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CPYU (D) REVIEW By Walt Mueller



song/
video

“Transparent Soul”

by Willow Smith ft. Travis Barker

Background/summary:

Willow Smith (known mononymously to her fans as **“Willow”**) is the 20-year-old singer, songwriter, guitarist, actress, dancer, and influencer who was raised in the celebrity spotlight as the daughter of power couple Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith. Acting from a young age and singing since age 10, Willow released this advance single from her upcoming 5th studio album to YouTube on **May 28, 2021**. The catchy and straight-forward tune features **Blink 182 drummer Travis Barker**, and is reminiscent of the radio hits from two decades past, as it is driven by the signature drum and guitar sounds of that pop-punk era.

(D)iscover

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?

- The video is set in a dark and dirty underground club where a variety of people are drinking, dancing, and hooking up. The hook-ups appear random, some of them same-sex and some in groups. Willow and her band perform the tune with a posture of anger and confrontation.
- Her angry diatribe is directed to duplicitous **“friends”** and acquaintances who use and exploit her. She says she wrote it during the Covid pandemic as she was inspired by these words from a Hindu guru: **“It is said that a saintly person is so pure that he or she acts like a spotless mirror. When we come into the presence of such a mirror-like soul, we can see both the beauty and ugliness of our inner life.”**
- She begins by calling out a two-faced former love interest who betrayed her by selling secrets about their relationship to others: **“I don’t f___ing know if it’s a lie or it’s a fact/All your little fake friends will sell your secrets for some cash/Smile in my face, then put your cig’ out on my back.”** She goes on to angrily warn him with this threat: **“If you ever see me, just get to runnin’ like the flash.”**
- She goes on to address others: **“I knew a boy just like you/He’s a snake just like you/Such a fake, just like you/But I can see the truth.”** She explains her power to see through people and to the real truth in the chorus: **“Transparent soul/I can see right through you, just so you know.”**
- She then addresses those who like to hang with the rich and famous as a way to feel good about and advance themselves: **“I don’t f___ing know if it’s paradise or a trap/Yeah, they’re treating me like royalty, but is it kissin’ ass?”** As one who’s lived her entire short life in the celebrity spotlight, she knows about being used. She trusts few people, if any.
- Willow’s disdain for fakes continues to escalate as she sings, **“I knew a girl just like you/She was vain, just like you/Such a pain, just like you/And everybody knows the truth.”**
- Her angry posture, both lyrically and visually, adds emphasis as she continues to induce fear in the objects of her contempt: **“It’s clear to me now/You’re scared of me, wow.”** For Willow, resolution comes through angry confrontation and inducing fear in others.
- Still, she is fearful herself. A mirror-like metallic figure appears, following her into the bathroom and out on the street as she retreats in fear. She drops to the sidewalk cowering, and the figure leans over her, looking straight into her eye. As the camera travels into the universe in her head through her eye, the pagan/new age **“Flower of Life”** symbol appears, which represents the unity and interconnectedness of all of life. Somehow, her fears diminish and the video ends with the metallic figure reaching out to lift her up.



Walt Mueller is the President and Founder of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding.

(D)iscern

HOW DOES IT STAND IN LIGHT OF THE BIBLICAL MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?

- We live in a world where sin has polluted and broken everyone and everything. The effects of sin are far-reaching, including into and through our human relationships. Even the most intimate of human relationships, a covenant marriage between a man and a woman, is marred at times by selfishness, falsehood, and duplicitous motives. While the Christian recognizes this and battles to mortify self-serving sin in all areas of life - including relationships - we must understand that in a world where we are increasingly told to look out for number one, people will use and abuse others with greater and greater frequency. While Willow is addressing this reality, we must recognize that when **"the course of this world"** (*Ephesians 2:1-3*) takes root and grows, using others is no longer seen as sin. We are to seek peace and resolution, rather than **"cancelling"** others and walking away.
- Willow raises awareness of our contemporary tendency to promote a false self and identity as a way to self-advancement. Living in our social-media-saturated world feeds this sinful obsession by both encouraging and facilitating the fabrication, curation, and promotion of a desired false-self. Deception is wrong. Vanity and pride are sins rooted in our personal insecurities. Whatever avenue we might choose to seek the affirmation and praise of others (aligning ourselves with those who are popular, photoshopping ourselves, pretending to be someone/something we are not) is sin. The Christian is to walk by the Spirit (see *Galatians 5:16-26*), pursuing **"godliness"** above all else (*I Timothy 4:8*).
- Because we live in a world filled with fakers and false identities, we must be very careful and wise about choosing our friends. True friends do not use or betray others. Rather, **"a friend loves at all times"** (*Proverbs 17:17*). In a world of disordered relationships, Jesus calls us to order our lives by loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. . . and in turn, to love others as we love ourselves (*Mark 12:30-31*).
- The song never offers any kind of redemptive resolution. Instead, Willow leaves listeners with the impression that there is no hope for change, forgiveness, grace, or restoration. Rather, she seems happy to have left the objects of her scorn **"canceled"** and cowering in fear. This is contrary to God's will and way. In *John 4:8* we are called to a **"perfect love"** which casts out fear.
- **"Transparent Soul"** promotes a human-centered rather than a God-centered view of life. In spite of the fact that she has been truly wronged by self-centered others, Willow is the one in charge and functions at the level of **her** desires to take care of things in **her** way. Her commitment to live under **her** authority has bled over into her unfolding understanding and lifestyle surrounding matters of sex and gender. She is self-proclaimed polyamorous bi-sexual, and she makes that clear to her followers, young and old alike.

(D)ecide

WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

- Parents and youth workers need to realize that as a celebrity-influencer who has a large and young following, Willow Smith's music and lifestyle have a powerful influence over the beliefs and behaviors of even our most vulnerable young children. Consequently, we must be aware regarding when and where our kids have been exposed to her music and message. . . as they will. . . either directly (seeing it themselves) or through their peers (who have seen it themselves). Talk with them about the identity, lifestyle, and worldview messages that are both explicit and implicit in **"Transparent Soul"** and elsewhere, celebrating what might be true, and correcting any errors/lies with biblical truth.
- If your kids have already watched/listened to **"Transparent Soul"**, watch and listen with them. Use what they've seen and heard as a springboard to Gospel-centered and biblically-based conversations on love, friendship, identity, and sexuality. Take time to talk about the power of friends and choosing friends wisely.
- With more and more of our kids spending enormous amounts of time and energy developing an online brand and persona as a passport to celebrity, teach skills for online honesty, along with what it means to pursue Christlike-humility. Let them know that celebrity can never fill the God-shaped hole in their soul.