

CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

Video: Sophia Grace Brownlee & Nicki Minaj

by Walt Mueller

Background/summary: Sophia Grace Brownlee is a bubbly 8-year-old Brit whose YouTube video of her singing Nicki Minaj's hit song "Super Bass" went viral, catching the eye of talk-show host Ellen Degeneres. In October 2011, Degeneres invited Brownlee and her singing sidekick— 5-year-old cousin Rosie—on to her show to perform the song. After an interview with the endearing young girls, Ellen had them perform the song, then surprised them by bringing out Minaj. Not surprisingly, the videos from *The Ellen Degeneres Show* have gone viral as well. (Clips are available on YouTube).

Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- The *Ellen Degeneres Show* series of clips opens with Sophia Grace and Rosie being interviewed by Ellen. The adorable and effervescent young girls talk about their love for singing and dancing, the color pink, frilly dresses (which they are wearing), and Nicki Minaj. Degeneres does her typically great job interviewing the children, prompting them with a variety of questions that lead them to confess that while the love "Super Bass" and its video, they have no idea what the song means. Degeneres invites the girls to perform the song on her stage, which they do to a rousing ovation.
- "Super Bass" is the seventh hit single off Minaj's debut album, *Pink Friday*. Minaj describes the catchy and upbeat song as the story of having a crush on a boy and wanting to get intimate with him, but playfully teasing him first. The song's video, which debuted in May 2011 and garnered the 2011 "Best Hip-Hop Video" at the MTV VMA's— tells the story with lusty visuals, lots of lap dancing, and even a shot of the male character rubbing his hand over Minaj's breast. The guy she describes in the song as "motherf___ing trip" gives her a look, and "when he give me that look/Then the panties comin' off."
- After the eight-year-old and five-year-old finish their song, Degeneres asks them if they'd like to meet Nicki Minaj, who comes out on stage only to drive the two young girls wild with excitement. The girls' parents are shown in the audience, wiping the tears of joy from their eyes. After lots of hugging and kissing, Minaj sings the song's bridge with Sophia Grace.
- The clip ends with Minaj imploring the girls to stay in school, pursuing their studies first and music second. Minaj then invites them to join her on a shopping spree the following day where she will buy them "whatever you want!"



Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

- Jesus challenged cultural conventions by prefacing his mention of sinful behaviors with these words: "You have heard it said that. . ." (see Matthew 5). The *Super Bass* video and the Nicki Minaj "brand" are filled with and promote these attitudes and behaviors, particularly as they relate to sexuality, identity, and personhood. Jesus would then follow-up by stating the better way of His Kingdom values, introducing them with the words "but I tell you. . ." In this case, we can affirm the desire Minaj describes as normal. At creation, God instilled in us desires for companionship, completeness, and sex (Genesis 1 & 2). But after the Fall (Genesis 3:6), those desires became corrupted and in need of repair, restoration, and redemption. . . the model of which is described in a sexual ethic that calls us to flee from sexual temptation (I Cor. 6:18) and embrace sex between one man and one woman within the context of marriage.

- It is the responsibility of parents to nurture their children in the faith (Deuteronomy 6), bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). It is the responsibility of parents and the larger church community to teach children right from wrong, knowing that they are especially vulnerable to embracing sinful values, attitudes, and behaviors at a young age (Proverbs 22:6). However it is that we choose to train up a child, they are likely to choose that way for the rest of their lives. Viewers need to question the wisdom of the parents, Ellen DeGeneres, and Nicki Minaj and their “celebration” of what is happening in the video.
- The Scriptures are clear on how careful we must be with children and the influences we expose them to. Jesus was adamant about not hindering children from being exposed to the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:13-16). In one of the most stern and straightforward warnings in the Bible, we are warned against causing “little ones who believe in me to sin.” For those who do, “it would be better for him/her if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he/she were thrown into the sea” (Mark 9:42). We must exercise great diligence and wisdom as we lead our kids through the maze of contemporary youth culture and it’s messages. This is an extremely serious matter. While we can celebrate and affirm Minaj’s message to the children on education, we must uncover and challenge the education she’s giving her young and vulnerable audience.

Decide: What do I do with it?

- Perhaps more than anything else, these video clips offer us compelling insight into who we’ve become as a culture. It’s incredibly easy to sit back, watch, smile, laugh, and enjoy what at first glance appears to be incredibly adorable. But is it really? We need to watch with critical eyes and ears, looking beneath the surface of the cuteness to peel back the curtain and see what’s really going on. The video clips show us who we really are in a way that should cause us to pause and re-calibrate our moral compasses in ways that motivate us into doing what’s really best for our kids.
- The video can be shown to students and used to spark discussion on how to remain faithful to God and His Word as we discern what’s happening in the world around us. Show the videos to your youth group and watch their physical response while the clips play. Listen to their reactions. Then, ask them what they thought. Prompt deeper thought by asking them if they saw any dangers beneath the surface. Ask thought-provoking questions that guide them from thinking the clips are innocuous, to seeing the spiritual realities and battles that exist. Spring off of that into a discussion about discerning media Christianly and how to be more intentionally thoughtful about culture, its messages, and its influence.
- Gather parents together to view and discuss the video clips. Be sure to include parents of younger pre-school, elementary, and tween-aged kids. If you are not a parent of teenagers yourself, have a mature thinker who is raising their own teens lead the discussion. Ask parents to consider the role they should play in protecting their children from negative cultural influences, in processing what they are seeing and hearing with their kids, and in training their children to think critically and Christianly about media messages and role models.



Scan this code to watch the first video clip from *The Ellen Degeneres Show*.



Scan this code to watch the second video clip from *The Ellen Degeneres Show*.

Scan this code to access info on the *How to Use Your Head to Guard Your Heart* 3(D) Media Evaluation

