

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
From *YouthWorker Journal* and YouthWorker.com

Apologies

Justin Bieber, Johnny Football Try to Make Amends

By Paul Asay

What Happened

After appearing on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show” recently, pop singer Justin Bieber admitted to being “really nervous” about his first appearance on television in a while. In a video he posted on Facebook, he explained why.

“I think I was nervous because I was afraid of what people are thinking about me right now,” he said. “It’s been a minute since I’ve been in a public appearance, and I didn’t want to come off arrogant or conceited or basically how I’ve been acting for the past year, year and a half.”

Bieber has a point. In less than 18 months, Bieber went from innocent teen heartthrob to tabloid bad boy. In September 2013, he was charged with assaulting a limo driver. The following July, he was accused of egging a neighbor’s house and reached a plea deal. In August 2014, Bieber pled guilty of careless driving and resisting arrest while drag racing in Miami. Had he not pled guilty, he could’ve been charged with driving under the influence, too.

That’s not counting the time he got in trouble for vandalizing property in Brazil, or when he was stopped in Germany because his pet monkey didn’t have proper paperwork, or when he raised eyebrows in Poland for walking through the airport half-naked, or—you get the idea.

Bieber seems to feel bad about much of his past behavior. “I’m not what I was pretending to be,” he said on his video. “...Often we pretend to be something we’re not as a cover up of what we’re truly feeling inside, and there was a lot of feelings going on in there. Just being young and growing up in this business is hard. Just growing up in general is hard.”

Bieber isn’t the only young star trying to make up for past mistakes. Johnny Manziel, the promising young quarterback for the Cleveland Browns, recently entered rehab. He didn’t specify any reason for checking into the clinic, but photos of him partying have filled the tabloids—often with a bottle of alcohol in hand—and when a picture of him rolling up a dollar bill in a bathroom made the rounds on Twitter, his team became deeply concerned.

“Johnny knows there are areas in which he needs to improve in order to be a better family member, friend and teammate,” his advisor Brad Beckworth said, “and he thought the offseason was the right time to take this step.”

Talk About It

Bieber and Manziel apologized, in a way—admitting to the world they’d not been the kind of people they should’ve been. Apologizing is an important step for all of us when we’ve hurt or let down the people who are close to us, but it can be really hard to do.

When has it been hard for you to say that you're sorry? What makes apologizing so difficult sometimes?

The apology can't stop at sorry, of course. You have to take steps to correct whatever went wrong—as Manziel apparently is trying to do. Have you ever needed to fix something in your life? What you do around the house? Homework habits? How you treat a younger sibling? Is it hard to make systematic changes? How successful have you been?

Despite the apologies, many people doubt whether Bieber or Manziel actually will change. That's one of the trickiest things about apologies sometimes. If we've repeatedly hurt people with our actions, those people doubt whether we're sincere when we try to make amends. God forgives our sins, but our past actions still can make people skeptical. Have you ever doubted that someone—whether at home, school or in the culture at large—could change? What made you doubt?

What the Bible Says

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (James 5:16).

“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:32).

“Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago” (Acts 3:19-21).

Paul Asay has written for *Time*, *The Washington Post* and *Christianity Today*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and wrote the Batman book *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He recently collaborated with Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, on his book *The Good Dad*. He lives in Colorado Springs with wife, Wendy, and his two children. Check out his entertainment blog at Patheos.com/blogs/watchinggod or follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.