

3(D) Review { By Walt Mueller }

SONG/VIDEO: "Stressed Out" by Twenty One Pilots

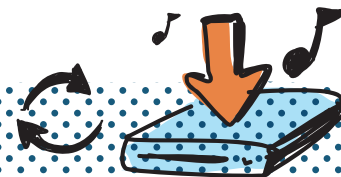
Background/summary:

This is the third single release from the band's chart-topping and award-winning ("Top Rock Album," 2016 Billboard Music Awards) fourth album, *Blurryface*. Released in April 2015, the video for "Stressed Out" has been viewed almost 700 million times, and has been labeled by some as a "Millennial generation anthem." The Columbus, Ohio band is made up of 27-year-old frontman Tyler Joseph, and 28-year-old drummer Josh Dun.



DISCOVER: What is the message/worldview?

- The video features singer Tyler Joseph wearing black on his hands and neck (his regular practice when performing live or on video) as the "Blurryface" character, which in Joseph's words is "a guy that kind of represents all the things that I am as an individual – but also everyone around me – is insecure about." That insecurity is evidenced in the song's opening lines: *"I wish I found some better sounds no one's ever heard/I wish I had a better voice that sang some better words/I wish I found some chords in an order that is new/I wish I didn't have to rhyme every time I sang/I was told when I get older all my fears would shrink/But now I'm insecure and I care what people think/My name's Blurryface and I care what you think."*
- The song features the duo lyrically and visually contemplating/lamenting the difficult yet inevitable transition from childhood to adulthood in light of developmental, relational, and cultural realities. As they do, the video shows them as adults engaging in activities from their childhood: riding big wheels through their old neighborhood, sitting on the curb drinking fruit punch drinks, revisiting their childhood homes, and trading a secret handshake. They sing, *"Wish we could turn back time, to the good 'ol days."*
- Their yearnings for childhood are not just sentimental, but are seen as a way to escape from the stress and anxiety that comes as a result of needing to become adults. The *"good 'ol days"* were a time *"When our momma sang us to sleep."* They continue, *"But now we're stressed out."*
- The pair long for simpler times with family and friends *"when nothing really mattered. . . We used to play pretend, give each other different names/We'd build a rocket ship and then fly it far away."* They compare the stresses of now with ease of the past: *"Out of student loans and treehouse homes we would take the latter."*
- As the song nears its end the duo is depicted sleeping and dreaming in their beds. Behind them stand their parents and siblings who in unison shout, *"Wake up! You need to make money!"*



DISCERN: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?



- The reality is that life passes by relatively fast. The Scriptures tell us that our lives are short and will disappear like a vapor (James 4:14). Our days are like grass or flowers that flourish and then quickly are gone (Psalm 103:15&16). Because our days are short, we are to make the most of our time (Eph. 5:16) and number our days so that we might increase in wisdom (Psalm 90:12).
- As we grow older and transition into physical adulthood, we are called to pursue spiritual growth and maturity. We are to increase in our knowledge of God (Colossians 1:10), our love for one another (I Thess. 3:12), and press on to spiritual maturity (Hebrews 6:1). Still, in terms of our faith we are called to be childlike (Matthew 18:3). The kind of maturity we seek should be marked by growth in Christlikeness and knowledge, while we continue to be in some ways like children.
- Anxiety and stress are at epidemic proportions among children, teens, and young adults. Currently, anxiety is the number one health issue being treated by health centers on college campuses. This indicates that the stresses of growing up are very real. While we must take steps to reduce stressors and anxiety in our lives and the lives of our kids, we must also learn/teach a theology of anxiety and stress. God calls us to “not worry about life” (Matthew 6:25; Luke 12:22-34), to “not be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6), and to cast our burdens and cares on Christ, who has promised to carry these for us (Psalm 55:22; Matthew 11:28-30).
- When it comes worrying about the opinions of others and our appearance to others, we can quickly slide into ordering our lives by the opinions of others and finding our identity in becoming people pleasers. Since this fear of man can control our thoughts, time, and actions, it is idolatrous behavior. We are commanded to put no other gods before the one true God (Exodus 20:3). Our identity must be found as one made in the image of God, made for God, and made to serve God.
- While we are called to image God through working hard and we are to earn a living, money should never become an issue either through caring too little or caring too much about money and material things. With Agur, we are to pray that the Lord gives us neither too much or too little (Proverbs 30:8&9).
- Life is in fact difficult. Because we live in the now-but-not-yet-fully-realized Kingdom of God, we will encounter difficulties. Still, we are able to look forward to that day when we “return” to a simpler time void of pain, suffering, tears, and death (Revelation 21). In the meantime, we should embrace difficulty as an opportunity to grow (Psalm 119:71) rather than yearning to escape into the relative simplicity and innocence of the past.

DECIDE: What do I do with it?

- We can applaud Twenty-One Pilots for their honesty and vulnerability in “Stressed Out.” Help students see how honesty and vulnerability are necessary if there is going to be personal confession, change, and the growth of community in the Body of Christ.
- “Stressed Out” is a perfect video to share with students as a discussion starter on a variety of issues including anxiety, stress, fear, and identity. Solicit their input on how they are dealing with each in their lives. What is causing their anxiety? Their stress? Their fear? And, where are they going to find their identity? Once they have become vulnerable about themselves, take them into the Bible, offering them an opportunity to hear God speak His will and way on these matters.
- Use the video as a catalyst to teach about physical, emotional, social, and spiritual growth. We cannot stay in a place of “arrested development.” Help students adopt a healthy and realistic approach to endeavoring to embrace and enter adulthood in ways that bring honor and glory to God.
- Show the video to parents as a way to help them understand the ways that the adolescent experience has changed. Ask them to identify and address the causes of anxiety and stress in the lives of their kids. Then, challenge them to eliminate unnecessary stress and pressure where they can. Help them understand the signs of burnout and depression.

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



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