

hanking God for Marilyn Manson, Eminem & Madonna

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"In all things give thanks." That's what the good book says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. In fact, it adds that this is God's will for us in Christ Jesus. "In all things" must somehow include shock rockers and rappers - those outlandish and blatant bad boys and girls of entertainment.

So to stretch our thanksgiving muscles and maybe our faith, here are reasons we can thank God for Madonna, Marilyn Manson and Eminem (pronounced M & M). Feel free to add to this list Snoop, Ozzie, Michael Jackson, your least favorite gangster rapper, (maybe even Osama Ben Laden.?).

First of all, we should thank God for them because they are made in the image of God. Like us, despite their selves, they show forth God's handiwork, patience and common grace. The canvas may have been smeared - as is ours - but a remnant of the artist's work remains! For that and them we can give thanks.

We should thank God for them because they are honest, straightforward people. There is no doubt where they stand, what they believe and how they think. In this, they set a commendable example for us. Do we "fly our flag" as clearly or boldly as they do? For rebuking us for our inexcusable silence, we give thanks.

Thanks continue as we realize they remind us of God's grace to save. If Jesus can forgive, cleanse, scrub up and use the likes of ME (a redeemed, and recovering self-righteous, religious type, similar to those who killed Jesus), then adopting the likes of those guys is no big deal. See Titus 3:3-7; 1 Corin. 6:9-11; John 3:16-18, 36.

These hurting, angry artist / philosophers elicit more thanks for serving to help us identify other hurting, angry people. People who rally around such performers are often hurt and hurting people too. They identify with their lives and angst-filled lyrics because of their own painful life experiences.

Numerous musicians in different styles (country, rap, alternative, grunge) have painful church roots. Yet, we can be thankful because when we see someone getting into Eminem, they have probably told us - albeit unwittingly - that they are a hurting person in need of love. They know we reject "their music." They want to know if we will reject them too.

We can thank God for deepening our prayer lives. Instead of simply

railing against them amongst ourselves, we can speak to God for them. Eminem is a young man who was hurt in the church. He is probably mad at God. He needs someone to cry out to God to have mercy on him. We are also reminded to pray for youth to be discerning in how they spend their money and to whom they lend their ears and hearts.

These flagrant and often foul-mouthed performers provide opportunities to "teach your children well" (ala Crosby, Stills and Nash). These flamboyant examples are living morality plays of right versus wrong. Cop killing is clearly evil, as are exploiting women, incest and rape. Such dark backdrops help truth shine more brightly. And yes, we can give thanks for the times they come down on the side of the right.

Thanks be to God for how they motivate us to love our children. I recommend to all young fathers the movie "Hook." Its message is clear and cleverly made: Your kids will have heroes - that is a given . Will it be you? Any force that competes for our kids' hearts and minds is a helpful reminder to be vigilant in our roles as parents. For spurring us on in such a noble cause, we give thanks.

Finally, thanks are fitting for being re-energized in sharing and showing the love and hope of Jesus with others. Evangelism is a far better response than just warning and rating labels - as prudent and sensible as those may be. People need to be saved from their own sins more than just shielded from the sins of others. Madonna, who takes her stage name from Jesus' mother, needs Jesus, as do all her fans and you and I as well.

We should be very thankful for being reminded of the necessity of sharing the good news of His death for our sins. If He makes the likes of us His children through faith in the Risen Savior, there is certainly hope for any and all (see 1 Timothy 1:12-17).

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