

extreme GRACE

Play the Tunes

Chris, our next door neighbor, wears headphones and listens to his tunes while mowing the lawn.

Julene, our student missionary daughter, hauls around a CD player with a ton of CDs so she can listen on airplanes, on buses, at the office, and in bed.

The fellow ahead of me in the supermarket check-out line is listening to his tunes on his Rio. The lady jogging past us in the morning is immersed in music from her SportsPlayer. The car beside me at the stoplight is shivering with bass notes from Garth Brooks. Music is everywhere, pounding, banging, crooning its way into hearts and minds.

In college I was in a madrigal group that sang only baroque. Now I love joining our kids at concerts by the Newsboys and Salvador. My wife, Brenda, loves classical music, but wakes up each morning to a contemporary Christian radio station. "It's a big, big house, with lots and lots of room."

That "Big, big house," as described in a song by Audio Adrenalin, is a great description of what has happened to our family musical listening style over the years. We've changed, adapted and learned to listen to a vast variety of tunes. With the help of our kids and many friends, our

musical tastes have shifted to include varied styles and sounds.

Each generation uses music as one way to distance itself from the last. My father's Perry Como tunes made grandpa very uncomfortable. But, grandpa's fiddle music worried great-grandpa that his son had chosen the wrong path and was on his way to perdition. As we grow and move out of our parents' shadows, each of us needs to develop as an individual, a person with special traits, interests and talents. Usually, we use music to

help clarify our



individuality. "My tunes help me become ME."

This is a dangerous truth, especially since our "growing" often is accompanied by twangs of rebellion. It is easy, and even fun, to adopt music that reflects rebellion and anger rather than music that uplifts goodness and hope.

We've had a great tunes rule around our home for many years: "Before you can bring any new music into our home, you'll need to share it with the folks in the living room."

As you can imagine, Brenda and I have enjoyed some great concerts. That's where we first met the Newsboys, Smashing Pumpkins, Pink Floyd and DCTalk. Knowing that our aging ears and minds are not tuned to modern tunes, the kids always give us the liner notes so we can follow the words.

Listening together draws us together. It reminds us that old geezers do not have to like all of the music the kids enjoy. It also teaches us that we should not expect them to be thrilled with a Del Delker CD for Christmas. Their tunes and our tunes can co-exist harmoniously in the same house, as long as three "rules" are met ...

1. Tune words must treat people as personally valuable, not objects to be exploited.
2. Tune words must not tear down any aspect of God's character.
3. Tune melodies, rhythms, and the use of instruments must encourage positive attitudes and make us easier to live with.

All three "rules" are open to personal interpretation and so result in wonderful family conversations on values, attitudes, and tunes. Listening together with open minds, talking together with open hearts, and sharing tunes together with open interest draws us together. The process helps parents see through the eyes of teens, and teens hear through the ears of parents. It helps us talk about attitudes rather than drums, and character rather than musical styles. Above all, it reminds us that God's house has lots and lots of room, and amazing tunes.

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