

FEATURE ARTICLE

My son is no music expert – well, not yet anyway. He has to listen to whatever I shove into the CD player or the station I select on the radio. So the other day I smiled as I chose a song that had some group shouting “Hey!” in it and my son (while deeply engaged with his PSP) paused his game to push his fist into the air and chime in with every “Hey!” There’s no doubt that music has power. Youth leaders know what a pumping song behind a game can do or how the right song with the camp video can create a wonderful memory.

Some songs have the power to make everything around us stop. I bet this has happened to you. A song comes on and everything slows down; you feel as if your heart has been uncovered and the lyrics are gushing through your ears and filling up your soul. You’ve just been zapped by a song.

I am certain that God uses music this way. There’s something wonderful that happens when God works and speaks to the songwriter, and then the Holy Spirit grabs those words and runs them deeply inside the listener. On my multiple-thousand-song playlist, Christian songs carry that singing power. Sure, there are some great secular songs that make me feel warm or even pretty mushy, but they don’t stop me cold and lay my heart wide open.

Zapped!

I’m almost a musician (I’m a bass player) – that means my iPhone is full of rocking, thumping, and funky rock grooves. I pick my music by how it sounds. I think most of us do. So your students are probably going to get zapped based on the

music styles they like. You don’t have to make them listen to something slow for a “zap” to happen. You just have to help put a good amount of music in front of them.

Just like a lighting strike, you can’t really coordinate a “zap.” You can make an electrical discharge happen in a lab, but that is nothing like the sound and flash that happens in nature. And don’t look for a group-zap – getting zapped by a song usually happens to me when I’m by myself and least expect it. One of my friends gets struck while he drives – I love when he says, “I just had to pull over and let the lyrics do what they needed to.”

Can’t Pick A Zap

Even in our talk-writing, camp-creating, purpose-laden youth leader wisdom, we can’t really know or



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Getting zapped

By A Song

select which song is going to speak to a student in the middle of the night. Being a music guru and youth pastor, I thought I could do that for students. But part of the wonder of being zapped is that you just don't see it coming – and that includes us as youth leaders.

I grew up listening to Steve Taylor – the bite of his sarcasm and wit of his lyrics made me smile and kept me singing along. There is a simple song buried at the end of an album where Steve simply asks, “I just wanna know, am I pullin’ people closer?” I heard it many times growing up. I vividly remember being in my church office years later, a fulltime youth leader, and looking at the faces of students in photos on my wall. Suddenly those lyrics flooded into my heart, tears filled my eyes, and that song became my prayer. To this day I can't hear that song and tell my tear ducts to relax. My brain had logged those lyrics away, but the

Holy Spirit pulled them out and infused them with exactly where my heart was.

Unlike that poor guy in the Guinness Book that has been hit by lighting a dozens times, don't look for your list of “zapped” songs to be very long. The wonderful thing about being zapped by a song is that it usually doesn't happen often, but the power of that song can last a lifetime (and can be re-engaged by a simple play button.)

Fling CD's And See What Zaps!

There are a couple things that you might want to do to be part of the process in helping your students get “zapped.” First, keep the Christian music flowing – and don't just think that “zaps” come from worship songs – God knows when and how He's going to use songs in our lives. Second, find a way to get music into the hands of your students. (Might I suggest giving it to them?) Sure,

hearing a song or video in the youth room is a great start, but the big “hit song” isn't usually to one that zaps – and it's usually in the solo moment when we get struck. So, the more you can get music into their hands and out of the youth room, the greater chance of zapping!