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2007/1/12 12:15

As shameful as this all seems I was wondering how Apostle Paul would respond...

Phil 1:18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2007/1/12 12:47

I appreciate your generosity on this Ian. Really I do.

However I do not believe Paul would rejoice at all because (too often) Christ is not being preached. As to their invisible motives I cannot say...but their content is visible.

MC

Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2007/1/12 13:01

Where their theology is in error we should correct them, where their theology is absent we should encourage them!

Even great preachers like Billy Graham and Brother Andrew have occasionally given messages without clear references to Jesus...

For Billy Graham it became a turning point in his ministry when he promised himself never to preach a sermon without the focus being on the cross of Jesus! But it wasn't Graham who made this realization, he was approached by another saint to point out this blind spot!

For Brother Andrew he had to be reminded by a member of Hamas that he had forgotten to mention the resurrection in a sermon he gave to some Islamic militants... He also made a commitment afterwards that he would never give a compromised Gospel. His messenger wasn't even a saint, he was a follower of Islam.

Some people may be afraid to speak a full gospel because they may scare away some of their audience... we know this is wrong, but sometimes we make this mistake ourselves and need to be reminded. Other times their motives are purely selfish, more seats filled means more money in the offering, the softest message means the most seats will be filled.

We however won't be the final arbiter on this matter... Even when the full gospel isn't preached it can lead people to salvation, they may only need a little push. However this is not excusing these preachers -but for us who know better it should be a call to preach the Gospel even more clearly to this world, for those who aren't doing so!

Also of note, some churches are 'seeker friendly' in their approach to general services but preach the gospel clearly once someone has started attending small groups and discipleship classes... this is a different method than some of us are used to, it bears fruit even if it is flawed, that is why I brought up the verse by apostle Paul.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2007/1/12 13:47

You make some good points brother. In all fairness to these people let's share our concerns with them whenever we have the chance. It may be hard to believe, but there may be some, even pastors, who are trapped in these systems much like anyone can feel trapped in their employment. They may be longing for real Christian fellowship as well...but they have no one to talk to.

Yet I do think you were performing a backwards handstand to connect the razzle dazzle of large "seeker sensitive" churches to Brother Andrew omitting the resurrection while preaching to Islamic Militants. There are some subtle differences..

Hopefully part of the purpose of these threads is not to rail on other people...but to keep all of this in perspective. My fundamental concern with "all of this" is that American Christianity is being defined by a handful of influential church experimenters who have turned away from the old way. They borrow morals and values from the world and synthesize them with Christian practices...perhaps because they feel that their survival is more important than their integrity. I imagine it would be hard to close down a church due to lack of authentic converts. So with viability being the paramount objective they set out on making the needed cultural and philosophical adjustments to their mission in order to remain viable.

Consider how serious this trend will become as they try to adjust to Generation Y who overwhelmingly in recent stats have said that getting rich and being famous is their number one goal. (Imagine the mass disillusionment that will set in 20 years from now...)

There is this fairy tale that talks about how a boy traveled to a faraway land to find a great treasure...ultimately his quest failed and he returned home without success. The story ends on a 'happy note' though...for the treasure he was seeking was hidden right in his own backyard and he only needed to stay home to find it! Well this fairy tale reminds me of American churches...Jesus is calling us to leave our "homes" but now here comes a gospel where everything God has for you is right here in your backyard! For instance I watched a certain successful preacher the other day exclaim as he held up his bible, "There's a new car for you in this book! There's a new house for you in this book!" (Paul would not rejoice in this case.) I once was asked to design a book jacket for a pastor who wrote "Jesus wants to give you all the things this world glamorizes. but only if you put your faith in him." (Uh, no...I didn't need the paycheck that bad...)

It's important to recognize the right from wrong...not to condemn people, but to strengthen what remains, even within ourselves. All the while, we willingly trust that God knows who are his. However, if these churches represent the hope of Gospel then it seems to me that mankind has no urgent need for this hope. We can find riches and psychological comfort aplenty in the world. The world already does a fine job of giving us a heightened sense of being and self.

Only the Holy Spirit can make us born again...regenerate men with whole new hearts created. All men will face eternity. We know this...but somehow feel bad when we point this out to seeker-sensitive churches whose message never rises above topics such as personal happiness or social justice.

Ian, your desire for humility and patience is a good thing to have around here at SI. Thank you brother. Know that I'm not cold hearted towards others in my take on all of this...nor do I extract myself from the sad landscape. It's all so lamentable.

Grace,

MC

Re:, on: 2007/1/12 13:57

Everyone is focussing on the music part of this... and in doing so, you are missing the point. There is a time and place for any form of music. I still believe that.

The point of my post is NOT music!! It is the overall attitude and spirit so prevalent in churches today... bring 'em in thru entertainment and whatever you do don't offend anyone!

This formula will never work. People need to hear the truth. Without hearing the truth there can be NO conviction of sin.

Krispy

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2007/1/12 14:13

I don't think the past couple of posts were about music.

Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2007/1/12 15:32

Quote:
----- Ian, your desire for humility and patience is a good thing to have around here at SI. Thank you brother. Know that I'm not cold hearted towards others in my take on all of this...nor do I extact myself from the sad landscape. It's all so lamentable.

My verse for the year is Ephesians 4:1-3

Quote:
-----As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ever year our church encourages us to pick a key verse for the year... I sat down before January first and prayed looking for the verse that would outline the goal of my spiritual walk for the next year, the first verse I read when I opened the bible was Ephesians 4:1-3.

When I first read it I thought to myself, 'there's no way I can make this my key verse for the year, If i shared this with my fellowshipp they'd actually want to keep me accountable to it... it's impossible!'

I started to flip the pages of my bible and stopped a few seconds later and realized that that was the verse that God had wanted me to meditate upon for the year.

I'm well aware of my pride, my judgemental attitude, my unforgiving spirit, my jelousies and my tendancy towards backbiting... but I was looking for a feel good verse, this definitely wasn't it!

Of course God wanted me to share this with my fellows so that I was accountable to a year of humility, gentleness, patience and peace! I'm really excited to see how this year is going to be!

However I'm not perfect yet, over on the Paul Cain thread I came off as pretty judgemental... so I've got some work to do!

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/1/12 15:47

Quote:
-----nor do I extact myself from the sad landscape. It's all so lamentable.

Thanks MC, agree ...

Krispy, I also do understand ...

Quote:
-----The point of my post is NOT music!!

Still, not a bit difficult to get around all that, is it? I was trying to draw some parallels there, how short the steps are from each other; the world, the church, the music ... all having become so interchangeable, indistinguishable ...

It's all so lamentable to repeat that heartfelt sentiment.

Re: - posted by NLONG (), on: 2007/1/12 16:26

Krispy,

As one who was enslaved by satanic gothic/punk rock I disagree that there is a time and place for all music, though perhaps you weren't being all inclusive when you said "all."

Got it loud n clear. Church tries worldly tactics to pull in the world to the church. Result: worldly unconverted "Church." In fact, you get a bunch of self-righteous believe-what-your-preacher-says robots who can't and sometimes won't get in the scriptures themselves for verification.

Anyone noticed that few "Christians" like accountability today (not talking about Krispy). Accountability has become judgement.

Re: - posted by iansmith (), on: 2007/1/12 16:44

Quote:

-----Anyone noticed that few "Christians" like accountability today (not talking about Krispy). Accountability has become judgement.

Accountability means submitting ourselves to the will and judgement and possibly the correction of others. I know that I am very individualistic, self righteous and proud, why would I want to bend my neck in front of anyone, especially when I can, because of all my bible knowledge discern wrong in others as well!

That was Rhetorical... that is exactly why we should practice submission, accountability is just a new word for Christian submission. If we find it hard to submit to others, just think about how hard its going to be to submit to Jesus!