

Unavoidable. Pervasive. Inescapable. Secular pop music is everywhere. Even if you can get your young Christian friends to switch their listening habits from secular to sacred, they are still going to hear the top popular songs everywhere they go. In this section we provide you some

ideas to take advantage of some of the most popular secular songs. Use the opening questions, the thematic concepts and discussion ideas to spice up your Bible study, Sunday School lesson, camp/retreat meeting or outreach event message.

Artist:

Ariana Grande

Song: One Last Time

Album: My Everything

By: Mary Wilson Peed, UnKommon Media
Butler, Georgia marybakerwilson@gmail.com

Theme

Love

Opening Questions

- If this world were ending, whom would you want to see for one last time? Why?
- Have you ever wronged someone and messed up a relationship that was very important to you?
- Were you forgiven?
- Did you forgive yourself?

Discussion

We don't know the details of the romantic love gone wrong in this song, but we do know she got caught in a lie and ruined her relationship. In the song, she pleads for "one last time." She doesn't care if he has someone else in his heart; she just wants to wake up with him one more time. This is a portrait of selfishness, not love. She is more concerned about her needs and desires than his faithfulness or his heart. She has broken his trust, and now she expects him to forgive her and let her back into his heart.

Fortunately, God—who understands true love—loves us extravagantly. According to **1 Corinthians 13**, love is patient and kind. It does not envy or boast and is not proud. It does not dishonor others, is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres. Love never fails.

Sometimes we are a bit like the girl in the song, falling into wrong choices and selfishness. Even so, God loves us so much that He does take us back and surrounds us with His presence. All we have to do is seek Him, and He will be found. He is a God of second chances.

Conclusion

Romans 8 says that nothing can separate us from God's amazing love for us—not death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation. Not anything you've done. There is no "one last time" with God. His love is forever, unending. He gave His only Son as a sacrifice, so that He could love you throughout eternity.

Artist:

Carly Rae Jepsen

Song: I Really Like You

Album: I Really Like You – Single

By: Doug Ranck, Free Methodist Church
Santa Barbara, California dranck@fmcscb.org

Theme

Confidence

Opening Question

Think about one skill or life action (i.e. piano playing or being kind) you do well. How do you feel when you are doing this?

Discussion:

"If you want it, take it... I wanna die alive... I'm stronger than I've been before. This is the part where I break free." In these words, Carly is displaying a confident and competent desire to move forward with life and not be a victim to circumstances. She is through with pretending the circumstances are acceptable. The time has come to claim freedom from her identity wrapped in one particular and seemingly unhealthy relationship.

One of the best feelings we can have is when we are doing what we were made to do. There is a feeling of sincere confidence and security. Living with integrity, loving with compassion, displaying our talents, and striving for excellence cause us to "feel alive." We sense we were born for this time and these actions.

In seeking to live out this purposeful life we must not find our confidence in people or affirmation alone. Our true assurance comes when it is rooted in a strong and growing relationship with Christ.

Jeremiah 17:5-8 describes this confidence. As we trust the Lord and put our confidence in Him, we will be nourished. Though everything around us shifts and moves, we will be firmly planted and freed to be who God has created us to be.

Conclusion

What circumstance or person may be dictating your life? What is one step you can take to "break free" and follow Christ, with faith and assurance?

Artist:

Ed Sheeran

Song: Thinking Out Loud

Album: X

By: Deron Henry, The First Family
Columbia, Tennessee deron@thefirstfamily.org

Theme

Love

Opening Questions

Do you believe in "love at first sight"? Why? What do you think of when you hear the words, "true love"? What do you believe about marriage? Give an example of what you would consider to be a good marriage and one that is a bad marriage—but leave your parents out of your examples! What do you think makes those marriages that good or bad?

Discussion

"Thinking Out Loud" is a love song by Ed Sheeran, who refers to it as a "romantic ballad" and has described it as a "walking down the aisle song." In it, Ed expresses his love to his girlfriend/wife. He says that even when they get old and are no longer attractive, he will still love her. His love is genuine and will grow stronger over time. For a relationship to last, it must be deeper than the world's definition of love.

There will be difficulty. No one enjoys those moments. But difficulty can be essential. Love can grow more strongly by enduring trials together. We may no longer be able to "sweep each other off our feet" or impress each other, but genuine love doesn't have to. Love strives to honor each other and is more concerned with the needs of the other person.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Paul is not talking about romantic love in this passage; however, he does give an excellent description of the qualities that genuine love must possess. True love must be kind and patient. It should not be envious or jealous. Real love is not resentful and it does not keep track of the wrong things that have been done. If it's real, it will stand the test of time. It will stand against anything that tries to destroy it. Real love gets stronger through the years and doesn't die as the world suggests.

The best example of genuine love is found in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that although we don't deserve His love, Christ died for us (**Romans 5:8**). Jesus says that there is no greater love than that (**John 15:13**). The best way to display real love to others is to experience His love for us.

Conclusion

You may not be ready to get married—that's okay. Remember, love is patient! (**1 Corinthians 13:4**) If you're not ready to walk down the aisle yet, you can still prepare yourself. Real love is not difficult to notice. If it doesn't look like 1 Corinthians 13, it's not real, and probably never will be.