

3

CPYU (D) REVIEW

By Walt Mueller

"Happier Than Ever"

by Billie Eilish

song/
video

Background/summary:

The sixth single release and title track off her Grammy-nominated July 2021 studio album, *Happier Than Ever*, by **20-year-old Billie Eilish**, is another in the long-line of angry break-up songs that have recently hit the pop charts and resonated with kids, particularly our girls. **Nominated for four Grammy Awards** and with **240 million YouTube views**, this emotionally-charged pop-punk ballad won the **"Song Of The Year"** award at the recent 2022 MTV Video Music Awards.



(D)iscover

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?

- The video opens with the camera approaching Eilish from behind as she sits calmly slouched on a couch in her living room. As the camera draws near, viewers see that Eilish is quietly singing into an old-school landline phone. The lyrics reveal that she is talking to an ex-boyfriend: **When I'm away from you, I'm happier than ever/Wish I could explain it better/I wish it wasn't true. . .**
- Accompanied by a quiet and calm acoustic track, the mood of the song is soft as Eilish recounts the hurt inflicted on her by the behavior of her ex. He has ignored her (**Do you read my interviews?/Or do you skip my avenue?/When you were passing through was I even on your way?**), acted hypocritically by breaking promises (**You'd do the opposite of what you said you'd do/And I'd end up more afraid**), and lacked self-awareness (**You clearly weren't aware that you made me miserable**).
- As she wanders around the room still tethered to the phone, her hurt and brokenness is evident. Throughout the remainder of her song, she continues recounting how he has inflicted emotional pain through his behavior, including drunkenness (**You call me again, drunk in your Benz/Driving home under the influence/You scared me to death, but I'm wasting my breath/'Cause you only listen to your f___ing friends**), slander (**And I don't talk s___ about you on the internet/Never told anyone anything bad/'Cause that s___'s embarrassing, your were my everything/And all that you did was make me f___ing sad**), consistent tardiness (**I could talk about every time that you showed up on time/But I'd have an empty line 'cause you never did**), his ignorance toward her family and friends (**Never paid any mind to my mother or friends/So I shut 'em all out for you 'cause I was a kid**), and his overall selfishness (**You ruined everything good. . . Made all my moments your own**).
- Halfway through the song, the mood shifts sonically, lyrically, and visually, from one of acoustic tenderness to a louder pop-punk rage. Lights begin to flash in her living room, catching her attention as a storm has gathered outside. As she opens her front door, rising waters rush in and she is swept outside. The remainder of the video depicts Eilish getting soaked to the bone as she swims in the deep waters and stands under a rainy deluge. It is important to note that in film and video, water like this typically represents sadness, washing, and cleansing. Her last lyrical pronouncement is **Just f___ing leave me alone!** She continues to cathartically scream out loud, eventually descending back into the water with a sense of resolve that she has purged her hurt, sent her kiss-off message, and is now **Happier than ever**.



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

- All of our relationships are complicated and difficult as they are broken by sin. The shalom experienced in the Garden of Eden at Creation (**Genesis 1 & 2**) came undone through the sin of our first parents (**Genesis 3**), and things are no longer the way they are supposed to be. This holds true for all of our relationships, including those with God, with others, and with ourselves. Relationships are hard work, and romantic relationships are no exception as two broken people try to navigate their connection and growth.
- In today's culture that has largely pursued life without God, His rightful place in our human lives is always replaced by an idol of some kind. . . something, someone, or a romantic attachment we believe will fill the void in our souls. As Blaise Pascal has said, nothing other than God can fill the God-shaped vacuum that exists inside us all. Eventually, these idols collapse, leaving us undone in much the way Billie Eilish has come undone.
- Still, Billie Eilish has cause for anger, hurt, and even for feeling trauma as she has been taken advantage of by an ex who has lived more for self than for other. Relationships are to be built on love. This love is not a feeling, but a binding and self-giving commitment to another, the ultimate expression of this being Christian marriage. Yes, there will be hurt, pain, and disappointments. However, both parties have committed to work these things out. While Eilish and her ex were not married, our dating and romantic relationships – all relationships in fact – when healthy, are marked by a commitment to the kind of self-giving love that has been shown to us by Jesus Christ (**Mark 12:28-34; I John 1:7-11; John 13:34**).
- The power of this song lies in the fact that so many share the same experience of relational breakdown. Many find that Billie Eilish is expressing the hurt and anger which they feel. Eilish told uproxx.com that this was **“probably the most therapeutic song I’ve ever written or recorded, like ever, ever, ever, ‘cause I screamed my lungs out and could barely talk afterwards, which was very satisfying to me somehow. I had wanted to get those screams out for a very long time and it was very nice to.”** While there are many ways to express anger and deal with trauma, ultimately the only lasting way to peace is through a relationship with Jesus Christ, where one casts all their cares and burdens on Him (**I Peter 5:7**). We need to be washed and made clean through the Living Water given to us by Jesus Christ (**John 4:14**).

(D)ecide**WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?**

- Remember that culture is always both a **map** and a **mirror**. As a mirror, Billie Eilish is teaching kids about the inevitable bumps, bruises, brokenness, hurt, and pain that come in romantic relationships. As a map, she is teaching them coping and response strategies for dealing with these realities. Since our kids are listening to Billie Eilish – even those who are very young (**this album won the “Favorite Album” award at the 2022 Nickelodeon Kid’s Choice Awards**) – we need to process the song with them, pointing out where it reveals truth, and challenging where it may send them in the wrong direction regarding their beliefs and behaviors.
- For kids who gravitate to the song because it reflects their own life experiences, use the song as a diagnostic tool to give you insights into their hurts and pains. Ask them, **Why do you like it? Where do you see yourself in the song? Does the song lyrically and/or visually express anything that you are feeling?** After listening, speak the hope-filled truths of the Gospel into their lives.
- Show the song to parents so that they might gain insight into how pop culture is answering deep questions and offering guidance to kids, and to motivate them to proactively nurture their children and teens in the faith with an eye to teaching them how to glorify God through dating, sex, and marriage.
- Use the song as a prompt for discussion with your students. Teach them God’s word on authority, identity, relationships, anger, trauma, break-ups, and the hope of the Gospel.

For more information and to order copies of our **How To Use Your Head To Guard Your Heart: A 3(D) Guide To Making Wise Media Choices** for your students, visit CPYU online at cpyu.org/3d, or scan this QR code.

