

# CENTRAL YOUTH MEDIA GUIDE



HELPING PARENTS AND STUDENTS NAVIGATE FAITH AND YOUTH CULTURE.



## SONG TITLE: "INDUSTRY BABY"

By: Lil Nas X

### BACKGROUND/SUMMARY:

Montero Lamar Hill (aka Lil Nas X) is an American rapper who, for the last few years, has climbed steadily to the top of the record charts in both the American and Canadian music industries. His breakout song, "Old Town Road," headed the Top 100 for nineteen weeks straight, resulting in him becoming an unmatched force in the music industry. Lil Nas X is undoubtedly a 'gay cultural icon' who has used his fame and sexuality to elevate and promote an LGBTQ+ lifestyle. Recently, Lil Nas X rocked the music industry by releasing a song called "Montero," which speaks about his embracing and acceptance of his homosexuality, winning him MTV's Music Video of the Year award. In March 2021, Lil Nas X released "Industry Baby" to address the ostracization he faced due to his sexuality and how he has stayed strong under adversity to be the success he is today.

**(Parent Warning:** Please be aware that the music video "Industry Baby" is very sexual, includes censored nudity, and is inappropriate for teenagers to watch.)

- Most-Nominated Male Artist at the 62nd Annual Grammy Awards.

- Has won awards for Best Music Video and Best Pop Duo/Group Performance.

- Lil Nas X is the first openly LGBT Black Artist to win a country music association award.

- Times Magazine named him as one of the 25 most influential people on the internet in 2019.

- Lil Nas X has become a 'cultural icon' as he openly uses his platform to promote a LGBT Lifestyle

## **STEP #1: DISCOVER** **WHAT IS THE MESSAGE/WORLDVIEW?**

- Throughout Lil Nas X's short career, he has been judged for his alternative life style. The intro to the music video "Industry Baby" begins with Lil Nas X being sentenced to prison for being openly gay. **He uses "Industry Baby" to push back at his haters, and to prove his staying power, regardless of people's perceptions about him and his sexuality, and their desire to keep him locked away.**
- The lyrics begin 3 months into his sentence, with Lil Nas X in his cell, surrounded by his accomplishments (his two Grammys, his platinum album, and a poster of his performance from the BET [Black Entertainer] Awards), singing "... couple Grammys on him/couple plaques/that's a fact/...I ain't lost since I began/funny how you said it was the end/then I went and did it again." **Despite the opposition, Lil Nas X sees himself as thriving under adversity.**
- As the song progresses, we see that **despite Lil Nas X's incarceration, his sexuality and lifestyle only seem to become more vulgar and extreme.** Lil Nas X gets a lap dance and is dry-humped by his cell mate. He then walks through the halls with two other inmates in provocative clothing, holding on to his inside-out pockets, as if they are his possessions — a sign that they are his sexual slaves or 'hoes' and him being their master.

- As the song moves into the chorus, the video progresses to the shower room where Lil Nas X leads 8 other men, all naked and wet, in a provocatively choreographed dance including twerking, squatting, rolling on the floor (the nudity is censored, but does not leave much to the imagination), while singing *"I got what they waitin' for/I don't run from nothing',dog/Get your soldiers, tell 'em I ain't laying' low/You was never really rooting' for me anyway/When I'm back up on the top/I wanna hear you say he don't run from nothing, dog/Get your solders, tell 'em that the break is over."* **Nas is going for shock value here.** What 'they' (his haters) are waiting for is him to back down, but instead he fights against expectations and standards (male nudity is not common in the music industry), and is ready for a fight (lyrics about not laying low, not running from anything, readying the soldiers). **Nas is unwilling to conform to the industry (or his haters') standards because of his sexual preferences and beliefs. In fact, he is being purposefully controversial to call out those who say he should not act this way; he even mentions 'baby boomers' in "Industry Baby" after many conservative and religious groups were outraged after his "Montero" music video was released.**
- The next scene shows rapper Jack Harlow handing out books to inmates in their cells. He gives Lil Nas X the "Book of Montero," (which looks similar to a Bible). Inside this book is a small pick, which he uses to dig a tunnel out of his cell (a parody of Shawshank Redemption). He and the other inmates are able to take over the prison (while one of the guards is distracted by the scene with the devil from his music video "Montero"; note the lyric *"turn my haters to consumers"*). They then start to do whatever they like: drive police cars, zap each other in the electric chair, dance in the field, and eventually leave the prison riding on top of the prisoner transport bus, while the guard towers burn in the back ground. **If the "Book of Montero" is meant to portray Nas X's worldview, and within that book is the tool which leads to his freedom and the destruction of the prison, then Nas is communicating the need to destroy the institutions that keep people confined, and from expressing who they truly are.** In fact, in an article Lil Nas X clearly said: **"Music is the way I fight for liberation. It's my act of resistance and that true freedom requires real change."**
- This music video also seeks to question why Lil Nas is being ostracized for his sexuality.** This is communicated in two subtle ways. The first is a scene showing Colton Haynes as the prison guard, mentioned above, watching Lil Nas X's music video "Montero" and lusting over it as he licks his lips. (NB: Colton Haynes is a prominent gay actor who has found success in supporting roles in Transformers, CSI Miami, and starring in Arrow and Teen Wolf.) The second subtle way is a short scene with a Jason Momoa (the lead actor in Aquaman) look-a-like. While Momoa is not gay, Lil Nas X is making reference to the fact that Aqualad, Aquaman's sidekick, is a gay man in the DC Universe's Young Justice. In these ways, **Nas is exposing the double standards within the entertainment industry.**
- The music video also seeks to show that Lil Nas X is not the only artist who people thought would not get far.** By featuring Jack Harlow, another 'one hit wonder' whom experts thought would fade away, "Industry Baby" has caused both artists to gain more popularity than ever before. I find it interesting that Harlow and Lil Nas X both have a similar story, in that many people thought they would succeed in the music industry, and yet they have exceeded expectations.

# STEP #2: DISCERN

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

- Lil Nas X portrays the best life as 'do what you, when you want, with whomever you want, and no one can tell you otherwise.' He believes that the music industry, specifically the rap community, and his 'haters' (religious, right-wing Conservatives) are trying to repress his expression, keep him in a 'prison,' and away from the public eye. He sees his own truth/worldview (Book of Montero) as the tool to obtaining real freedom, by breaking down standards and prejudices. Lil Nas X sees freedom as 'anything goes,' where chasing your passions, giving into your lust, and following your sexual urges reigns supreme. And yet in reality, he is a slave to sin (**John 8:34**), and to a life that never truly satisfies. As we explore the Biblical worldview regarding living for things of this world, we see that Nas X's mantra is contradictory to the message of Scripture regarding freedom (**Galatians 5:13**), sin, and sexuality.
- Lil Nas X is so caught up in the world, which shows you his spiritual condition. Despite being raised by Christian parents, he has turned his back on his upbringing and given in to living his personal 'truth' rather than the Truth of the Bible, that is, Jesus. **1 John 2:15-16** tells us, **"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world"** (NLT). "Industry Baby" shows Nas finding pleasure in worldly things, such as awards, money and influence, but also in flaunting his sexual identity, and creating controversy. These things are not of God, but of this world.
- The Bible tells us that if **"you have been raised with Christ, set your eyes on things above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God"** (Col 3:1) and **"put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, lust [and] evil desires"** (Col 3:5, NIV) While Lil Nas X believes that he is living his best life and breaking away from limitations, in reality, by giving in to his earthly desires, he is on a path towards eternal death. **James 1:14-15** says that man is **"lured and enticed by his own desire, then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death"** (ESV). As Christians, we are told not to chase after the temporary pleasures, but rather everlasting life, which is true freedom in Christ.
- Today's culture increasingly views Biblical sexual ethics as bigoted and old-fashioned. Where God's design for sex is within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (**Genesis 2:24, Hebrews 13:4**), post-Christian culture says give in to your sexual lusts and passions with whomever or whatever is available. Although sex seems to be a taboo topic in many churches, and is rarely addressed within the church despite today's hyper-sexual culture, the Bible is packed with information to help Christians work through the message of "embrace your sexuality regardless what people think." It is crucial that we continue to work at understanding what the Biblical says regarding sex, sexuality (**Leviticus 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:18**) and gender (**Genesis 1:27, Matthew 19:4**).

# STEP #3: DECIDE

## WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?

- While we strongly do not recommend your children or teens watching or listening to: “Industry Baby,” we do want to challenge you as parents to understanding the cultural messages being spoken to your children in the form of media. Lil Nas X’s music video “Industry Baby” has over 222,000,000 views on YouTube and has been streamed over 1.3 billion times on streaming platforms like iTunes and Spotify. The reality that our kids face daily is that they are being bombarded with messages about sexuality, acceptance and the right to choose gender preference. It is beneficial for parents to step back, and take a look at the pervasive messages being communicated in culture, and help your kids to ask the following question: **“What do I believe and why do I believe it?”**
- Secondly, anyone who works with adolescents and young adults will tell you that sexuality, LGBTQ+, acceptance, gay rights and the church’s position about homosexuality are some of the hottest topics being discussed in the world and by students today. With the introduction of SOGI in school districts across Western Canada and the hyper-sexual agenda continually being promoted through mainstream media, the church is faced with some tough decisions as we seek to answer the question: **“How do we stay Biblically faithful, holding Biblical convictions, as we speak about gender, sexuality, and identity?”** As the pot of sexual confusion continues to boil over, the church must respond sensitively, gracefully, truthfully and prayerfully, understanding the sensitive issues and struggles that the LGBTQ+ community faces. As we seek to understand this, we must first recognize that we all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God, even in regard to our sexuality and our expression of it (**Romans 3:28**).
- Thirdly, **we want to encourage you as parents to be pro-active in regard to having intentional, Gospel-centered conversations with your children and teenagers about identity, sexuality, gender and belonging.** There is no doubt in my mind that the prominent message of our culture is all about being your authentic self, regardless of the way you were brought up. As you have these crucial conversations please remember to **take time to listen, to ask thought-provoking questions, and most importantly, to affirm God’s design for sexuality and gender.**
- Lastly, we want to remind you to pray for your kids daily. As many of Lil Nas X’s songs focus on themes about indulging in the physical, and embracing your sexuality, we want to remind you that our kids are in the biggest battle of their lives. **This battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12).** It is so crucial that we prepare our children for this battle by helping them put on the full armour of God (Salvation, Righteousness, Truth, Spirit, Faith and Peace).