



Gangnam Style

"If any of you are happy, they should sing."

James 5:13b, CEB

Music is a fascinating gift from our Creator. It removes barriers and brings a great deal of synergy across our globe. Working with international students and Canadian students together, I see this phenomenon at work. A song can bring people together in a way nothing else can. The rhythms and melodies transcend language and culture. I was recently reminded of this on a trip to Seoul, Korea.

Outside the large COEX centre (a shopping centre and hotel that covers a city block) is a larger-than-life statue representing the Korean pop music hit of 2012, "Gangnam Style." Gangnam style refers to a lifestyle associated with the Gangnam District of Seoul. It is located in the very centre of the city which is the pop culture and fashion hub of this tiny country with a huge population. The golden hands crossed over represent a silly dance that went along with this pop tune that became popular all over the world. The first time I visited Gangnam was in 2014, when the city was still buzzing from the foolish song, and at night

there would be karaoke performers out in the streets.

When the song was released and became popular in Canada, it was an immediate bond between student groups. The Secretary-General of the United Nations at the time, Ban Ki-moon, hailed "Gangnam Style" as a force for world peace. I am not sure I would give it that much power, but it was interesting to see how it brought people together.

Much more powerful than a pop song with silly dance moves is the bond we have in the music that reflects our faith. I work as the principal of a Christian school in Sussex, New Brunswick. As students have come to our school from Christian schools in other parts of the world, they understand our anthems and can sing some of them word for word. The themes in our evangelical community inspire the soul. I am sure you've had this experience from time to time when in a congregation other than your own. When that happens, you join your voice into that new congregational choir and sing together in one accord.

The styles of music that Christians enjoy differ, but there is that earnestness in the words and melodies that brings a oneness in spirit. There is power in the words that really could bring world peace. The songs that are based on these biblical refrains are the ones with eternal value. The chorus of praise in Psalm 98 is a good example:

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvelous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
The LORD has made

his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness
to the nations.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,
burst into jubilant song with music;
shout for joy before the LORD, the KING.
Let the sea resound, and everything
in it, the world, and all who live in it.
(1-2, 4, 6b-7, NIV)

Music is a powerful force in the lives of our kids. One chart-topper at the end of 2019 was a song by Billie Eilish called, "Bad Guy." The lyrics, written by a 17-year-old girl, are so mature it will make you blush to read them. How did she get to the top of the charts? Our kids made her popular by their purchase of her album or her songs individually. The reviewer from pluggedin.ca (Focus on the Family) said, "But though this inventive young singer may grab the ears and eyes of many, much of what she's saying needs to be approached with great caution—especially for tweens and teens who are already grappling with depression or suicidal thoughts."

Music is a medium that powerfully conveys and reinforces a message. One pastor said every song is a sermon set to music. Work at interacting with the playlists your kids have on their

devices. What messages are being conveyed through those earbuds? Is their music life-giving? Does it reinforce faith? Does it promote a Christ-honouring morality? Let's make it a priority to promote a playlist to our kids that embodies eternal praise, peace, faith, love, and true joy as our Creator intended.

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