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CPYU (D) REVIEW

By Walt Mueller

“Montero (Call Me By Your Name)”

by Lil Nas X



song/
video

Background/summary:

After being named by *Time* as one of the **25 most influential people on the Internet** (2019), the 22-year-old gay rapper Lil Nas X (real name Montero Lamar Hill) rocketed to music stardom. Already a Grammy winner, he released “Montero” as a single in March of 2021. The song’s subtitle is the name of the 2017 gay romance film, *Call Me By Your Name*, which hints at the song’s content. It debuted at **#1 on the Billboard Top 100** chart, and has charted at #1 in a variety of countries globally. The video won the coveted **Video Of The Year Award at the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards**. To date, it has been viewed on YouTube over 350 million times. (Editor’s note: while the “Montero” video is popular in today’s youth culture, we recommend cautious viewing only by mature adults).

(D)iscover

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?

- The song begins with Lil Nas X speaking these words: **“In life, we hide the parts of ourselves we don’t want the world to see. We lock them away, we tell them ‘No.’ We banish them. But here, we don’t.”** The camera drops through the clouds into the Garden-of-Eden, winding up at the base of a tree reminiscent of the creation narrative’s **“tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9)**. He sits against the tree, happily singing with his guitar, unaware that the serpent is intentionally slithering in his direction.
- From that opening scene, **“Montero”** visually and lyrically unfolds as an autobiographical metaphor of hope and freedom realized in **“coming out”** for those who, like Lil Nas X, feel locked in the closet due to what are seen as outmoded Christian standards for sexuality. He has said that the song is an expression of his rebellion against his Christian upbringing (his father was a gospel singer) and celebration of the freedom from shame he has experienced through boldly embracing his homosexuality.
- The video’s release coincided with Lil Nas X posting this note to his younger self: **“Dear 14-year-old Montero, I wrote a song with our name in it. It’s about a guy I met last summer. I know we promised to never come out publicly, I know we promised to never be ‘that’ type of gay person, I know we promised to die with the secret, but this will open doors for many other queer people to simply exist. You see this is very scary for me, people will be angry, they will say I’m pushing an agenda. But the truth is, I am. The agenda to make people stay the f___ out of other people’s lives and stop dictating who they should be. Sending you love from the future, LNX.”**
- As the song’s visual story progresses, Lil Nas X unleashes a lusty homoerotic lyrical thread where he expresses his desire for all types of sexual experiences, along with drug and alcohol use. He sings, **“I’m not fazed/I’m only here to sin.”** He implores the object of his desire, **“Call me when you want/Call me when you need/Call me in the morning/I’ll be on my way.”**
- Visually, **“Montero”** depicts the singer being caught and seduced by Satan (also played by Lil Nas X) as he tries to run away. Taken under Satan’s spell, the two begin to kiss. The camera focuses on a sentence carved in Greek on the tree. The sentence, from Plato, is translated **“After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half”** . . . which is used in this context to refer to Lil Nas X’s freedom in reconciling himself to himself through accepting and celebrating his homosexuality.



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- The scene shifts to the Colosseum where the fallen **"now out"** Lil Nas X is bound in chains and subjected to trial by past versions of himself and a huge crowd, which eventually casts stones. Lil Nas X is eventually done in when he gets hit in the head by a butt-plug (a homosexual sex toy) thrown by someone in the condemning crowd.
- Now dead, Lil Nas X is depicted ascending into the clouds toward an angelic figure. But as he is rising, a stripper pole ascends from the pit of hell and he chooses to grip it, changing directions from ascent to descent, and seductively sliding down with apparent joy. He arrives in hell, approaches Satan's throne and proceeds to do a sexually explicit lap dance on Satan. Beneath Satan's throne is inscribed a Latin phrase, translated **"they condemn what they do not understand."** The video concludes with Lil Nas X turning the tables and seducing Satan. He approaches Satan from behind and snaps his neck. As the video ends, he removes Satan's horns and victoriously places them on his own head.

(D)iscern

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

- At its start, **"Montero"** depicts the reality of God's good Creation, void of sin with all things being how God intended them to be. It portrays the limits set by God on our first parents, who were told not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good evil, **"for you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:16&17)**. But when our first parents rebelliously ate of the tree, we are told that their eyes were opened and they were full of shame, leading them to hide from God (**Genesis 3**). In **"Montero"**, Lil Nas X does not seek redemption and a restored relationship with God. Rather, he chooses to embrace evil as the path to freedom. The Scriptures are clear, that this is not the way to freedom and flourishing. We must turn from our sin and come to the Father through a relationship with Jesus Christ, who is **"the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)**.
- While the video wrongly celebrates choosing evil as the path to freedom, it does open our eyes to the fact that there is a spiritual war we must be aware of. The Apostle Paul tells us that our battle is not against flesh and blood, **"but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12)**. We are not to submit to these forces but put on our spiritual armor (**Ephesians 6**), all the while living on high alert knowing that the adversary prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Rather than choosing to live into our sin, we must be committed to mortifying our sin.
- In the Bible, the horn is a symbol of power. Lil Nas X wrests and assumes the power of Satan. However, we know that this is ultimately an exercise in futility. God says that he will remove the horns of the wicked, but lift up the horns of the righteous (**Psalms 75:10**).
- Contrary to the cultural narrative promoted by Lil Nas X, God has established male and female as the gender binary, with marriage being established in the Garden as a life-long monogamous covenant between one man and one woman. Lil Nas X willingly rebels against this fact in a manner described in **Romans 1** as a suppression of the truth that results in God giving people over to their idolatrous and dishonorable passions (**Romans 1:18-32**).

(D)ecide

WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

- While we do not recommend showing or even viewing **"Montero"**, we must recognize that it is being widely viewed and embraced by our kids. As such, we must be familiar with its message as it is mapping out a way to believe and behave, especially for those kids who like Lil Nas X, are struggling to come to terms with personal gender and sexuality issues. We must diligently speak to kids from a young age - with grace and truth - about what God is **for** when it comes to sex and gender. Both are good gifts from God, given with borders and boundaries that lead to freedom and flourishing.
- Since the culture - including music and video - is catechizing kids 24/7, we must ramp up our efforts to teach Scripture and theology in the context of relationship so that we might equip kids for a life of faithfully following Jesus Christ. Christian education in the home, church, and youth group is essential. And, as we teach biblical truth, we cannot overlook teaching about our enemy and his schemes.
- Pray for our kids. They are looking to find their identity and adopt beliefs that will serve as their worldview to inform their behaviors for the remainder of their lives. These are crucial and vulnerable years. In the story of Lil Nas X and **"Montero"**, we see just how vulnerable they really are.