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CPYU (D) REVIEW By Walt Mueller



song/
video

“abcdefu”

by GAYLE

Background/summary:

This is the debut major-label single from 17-year-old Nashville singer/songwriter **GAYLE**. A newcomer to the pop music scene, GAYLE says that “every song I sing is based off my own personal experience.” This three-minute long **angst-ridden breakup song** dropped on 8/13/21. While it went viral on TikTok, Instagram, and Spotify, it didn’t gain traction on the charts until the end of the year. To date, the song has topped the **Billboard Global 200 Chart**, and sits at #6 and rising (2/8/21) in the U.S., with the video approaching 100 million online views.

(D)iscover

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?

- The song’s title encapsulates the rage GAYLE expresses to an ex who has broken up with her because he needs “**his space**”. Bitter and angry over the breakup, she is giving him the middle finger lyrically and visually. From start to finish the song is one big literal and figurative “**F___ You!**” The cover art features an actual x-ray image of GAYLE’s hand after breaking her middle finger during a fall earlier in the year. Visitors to her website (gayleofficial.com) will see their cursor turn from an arrow to a middle finger. No doubt, there’s a theme here.
- The video opens with this introductory text on the screen: **me and my friends visit my ex’s house :) Holding an old video camcorder while accompanied by four of her friends, GAYLE exits the car and addresses the camera with the song’s chorus, F___ you and your mom and your sister and your job/ And your broke-ass car and that s___ you call art/F___ you and your friends that I’ll never see again/ Everybody but your dog, you can all f___ off.** The crew takes turns giving the finger to the camera.
- In an effort to be nice and respectful, she tells him **I swear I meant to mean the best when it ended.** However, those intentions changed when he wouldn’t return the favor: **Even tried to bite my tongue when you start s___/Now you’re textin’ all my friends asking questions/They never even liked you in the first place.** She then comments on his quick move into another relationship, although it was short-term: **Dated a girl that I hate for the attention/She only made it two days, what a connection/It’s like you’d do anything for my affection/You’re going all about it in the worst ways.**
- The crew pulls up to the ex’s house, finds the key under the mat, and goes inside. She sings, **I was into you, but I’m over it now/And I was tryin’ to be nice/But nothing’s getting through, so let me spell it out. . . a-b-c-d-e-f-u. . .** and she repeats the chorus.
- They proceed up the steps and into the ex’s room, where they go through his closets, jump on his bed, and generally rifle through his things. She blames him for her shift from kindness to rage: **Told everyone I’m a bitch, so I became it/Always had to put yourself above me.** This time around for the chorus, she adds his Craigslist couch and the way his voice sounds to the list of her expletive’s objects.
- The video continues with GAYLE and her friends making a mess in the kitchen as they bake a cake, decorate it with a big “**FU**”, and happily smear it all over each other. The video closes out with them rinsing off in the shower. As they leave the house, GAYLE sets the camcorder containing the tape that documents their adventure on his bed so he is sure to watch it when he gets home.



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?

- **"Who am I?"** is one of the most basic questions teenagers like GAYLE are asking. Identity formation is a developmental task shared by all teenagers. In today's world, even adults struggle to find an answer. In the case of GAYLE, she is determined to take her life into her own hands as she functions as the authority over her own beliefs and behaviors, including how to "appropriately" respond to a break-up. On her website she writes, **"Who I was told to be and who I wanted to be were two separate things for me growing up."** She admits that she's still growing up. She says that allowing others to shape her identity affected every part of her being, but she eventually **"woke up one day and realized that I was pleasing everybody but myself."** Her music reflects her desire to break out of that and live the mantra today's culture continually preaches, **"You do you!"** Conversely, God's design and desire is for us to find the freedom that comes with living under His authority, as he guides and leads our lives. The Psalmist writes, **"Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart, who also do no wrong, but walk in his ways!" (Psalm 119:2-3).**
- For our Christian students, a response to a break-up, or any of life's difficulties, should be one that brings glory to God both in posture and content. GAYLE leans into rage, revenge, profanity, and vandalism as a response. We are called to **"keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:13-14).** Jesus said that **"everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment" (Matthew 5:22).** And Paul reminds us that as followers of Jesus we are to put to death **"anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth" (Colossians 3:8).** The message of the Bible runs counter to GAYLE's response. In obedient response to God's grace in our lives, we are to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, and love **(Colossians 3:1-17).**
- In the video, GAYLE is surrounded by a group of peers who, by their participation, affirm her response to her ex. We become like those with whom we surround ourselves. **Proverbs 13:20** tells us that **"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."** Gayle states in an interview, **"I purposely surround myself with people who accept me for exactly who I am so it becomes easier to let the people who don't, not affect me."** Followers of Christ are called to live in the community of the Body of Christ, where we are encouraged, built up, and held accountable in ways that honor the Lord and lead us into conformity to His will and way.

(D)ecide

WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

- Recognize that our kids are listening to GAYLE and **"abcdefu."** Because of age-aspiration, our younger-than-teenage children are also listening. Popular music serves them as a map, guiding them into how to interpret life, what to believe, and how to live in the world. Ask the kids you know and love if they are familiar with GAYLE and this song. Then, ask them what they think about the song and its message. Follow up with corrective insights from God's Word.
- For kids who gravitate to the song because it reflects their own life experiences, ask them these questions: Why do you like it? Do you see yourself anywhere in the song? Does it express anything about the way you're feeling? In other words, use the song as a diagnostic tool to give you insights into the hurts and pains your kids are experiencing. Follow up by directing them into the hope of the Gospel.
- While we don't recommend showing the song to students (unless it is already on their playlist), reference it to both students and their parents, using it as prompt to teach God's Word on authority, relationships, revenge, profanity, identity, the Fruit of the Spirit, love, and relational breakdown. Teach students to live counter-culturally in response to relational difficulties, along with how to handle breakups, anger, and anxiety to the glory of God.

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