

Countering the Blasphemy Challenge

■ Local students planning county-wide response to YouTube campaign to denounce God

By Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun

TOXEY – “We’re doing this because we don’t want anyone to go to hell,” says 14-year-old Cassy Arrington of South Choctaw Academy.

When Cassy and her classmates heard of a shocking challenge being issued on a popular teen website, they were stunned. But their shock soon turned to a decision to take action – action that they hope will include students from every school in the county, and beyond.

In the ‘Current Events’ portion of their history class at SCA, Cassy and her classmates learned of efforts by an atheist organization to reach young people with their anti-Christian message. Teacher Nina Butler told the students about a news report she had seen describing ‘The Blasphemy Challenge’, a campaign issued by the radical atheist group, the Rational Response Squad.

The campaign, Butler told them, was an effort by that organization to project their views against Christianity into the minds of young people through the internet.

But, Butler told the students, the organization was taking their message a step further by urging young people to denounce the existence of God – in particular, the Holy Spirit – and to do it by videotape through the popular teen internet site, YouTube.

Growing in popularity especially with teens, YouTube allows its users to upload their own homemade videos in a visual chat room, and to respond to the videos through message boards.

The so-called ‘Blasphemy Challenge’ offers free DVD’s to anyone who will upload a video of themselves on YouTube denouncing the Holy Spirit, with the intent to gain 1,001 such messages on the website over the next few months.

“The Rational Response Squad is giving away 1001 DVDs of ‘The God Who Wasn’t There,’” states the Blasphemy Challenge website. “There’s only one catch: We want your soul.”

“It’s simple,” the site goes on. “You record a short message damning yourself to Hell, you upload it to YouTube, and then the Rational Response Squad will send you a free ‘The God Who Wasn’t There’ DVD... You may damn yourself to Hell however you would like, but somewhere in your video you must say this phrase: ‘I deny the Holy Spirit.’”

The premise of the challenge is to counter scripture references in Mark 3:29, which says, “Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.”

Hundreds of the blasphemy videos have already been posted by teens and young adults on YouTube, with many of them shockingly blatant in their anti-Christian sentiment. Many utter such statements as ‘See you in hell!’ ‘I denounce God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; May I burn in hell ... if there is one!’ and ‘Guess I’ll be there in hell with the rest of America!’

According to Cassy, and several other students who heard the statements, the messages are more than a little frightening.

“We went to the website at school,” says Cassy. “We didn’t watch the videos, but we listened to them. It was upsetting. Just hearing it was scary. It made me really uncomfortable. Some of the kids were even covering their ears.”

Internet experts say that the audience viewing the videos could potentially reach into the million – with



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell
These SCA students are part of a larger group of students who are taking steps to counter the Blasphemy Challenge that is encouraging young people to denounce God. Pictured are (seated) Cassy Arrington and Hannah Giles; (standing) Joshua Mosley, Jacob Roberts, and Miranda Hallman.

tion, has an even bigger agenda with the project. By garnering as many ‘blasphemers’ as they can get, they say they hope to rid the United States of Christianity within the next few years.

The sheer shock value of the project has garnered national media attention in the past few weeks, with programs such as ABC’s Nightline, Fox News Channel’s The Big Story with John Gibson airing stories about the campaign.

Following their initial shock about the website, students in several grade levels at SCA began to form their own plan to counter the challenge. Some have already written their own YouTube message board responses to the challenge.

In their responses, the students acknowledged their own faith in God and their plans to pray for those who have denied Him in the videos.

“...I’m sorry you feel that way,” stated 9th grade Jacob Roberts in his response. “God loves you no matter what you believe in. I will pray for you.”

“Do you not realize that you wouldn’t be able to say you don’t believe in God, if it weren’t for God?” argued Miranda Hallman in her response.

“I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” answered Joshua Mosley. “I know God still loves you even though you have treated Him like you have.”

“I heard that some atheist people are trying to get Christianity out of the U.S.,” Hannah Giles said in her response. “Would you please tell them that they are...making a big mistake in their life. Tell them that the only way to get to heaven is through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.”

In addition to their message board responses, according to their teacher the students are in the process of putting together their own YouTube counter-challenge.

“The students were so upset about this that they wanted to do something,” Butler states. “It was their idea to get twice as many videos (2,002 responses) from people saying that they believe in God.”

Over the next few weeks, the students say they will be putting feet to their plan. Working through a local youth minister, they hope to put together rallies at all local schools – both public and private – to ask students to make videos in response to the Blasphemy Challenge. They plan to give students the opportunity to make their videos at the school rallies, or to do so at home on their own time.

In the coming weeks, the students plan to culminate the counter-challenge with a rally on the courthouse square in Butler for all students who have participated.

The students who have already committed to issuing a response on YouTube are convinced that they will reach their goal of 2,002 responses within the next few weeks.

For Cassy and her classmates at SCA, the counter-challenge is not about striking back at the atheists in anger. It is about sharing their faith with those whom they believe need to hear it most. It is about reaching out to those who are lost.

And it is about saving their country – and the generation who will soon be running it – from going down the wrong path.

“They are trying to turn people who are Christians into atheists so they can turn America into a country that is not based on God,” Cassy explains. “We don’t want that, and we don’t want anybody to go to hell.”

“If we don’t do something,” she adds, “it could be that the whole next generation will not believe in God at all.”

most of them teens, pre-teens, and young adults. In fact, the instigators of the project are adamant that children are just the audience they are seeking. The Blasphemy Challenge website acknowledges this target audience in a question-answer forum about the project.

When asked if it is true that they are targeting young people in particular, the website answers:

“Yes. As young people are the most vulnerable to religious indoctrination, we feel it is important to reach them with the concept of challenging the doctrine they are told to unquestioningly believe.”

“It isn’t just adult Christians who are indoctrinated with the frightening ideology of Christian belief,” the site continues. “In fact, most Christians are indoctrinated as children. These children are told that they must believe the following: That 2000 years ago a man died, stayed dead three days, rose from the dead and then flew into the air above the clouds – and right now this man is with them as their invisible companion and savior from Hell, if only they will submit to him. If this bizarre theory were not religious in nature, teaching it to children would probably be considered child abuse.”

But the Blasphemy Challenge, by its own admis-

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