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CPYU (D) REVIEW By Walt Mueller



"Espresso"

by Sabrina Carpenter

song/
video

Background/summary:

Released on April 11, 2024, this catchy pop-dance tune from **25-year-old Sabrina Carpenter** is the hit single from her sixth studio album, *Short n' Sweet*. Reaching #1 on the *Billboard* Global 200 chart, "Espresso" won **"Song of the Year" at the MTV Video Music Awards**, was the 2024 most-streamed song globally on Spotify, was named "Favorite Viral Song" at the Nickelodeon Kid's Choice Awards, and is **nominated for two Grammy Awards**.

(D)iscover

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?

- The video opens on a summer beach scene, with Carpenter at the helm of a boat while driving a chiseled male passenger who is sitting in the back seat focused lustily on her body. She is completely aware of his attraction to her, relishing her addictive and seductive powers over him - just like highly-caffeinated Espresso - even leaving him sleepless at night as he fantasizes over her: **Now he's thinkin' 'bout me every night, oh/Isn't that sweet? I guess so/Say you can't sleep, baby, I know/That's that me espresso.**
- Her passenger stands up and moves forward to her, positioning himself behind her in order to show his affection. While this is happening, she sings words with double-meaning, implying that she is the object of his auto-erotic sexual fantasies while he is alone in his bed at night: **Move it up, down, left, right, oh/Switch it up like Nintendo.** Maintaining her power and control, she intentionally turns the boat hard to the left, throwing him out of the boat without any care or concern for him, grabbing his credit card as he goes overboard. Her self-centered commitment to her power are expressed as she sings, **I can't relate to desperation/My give-a-f***s are on vacation/ And I got this one boy and he won't stop callin'/When they act this way, I know I got 'em.**
- She heads to the beach where she is joined by four female peers, all happily carrying multiple shopping bags, indicating the fact that they too are using boys as objects to get what they want, materially and otherwise. As the girls lounge, a group of young male beach attendants cater to their every need by setting up umbrellas, giving massages and pedicures, getting drinks, applying suntan lotion, and fanning them with palm fronds. The camera focuses seductively on the bikini-clad girls' physical attributes.
- As this is happening, Carpenter sings more sexual innuendo as the girls still reign over the staring guys during scenes of dancing on the beach: **Soft-skin and I perfumed it for ya/I know I Mountain Dew it for ya** (double-meaning again: "mount and do it for ya")/**That morning coffee, brewed it for ya/ One touch and I brand-newed it for ya - oh! . . . Oh, he looks so cute wrapped around my finger . . . My honey-bee, come and get this pollen.**
- The video comes to an end with Carpenter being arrested, cuffed, and placed in a squad car as the victim of her credit card theft has led police back to her. Not at all worried or concerned, she sits arrogantly in the back of the police car, smirking as the officer can't get the car to start. She is still in total control.



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?

- While Carpenter both celebrates and promotes our current cultural commitment to self-sovereignty, the Bible tells us that only God is sovereign over all things (**Jeremiah 32:17, Colossians 1:16-17, Isaiah 45:7-9, Psalm 115:3, Psalm 71:16**). He is the Creator and Maker who continues to rule over His creation (**Genesis 1:1, John 1:3**). Any effort on our part to worship and serve someone or something other than God is idolatry. We are to have no other gods before God, including ourselves (**Exodus 20:3-5**). The sin of our first parents which sent all creation into brokenness was the sin of human pride, thinking that we are gods and He is not (**Genesis 3**). Jesus makes it clear that His followers are to deny themselves in order to faithfully follow in His footsteps. To do otherwise is to lose one's life (**Matthew 16:24-26**).
- Carpenter has said that she wants the song to be an anthem of female empowerment. God has given us His order and design for sex and gender in the Creation narrative (**Genesis 1 & 2**), which is reflected in the teachings of Jesus Christ (**Matthew 19:4-6**), and is maintained consistently throughout the Bible. If we want to know what it means to be **fully** human, we will choose to live according to that pattern. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were given complementary biological forms and purposes so that they might work together in mutual submission to one another to care for God's creation and fulfill His purpose for humanity. Seeking to dominate another in selfish ways is sinful.
- In today's world, attraction to another is predicated on physical attraction and sexual potential. In essence, **"love"** is no longer seen as commitment, but is now understood as lustful desire that one is entitled to satisfy at the expense of another. In **"Espresso"**, vulnerable young viewers are encouraged to not only objectify one's self as a pathway to power, but to see others as nothing more or less than sexual objects. This not only takes sexuality out of God's created place and purpose in marriage (one man and one woman in a life-long monogamous covenantal relationship), but establishes personal pleasure as the sole purpose of sexual activity.
- Human relationships must not be about **"what's in it for me."** When asked which of the commandments was most important, Jesus replied that we are to love the Lord our God with everything we have and are, and then we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (**Mark 12:28-31**). Using others for self-serving personal gain is wrong in every way. We are not to use others for material gain, advancing our status, or for sexual pleasure.

(D)ecide

WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

- Remember that culture is always both a **map** and a **mirror**. As a mirror, Carpenter is reflecting multiple cultural narratives that are opposed to God's will and way for our lives. The song's popularity and widely-aged audience indicate that even the most vulnerable of our younger children are being instructed on what it means to be human, where to establish your identity, what to believe, and how to relate to others. The song is a powerful map guiding them now and for the rest of their lives. We need to process the song with them, watching alongside so that we can think with them in ways that bring the light of God's Word to bear on the song's worldview.
- Use the song both as a diagnostic tool, and a training tool. As a diagnostic tool, show the video and ask them to list those ideas with which they agree, and those with which they disagree. As these questions: **Why do you like "Espresso"? Does the song reflect anything about how you feel about life? Do you agree with the way the song instructs us to live out our humanity and gender?** After listening, speak the hope-filled truths of God's Word into their lives. As a training tool, walk them through the 3(D) steps.
- Show the song to parents so that they might gain insight into how pop culture is offering guidance to kids. Encourage them to talk about how God's Word speaks to each of the themes in the song. Use the song as a prompt for discussion with your students, teaching them God's Word on identity, relationships, sexuality, gender, selflessness, and materialism.

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.

