

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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First Impressions

Is the Seahawks' Richard Sherman a Bad Guy?

By Paul Asay

What Happened

Seattle Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman made perhaps the biggest play of his life near the end of the NFC Championship Game, when he knocked a ball away from San Francisco receiver Michael Crabtree. The interview he gave shortly afterward raised more eyebrows than the play itself.

"I'm the best cornerback in the game!" he hollered on his Fox postgame interview. "When you try me with a sorry receiver like Crabtree, that's the result you are going to get! Don't you ever talk about me!"

Sherman also was shown making choking motions to the San Francisco team. He also said something to Crabtree that sparked the receiver to push Sherman away by the facemask.

People swiftly reacted to Sherman's interview—and it wasn't good. People called the cornerback a prime example of a poor winner. Many viewers took to Twitter to lambast the Seahawk. In a culture that often defines people through tweets and sound bites, Sherman became an NFL villain.

There was more to this supposed bad guy than met the eye. Sherman graduated from high school with a 4.1 grade point average, high enough to get into Stanford University, one of the more prestigious schools in the country. He left the school with a degree—and a 3.9 GPA. He writes a column for *Sports Illustrated*.

What did he do to Crabtree to make the receiver push him away so angrily? According to the audio (he and Crabtree were mic'd), he was congratulating the receiver on a "h--- of a game" while trying to shake his hand.

None of this excuses his behavior after the game, which many still would call classless. Sherman himself said he regretted what he'd said—especially calling out Crabtree the way he did. "Obviously I could have worded things better and could obviously have had a better reaction and done things differently," he told ESPN. "It is what it is now, and people's reactions are what they are."

Talk About It

Many people thought they knew all they needed to know about Sherman after seeing the interview. No one's soul can be summed up in a 30-second interview. Do you think

Sherman got a bad rap in the aftermath? With some people saying his rant could earn him millions in endorsements, do you think people now are giving him too much of a pass?

Fair or not, first impressions are a big deal. Have you ever said or done something that made you look bad and you regretted? Were you judged for it? Were you eventually able to overcome it? Have you ever made a snap judgment about someone else that turned out to be unfair?

How important is it to treat your opponents with respect? Do you think Sherman was wrong to call out Crabtree or boast about his own skills? If you were in Sherman's shoes, what would you have done differently?

What the Bible Says

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye” (Matt. 7:1-5).

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires” (James 1:19-20).

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

Paul Asay has covered religion for *The Washington Post*, *Christianity Today*, Beliefnet.com, and *The (Colorado Springs) Gazette*. He writes about culture for *Plugged In* and wrote the Batman book, *God on the Streets of Gotham* (Tyndale). He lives in Colorado Springs with wife Wendy and his two children. Follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.