

Section 4: Context of Music

Question #4 “Context”

TEXT: Psalm 8:1,2; Matthew 21:15-16; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; 14:26,40; Philippians 4:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:11-24

Analyzing Music as a Christian

Christians should endeavor to think Biblically concerning every aspect of our lives including our music. We should consider harmony with Scripture and be on the look out for heretical red flags and negative effects. We should consider timing and apparent coordination of things. Christian worship involves so much more than just "the music".

1. We can critically analyze the **music** — sounds, instruments, arrangements, mood, good and bad art, etc.
2. We can critically analyze the **lyrics** — truth or heresy.
3. We can analyze the **context** or **setting** — who is creating and promoting the music.

In this section, we will focus critically on the context or setting of the music. We will consider the theology, life styles, and philosophies of the writers, singers, musicians, producers and churches involved. We will consider:

- Bethel, Jesus Culture, Lauren Daigle, Steffany Gretzinger (left Bethel 2019)
- Pentecostals of Alexandria, Charity Gayle
- People and Songs
- Jesus Image, TBN
- Hillsong
- Elevation Music

Some Red Flags and Why they are *Red*

1. Ministry or Industry?
2. Intentional Undoing of Standards
3. Image Versus Reality
4. Substance or Manipulation? — Are the Words or the Music having the Greater Effect?
5. Fads
6. Spotting New Age and New Think Influences

1. Ministry or Industry?

“MUSIC INDUSTRY” Merchandise of Gospel

Is it ONLY the lyrics and music that determine Christian music?

The lives and theology of the writers composers. Would be lose some hymns if we were consistently as strict in a standard to judge worth of music by its creators.

Profiting from Jesus?

2. Intentional Undoing of Standards

- Stephen Furtick insulting the prayer life of his father.
- The motivation for this "forget doctrine and standards" is ecumenicalism
- Christians have always had standards — practical positions taken in response to conviction produced by the Bible.
- Protecting our values
- Ephesians 5

3. Image Versus Reality

Public image is probably the greatest asset of public figures. Whether kings, politicians, movie stars or moral crusaders, projecting and maintaining a certain perception for the public is often the deciding factor between success and failure. -- <https://historycollection.com/famous-historic-figures-public-image-vs-the-reality-of-their-lives/>

John Wayne

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John Wayne (1907 – 1979) made a killing off his public image of rugged toughness, and on-screen portrayals of virile and gung ho tough guys. “Duke”, as he was known to millions of admirers, cornered the market for a while on depictions of the quintessential American fighting man. Such roles got him two Oscar nominations for Best Actor, including one for playing a tough US Marine sergeant in *The Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949).

For example, John Wayne: Less known is the fact that, just a few years earlier during WWII, Duke had been booed off stage by actual US Marines, who reacted negatively to his fake machismo. They also resented the fact that he had gone out of his way to duck the draft and avoid service during the war. Wayne spent the rest of his life berating himself – and overcompensating – for having avoided the fight during WWII.

4. Are the Words or the Music having the Greater Effect?

Seducing Spirits

Listening to their stuff could draw someone into their ministry and or theology.

dress style presentation, tore, "stylish"

production (low lights, intimate)

1 Timothy 4:1 — Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

5. Fads

What would a Christ-like response NEW styles and NEW forms of music look like?

6. Spotting New Age and New Think Influences

Music within the Hillsong Context

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/y-j7CFfDvHc>

Shout to the Lord Lyrics

My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like You

All of my days I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love
My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship You
Shout to the Lord all the Earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In You
My Jesus, my Saviour
Lord there is none like You
All of my days I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love
My comfort
My shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
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Shout to the Lord all the Earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have
Oh nothing compares to the promise I have
Nothing compares to the promise I have
In You

Shout to the Lord Facts

Darlene Zschech wrote "Shout to the Lord" in 1993. This globally popular Christian praise song was written by Australian worship leader Darlene Zschech in 1993. It was written during a time when Zschech was struggling with money worries and the stresses of raising a young family. One day, when she was feeling particularly discouraged she slipped into the toy room where they kept their piano and put into song some biblical truths to which the stressed young mother was holding onto, in particular drawing from the Psalms. Zschech explained to Today's Christian Woman: "I wrote it when I was feeling discouraged. I felt I could either scream and pull my hair out, or praise God." She added: "The line "Nothing compares to the promise I have in you" was something I clung to when our circumstances seemed so bleak. I think that rings true with anyone going through tough times." This was the title track of a best-selling worship album by Zschech's Hillsong Church, which was released in 1996 in America. Hillsong sprung onto the world stage in 1996 with the song "Shout to the Lord",

Moral Concerns Hillsong Timeline

- Frank Houston (father of Brian Houston) head of Assemblies of God in Australia
- **1965 to 1977** Brett Sengstock from New Zealand was abused from age 7 to 12. From the first instance it was like I had been "murdered". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4g2FgAu1NYw&t=151s> Victim of Hillsong Church founder's father says childhood was destroyed by sexual abuse. Plus as many as 9 other victims. <https://kelsolawyers.com/au/frank-houston>
- **1978** told us that he first disclosed the sexual abuse by Mr Frank Houston to his mother in 1978, when he was 16. His mother did not report the sexual abuse to anyone at the time, and AHA said that he did not take it further, as he 'did not want to cause any trouble'.²¹⁴ In 1998, AHA's mother disclosed the sexual abuse to Pastor Barbara Taylor, the senior pastor of another AOGA affiliated church in New South Wales. She also told a visiting evangelist minister, Mr Kevin Mudford.²¹⁵ On 4 November 1998, Pastor Taylor met with Mr Mudford and Pastor McMartin, who was then a member of the New South Wales State Executive of the AOGA. Pastor McMartin was told that allegations of child sexual abuse had been made against a senior pastor, without naming the victim or the alleged perpetrator. Pastor McMartin suggested that the allegations should be reported to Pastor Brian Houston because he was the National President at the time. Pastor Taylor told us that she did not report the allegations to Pastor Brian Houston at the time because the allegations concerned his father.²¹⁶ Pastor Taylor told us that on 19 May 1999 she wrote a letter to Pastor McMartin. The letter did not disclose the identity of AHA or of Mr Frank Houston, but it confirmed there had been contact between the victim and the alleged perpetrator and that the matter was put on hold, as the victim was too upset. Pastor Taylor spoke again with Pastor McMartin about the matter on 16 September 1999. She then wrote him a letter, naming Mr Frank Houston as the alleged perpetrator and AHA as the victim.²¹⁷ Pastor McMartin gave evidence that, when he learned the identity of the alleged perpetrator, he told Pastor Taylor to tell the victim that the complaints process could not begin until a written complaint was made, in accordance with the Administration manual. Pastor McMartin also told us that he contacted Pastor Alcorn, who was then a member of the National Executive, for advice. Pastor Alcorn and Pastor McMartin spoke to Pastor Brian Houston about the allegations about two weeks later, in approximately November 1999.²¹⁸ Pastor McMartin said that after he reported the matter to Pastor Brian Houston it was his understanding that the National Executive would undertake its own investigations. Despite the seriousness of the allegations, no steps were taken by the AOGA New South Wales State Executive to follow the complaints process
- **1965 to 1971** Frank Houston was the Superintendent of the AOG for the whole of New Zealand in 1965 and maintained the position until 1971.
- **1977** Frank Houston established Sydney Christian Life Centre in 1977 In 1977, Frank Houston and his family moved to Sydney where he felt there were better opportunities to grow a larger ministry. He was already known there. He started the Sydney Christian Life Centre (Sydney CLC) in a rented hall in Double Bay.
- **1980's** Frank Houston sexually abused a trainee pastor during counselling sessions. Marr, David (3 August 2007). "Hillsong - the church with no answers". The Sydney Morning Herald. Retrieved 15 March 2007. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/hillsong-the-church-with-no-answers-20070804-gdqs1h.html> Frank Houston was about 60 when he undertook to cure 23-year-old Peter Laughton's homosexuality. "My counselling sessions by the senior minister were nothing more than sexual abuse disguised in the form of the need of a father's love and discipline," Laughton says. "Through my naivety, I enjoyed the naked beatings, the eternal bum caresses and masturbating into bottles, among other things." Laughton was training to be a pastor. He says the abuse continued for about four years until 1984. "I look at it now and think, 'God, I was really naive to fall for that.' " And believing himself cured, he married.
- **1983** Brian and Bobbie Houston founded Hills Christian Life Centre many years after these events in 1983. His son Brian started up the Hills Christian Life Centre (Hills CLC) at Baulkham Hills in 1983. Houston marketed its Christian music under the "Hillsong" label. The church started annual conferences which attracted tens of thousands, eventually selling out the biggest venue in Sydney. Hills CLC was growing so fast it started to attract media attention
- **Early 1990's** Laughton told another Hillsong pastor about his ordeal But as far as Laughton is aware, no action was taken against the old man until he was forced into retirement by his son Brian after an allegation of pedophilia emerged in about 2000.
- **1993** Darlene Zschech wrote "Shout to the Lord" in 1993. "This was the title track of a best-selling worship album by Zschech's Hillsong Church, which was released in 1996 in America. Hillsong sprung onto the world stage in 1996 with the song "Shout to the Lord",
- **1999** In early 1999, Frank merged his Waterloo church with Brian's Hills CLC under the new 'Hillsong Church' banner. Brian became Senior Pastor over the combined Waterloo and Baulkham Hills campuses. By late 1999, Hillsong Church was well and truly the biggest church in Australia; its Christian music albums had enjoyed international success. Brian Houston, now 43-years-old, was the National President of the Assemblies of God in Australia.
- **1999** When they found out his own parents declared he would be causing trouble for the church. His aunt, a Pastor in the church said she would not stand by him if he went to the "secular" courts. To Brett it all sounded very much like "shut-up". Brett

Sengstock's mother reported Frank Houston's abusive behaviour to the church. Brett asked the Hillsong Church elders not to involve the police in the matter. Brett was aged 36. Brian Houston became aware of the sins of his father, according to Hillsong church documents. By then Brian was the head of the Assemblies of God and though obligated legally DID NOT report this account to the police.

- **December 22, 1999**, Brian Houston called a crisis meeting about Brett Sengstock. Meets were agreed to be kept confidential and on a special file. In the minutes Frank's crimes were described as "a single act of sexual abuse more than 30 years ago." "The complainant does not wish to be identified and does not wish to make a formal complaint, but Frank Houston has confessed to the act."
- **November 2, 2000**
- **2000** The allegations concerned actions from 30 years prior. After an internal investigation Frank was removed in 2000. What the church did do was strip Frank of his credentials and he retired on a pension. Frank Houston, confessed and paid \$12,000 settlement to the Sengstocks. Brett Sengstock "I feel like its just been brushed under the carpet"
<https://www.9news.com.au/national/sexual-abuse-survivor-describes-his-ordeal-at-hands-of-pedophile-pastor/6bf49f92-b731-403e-803a-99b6908a20b3>
- **November 28, 2000** Brian Houston is made aware of more victims (6).
- **December 8, 2000** Statement from the church concerning Frank Houston, "It will only be used publically if rumors become so extensive"
- **December 24, 2001** Assemblies of God Australia letter dated December 24, 2001 sent to its pastors like Bob Cotton. Announced Frank being put out for "Serious moral failure" and "Sexual Failure of Ministers". The letter does not begin with Frank but with another preacher who was put on 3 year dismissal.

The AOG National Executive never told it's pastors that Frank Houston raped multiple boys in both New Zealand & Australia. They simply called it a "moral failure" & told us not to tell our congregations. Further, they diluted the news with the "moral failure" of another pastor. -- Bob Cotton

December 24, 2001 closing of letter: We are aware that the above information may be a surprise and shock to some of you and therefore we have deliberately chosen to restrict this letter to our ordained and probationary ministers. We cannot see any reason for this to be announced to your church or further afield. Sadly, there are always one or two people with their own agendas who will try to get mileage from other people's pain.

- **2001** Church renamed to Hillsong Church.
- **2001** Rumours of scandal sharpened Tanya Levin's interest. After one hugely popular pastor was expelled in 2001, Levin began asking questions about Brian Houston's father, Frank - a preacher so powerful he was thought to be able to raise the dead - who was being accused on the internet of pedophilia. But Hillsong was in the dark. Brian and Bobbie Houston won a standing ovation from the congregation when they finally broke the news that old Frank had an unwavering love of God and deeply repented his moral failings. His crimes were not named that day. Levin was furious: "I had a near-irresistible urge to yell out like the boys used to do in the old days, 'What did he DO, Brian?' "
- **2004** Hazel Houston (months later followed by Frank Houston) died. During a Maitland sermon Frank told the congregation how his wife did in a McDonald's. The recorded sermon challenges Brian Houston's evidence to the child abuse royal commission in 2014 that Frank Houston was "stood down instantly" after admitting child sex offences, and "never, ever preached again anywhere after I confronted him in my office in mid to late November, 1999".
<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/6444987/frank-houston-recording-challenges-hillsong-narrative-about-responses-to-child-sex-allegations/>
- **2004** Burying his father in 2004, Houston declared him a man who made mistakes but a preacher "in a class of his own".
- **2004** Bob Cotton said he supported Frank Houston until his death (age 82) and allowed him to deliver sermons because he believed the "serious moral failure" related to a sexual relationship by Frank Houston, a married man. He said he was "blindsided" when the royal commission in 2014 revealed the extent of church executive knowledge about Frank Houston's child sex offences, and the failure to report allegations to authorities including police.
- **January 2004** Erina's Coastlife Church senior minister Ian Zema wrote to Assemblies of God national secretary Keith Ainge in January, 2004, seeking clarification of Frank Houston's "discipline and restoration period" after one year of Frank and Hazel Houston attending his church. "Frank has no desire to preach or for public ministry in any way. However, if he was called upon to pray for someone at the altar or to deliver a prophetic word he is not sure if that is appropriate or approvable by the national executive," Mr Zema wrote. In late April Mr Ainge said he had spoken to Brian Houston who referred it to the national executive. Mr Ainge advised Mr Zema that Frank Houston was "found to have been involved in serious sexual misconduct and his credential removed with the understanding that it would not be reissued".
<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/story/6444987/frank-houston-recording-challenges-hillsong-narrative-about-responses-to-child-sex-allegations/> Hillsong testified of "extensive child protective policies" but no such policies were cited in response to Mr. Zema. **-by 2004** Houston responded that, by 2004, the entire Hillsong church knew what Frank Houston had done – and that there

was more than one victim. "By then I had told the whole Hillsong Conference." In regard to Zerna, Brian Houston told Fordham: "Ian Zerna knew exactly what he [Frank Houston] was accused of." <https://www.ternitynews.com.au/australia/the-sad-end-of-frank-houston/>

- **2005** Brian Houston boasted on ABC television that Hillsong's income for the financial year 2004-2005 was \$50 million.
- **2005** Bobbie Houston announced at the Colour Your World conference in 2005 that there the only three types of media about Hillsong. They are the positive, the neutral and the anti-Christ.
- **August 2007**, further allegations emerged that Frank Houston had sexually abused a trainee pastor during counselling sessions in the early 1980s
- **August 4, 2007** "There is a 50 per cent turnover every five years. Hillsong is renowned for having a very big back door." -- Tanya Levin author of people in glass houses. Something in her seems to yearn for those exhilarating years fighting the good fight against the devil in all his disguises right down to the voodoo beat of rock'n'roll. "We were told you can't have it because it's incantation and you're going to raise all these demons." How different things are now. Levin begins to sing some Hillsong Christian trance music: "Doof, doof, doof. Christ is the future. Doof doof doof ..."
- **2014** Brian Houston testified in court, "I had no doubt what my father did was criminal conduct." Houston testified it was the victim's responsibility to contact police. "I generally believe I would be pre-empting the victim if I just called the police."
- Bob Cotton began his research into Hillsong and the Houston's in 2014.
- Bob Cotton, pastor in North Sidney, had considered Frank Houston his hero. It was not until 2014 and Brett Sengstock's testimony to the "Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse", that he discovered Frank was a pedophile.
- **June 2015** In his book Live, Love, Lead, released in June, 2015 before the royal commission delivered its findings into Australian Christian Churches and Hillsong four months later, Brian Houston said his father "never ministered again" after November, 1999. "He descended quickly into old age as the shame and torment of his dark past overtook him," Mr Houston wrote. "Five years later, suffering dementia, he had an apparent stroke in the shower. He fell backwards, hit his head and died," Mr Houston wrote.
- bob Cotton said the one-hour sermon only weeks before Frank Houston's death, aged 82, showed an elderly man who repeated his comments about his wife's death at times, but who also spoke strongly about his faith and responded quickly and firmly to his audience. "I spent a lot of time with Frank in his final years. I don't agree with the assessment of his mental state that was presented by some to the royal commission," Mr Cotton said. "Anyone who listens to that sermon would struggle with the idea he was a man suffering from dementia to the extent that he couldn't still deliver a sermon."
- **October 2015** The royal commission in October, 2015 found Mr Houston had a conflict of interest in his handling of allegations against his father.
- **2017** According to the church's self-released 2017 annual report, which was independently audited, its total revenue for 2017 was a little over \$109 million. About \$14 million of that came directly from music. Properties valued at over \$100 million. "The savvy church has quietly turned its worship program into one of Australia's biggest music exports." <https://au.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/inside-hillsong-church-hit-making-music-machine-6661/> 50 million people worldwide estimated to sing Hillsong songs in church each week.
- **December 24, 2020** "primarily gossip"
- **August 5, 2021** Hillsong founder Brian Houston charged by police over alleged concealment of father's child sex abuse. He is expected to appear in Downing Centre Local Court in Sydney on Tuesday 5th October 2021. "These charges have come as a shock to me given how transparent I've always been about this matter," he said. "I vehemently profess my innocence and will defend these charges and I welcome the opportunity to set the record straight."
- **July 23, 2021 updated August 6, 2021** <https://hillsong.com/newsroom/blog/2021/07/hillsong-church-response-to-recent-media-inquiries-on-the-royal-commission/#.YWLjEdpKjIV>

Doctrinal Concerns of HillSong

Bethel and Jesus Culture

Phil Johnson kathy walker stephanie gretzinger New age newthink Chariry g ecumenical Music and Doctrinal Infkuenes: Joyce Meyers preached for Elevation for Code Orange Steven Furtick " The greatest bible teacher alive today" is jm ... "I want to be here bc I happen to really like your pastor" Charitt gaayke apostolic - oneness-- Bethel music Jesus culture Christine DiMarco What does it mean to be christian? Poa sing Jesus culture songs "not afraid" "freedom" "fearless" Kim walker smith Bill johnson when heaven invades earth .. (new thought New age comparison)

1. Jesus will protect just bc im a Christian Dominion theology eschatology... ruse and build mission .. hype ... being mindless desperation - power - Jesus healed as a man and as a model for us ... spotless bride for jesus' return ... kingdom now theology...