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ARTICLE

When Christian Music Goes Mainstream: The Risk Of Redefinition



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BY PNW STAFF JANUARY 13, 2026

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As the Grammy Awards approach once again, one undeniable truth is echoing through the music industry: Christian music is no longer confined to Christian radio, Christian bookstores, or Sunday morning playlists.

It is breaking through--streaming charts, stadiums, and even the Billboard Hot 100--at a pace not seen in over a decade. According to Luminate's 2025 Midyear Report, while overall music streaming has slowed, Christian and gospel music are rising. That alone should give the Church pause--not in fear, but in discernment.

On one hand, this moment is extraordinary. For the first time in 11 years, two contemporary Christian songs--Forrest Frank's "Your Way's Better" and Brandon Lake's "Hard Fought Hallelujah" featuring Jelly Roll--cracked the all-genre Top 40. Artists like Lake, Elevation Worship, and Lauren Daigle are filling arenas and stadiums. Younger listeners--especially millennials and Gen Z--are tuning in, many encountering gospel-centered lyrics in spaces they never would have sought out on their own. In a fractured, anxious culture, songs that point beyond the self toward God are resonating deeply.

This is, without question, a gift.



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Christian music has long carried the Great Commission in melody. When Scripture-soaked lyrics reach people who might never open a Bible or step inside a church, the gospel seed is being planted. Even artists with complicated personal stories, like Jelly Roll, openly acknowledge



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Industry leaders now argue that Christian music is defined purely by lyrics, not by theology, belief, or obedience. If a song contains Christian language, it qualifies. If it sounds hopeful or spiritual, it belongs. The result is a genre so broad that it risks becoming hollow--using the language of worship while divorcing it from the God worship demands allegiance to.



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That tension came into sharp focus at last year's Grammy Awards, when the Harlem Gospel Travelers were nominated for Best Roots Gospel Album. The group is openly LGBTQ+, and one member, Ifedayo Gatling, identifies as nonbinary--becoming the first person with that identity nominated in the gospel category. The music industry celebrated the moment as a milestone for representation. Many Christians, however, saw something far more alarming.

This was not simply about talent or musical excellence. It was about definition.

Gospel music is not merely a style. It is not a vibe. It is not a cultural artifact to be reshaped by the spirit of the age. Gospel means "good news"--specifically, the good news of repentance, redemption, and submission to Jesus Christ as Lord. When artists openly reject biblical teaching on sin while being elevated as representatives of gospel worship, the message is no longer being broadened; it is being rewritten.

This is where the blurring of lines becomes dangerous.

If secular artists sing songs with Christian lyrics, are those songs Christian? Sometimes, perhaps--God can use imperfect vessels, and truth spoken is still truth. Scripture itself reminds us that the Word does not return void. But Christian music has never been solely about words. It has always been about witness. Worship is not performance; it is proclamation shaped by obedience.

The Grammys did not merely recognize diversity last year. They redefined gospel worship to accommodate rebellion rather than call people out of it. In doing so, they mirrored a wider cultural impulse: to keep the comfort of spiritual language while stripping it of biblical authority.

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has already made clear.

This is not a call to retreat. It is a call to stand.

If Christian music is truly going to "take over," as some hope, it must do so not by blending in, but by shining brighter--rooted in truth, marked by repentance, and unmistakably centered on Christ. Anything less may still sound inspiring. But it will no longer be gospel.

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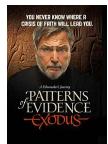
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