

# Plugged In Today's Hip Hop Culture

By Adam Durso with Adrienne Grant

Within the past decade a new way of music has permeated the church walls and stirred controversy in our midst. Questions and forums arise to address topics such as “Hip Hop . . . Is it the means or is it the message? Is Hip Hop and Holiness Heretical? Is spreading the gospel through the form of Hip Hop compromising? Are they Christians who happen to rap or rappers who happen to be Christians?”

The purpose of this genre is to reach a lost generation at their level. Hip-Hop is used symbolically as a net to draw in an individual but the truth lives in the revelation of the word of God, the cross and the Lord Jesus Christ. Though skeptics could argue the point “Is this an innovative means to teach youth about the Lord, or just a lot of hype that imitates the world?” Some believe the latter but innovators have never been embraced much until enormous results manifest. In truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ was never intended to be a category of music, but it is what it is—the good news of salvation. It was never God’s intention that singers, musicians, rappers, teachers and preachers of the word were to be esteemed. They are the messengers and their lives should line up with what they say like the old adage, “Practice what you preach.” The creative means in which we spread the gospel has never been without dispute and is typically nothing new. In the early thirties Rev. Thomas A. Dorsey was scrutinized for his new sound, sacred blues, and was thrown out of some of the best churches in America. Should rejection have discouraged Dorsey, we’d never know the classic “Precious Lord, Take Me Home,” which was penned after the tragic deaths of his wife and child. This hymn has encouraged the broken-hearted Christian the world over. Dorsey introduced a new sound to the church also.

Let’s face it: we live in a radical time that requires radical faith. Jesus was considered a radical by the religious leaders of his day, but yet his message was life-changing. He broke cultural barriers, bondages and the rules of tradition. In the end, His life reconciled man unto God in a very unconventional manner. Yet, Jesus won the hearts of many even before He went to Calvary by words alone. The woman at the well can testify to this if she were here today. It was simple truth that Jesus spoke into her situation that broke the strongholds of her life and ushered in freedom. How was she received when she raced through town proclaiming the gospel when those who knew here witnessed this?

Contemporary missionaries follow suite with cross-cultural communication. How else could those of different cultures live amongst others than their own and bring the salvation message? James Hudson Taylor was called into missions at the age of 19 and millions were impacted for Jesus Christ by this one life. Did he use an unconventional method to share the gospel? Yes, Taylor completely immersed himself within the Chinese culture, and became one of “them” so he could reach them. We can spend our time debating this issue or we can seek the lost as Jesus commanded us to. Rev. Billy Graham stated a profound fact, “The methods always change—the message never does.” With this in mind we have to realize that Hip-Hop is a means of communicating the gospel to the lost and an inducement to a dying generation.