

Youth Culture Lesson
Finding Teachable Moments in Culture
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Strike Out

Twitter Trolls Brought Down by Famous Angry Father
By Paul Asay

What Happened

It started with a simple tweet. Former major league pitcher Curt Schilling sent out a congratulations message to his daughter, who's expected to pitch for Salve Regina University next year.

However, the congratulatory message was quickly followed by a number of harsh, suggestive and bullying tweets directed at Schilling's daughter. They were so bad, in fact, we can't repeat what most of them were.

Schilling was furious—and proceeded to track down two of the most vulgar tweeters and revealed their identities on his blog. One was a student at Brookdale Community College. "How do you think that place feels about this stud representing their school?" Schilling asked. "You don't think this isn't going to be a nice compilation that will show up every single time this idiot is googled the rest of his life?"

The other allegedly was a student at Montclair State University. "...Does anyone attending Montclair State University have a student handbook?" Schilling asked. "If so can you pass it along because I am pretty sure there are about 90 violations in this idiots [sic] tweets."

"This is a generation of kids who have grown up behind the monitor and keyboard," Schilling said. "The real world has consequences when you do and say things about others. We're at a point now where you better be sure who you're going after... What these kids are failing to realize, what this generation fails to realize is this; Everything they've just said and done? That is out there now, forever. It can, and in some cases will, follow them for the rest of their lives."

That seems to be true. According to media reports, the student from Brookdale has been suspended, and the Montclair student—recently graduated—was fired from his job selling tickets for the New York Yankees.

Talk About It

Most of us didn't need Curt Schilling to tell us that what we put online can haunt us forever, but sometimes it's hard to remember. We tend to share our lives through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter—and sometimes we share too much. Have you ever shared something online that you later regretted? What was the fallout?

Unfortunately, social networks also have been forums for bullying. Trolls say some awful things online, figuring they'll never be discovered. Other bullies post insults and putdowns online or spread rumors that can go viral. Have you ever been bullied online? Has someone you know? Did you ever talk to anyone about it? What was the result? Have you ever *been* the bully?

Words can hurt—whether they're written online or said in person—but words also can heal. Can you think of a time when someone said just the right thing to cheer you,

perhaps a compliment that you've held onto for years? When have you made someone else's life a little better by something you've said?

Schilling's two Twitter trolls said some really nasty things about his daughter, and most people would say they deserved to suffer the repercussions. However, in turning the tables, an argument could be made that Schilling became a bit of a bully himself—at least temporarily ruining these guys' lives for a mistake they made on Twitter. Did he do the right thing? Would you have done anything differently?

What the Bible Says

“Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet. 3:10-12).

“There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers” (Prov. 6:16-19).

“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36-37).

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

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.