

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

**Ugly**

The Sad Story of Amanda Bynes

By Paul Asay

**What Happened:**

For years, Amanda Bynes was considered one of the most promising comic actresses of her generation. She starred in such Nickelodeon shows as “All That” and “The Amanda Show,” as well as appeared in a number of movies from *Big Fat Liar* to *Hairspray*.

Lately, Bynes is best known for her erratic behavior and her Twitter account.

During the past several months, she’s been arrested several times for a number of driving offenses, including driving under the influence, and recently was charged for throwing a bong out her apartment window. She often shows up for court wearing outlandish outfits. On her profane Twitter feed, she obsesses about her weight and cosmetic surgery, and often she simply rambles non-sensically.

She’s known for calling people “ugly,” perhaps the greatest sin one can commit in Bynes’ eyes. They range from Miley Cyrus and Jenny McCarthy to the Obamas and her own father. She told Rihanna, “Chris brown beat you because you’re not pretty enough.”

For some, Bynes is one of social networking’s most entertaining trainwrecks. More than 3 million people follow her, but many see symptoms of severe mental illness in Bynes; and they question whether watching someone self-destruct should be a legitimate avenue of entertainment. Writes Dr. Drew, “It may be time to leave @AmandaBynes alone...if she needs help, hopefully she’ll get help one day before something bad happens.”

“Somewhere under the wigs and the face piercings and the angry, strange tweets, there’s a real 27-year-old girl who just a few years ago had talent and a promising career and what looked like a genuine smile on her face and a spark of light in her eyes,” writes Mary Elizabeth Williams for [Salon.com](http://Salon.com). “There’s a human being. Whatever it is she’s going through is not some roadside attraction. It’s a roadside disaster. And if we can’t help her, why should we be staring at her?”

**Talk About It:**

Do you think Amanda Bynes needs help? Who should be the one to give it to her? If you could talk with her, what would you advise her to do?

Sometimes we make fun of people we shouldn’t. It can be easy to do at times, to mock those who act strangely or talk differently. It’s particularly tempting if we don’t like the person very much—or if they don’t like us. Sometimes, the people who seem to deserve help the least are the ones who need it the most.

Have you ever known someone whom you felt could use help? Did you help the person? What did you do? Have you meet someone who probably needed help or someone to be a friend, but you weren't able to give him or her the help he or she needed?

**What the Bible Says:**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous...” (Matt. 5:43-45).

“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 5:46-48).

*Paul Asay has covered religion for The Washington Post, Christianity Today, [Beliefnet.com](http://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 two children. Follow him on Twitter @AsayPaul.*