

## Actions Have Consequences

“It seemed like a good idea at the time.” How many people have said that as they contemplate past decisions? Have you? Usually that statement implies that the consequences of the “good idea” turned out to be “not so good”!

Let me introduce you to Billy Gibby, aged 32. Billy decided to raise money to support his family by selling advertising space on his face. Since 2007, he has been paid to have 24 tattoos inked on his face, ads for various companies, including some pornographic websites. Nicknamed “Billy the Human Billboard,” he has even recently changed his name to Hostgator Dotcom – for money, of course. Over the years he has made about \$100,000 from his tattoo advertisements, but that money is all gone.

Now Billy has a problem. He wants to have the tattoos on his face removed, but the cost of removal is about \$4,000 and he doesn’t have the money. How will he raise the money? He has returned to selling advertising space on the rest of his body!

One would think, at some point in the process of deciding to sell advertising on one’s face, and especially pornographic website addresses, that the question might occur to one, “Is this a wise thing to do?” Or, in light of the fact that it is slow, difficult and expensive to remove tattoos, perhaps the question, “What if I decide in the future that I don’t want to have tattoos (or *these* tattoos) on my face?”

Billy’s claim is that he got the facial tattoos “because of my mental illness” (one source indicated that he claims to suffer from bipolar disorder), but he also claims that he did it to support his family. He currently has a wife and five children.

Apparently many employers are reluctant to hire Billy because of his “facial advertising.” Imagine that! If you were the manager of a retail department store, would you want Billy, with his facial pornographic website advertising, to be waiting on your clientele? I think not.

In one source, Billy is quoted as saying, “My kids look at me and know that’s daddy, but I worry if I don’t get them taken off, other kids will make fun of my kids for their daddy having tattoos on his face...People are so judgmental because of how I look, but one thing I’ve learned from this is to not judge people.” Another source quoted him as saying, “People shouldn’t judge people by looks...People look at me like a criminal when I go into [a] store. I did this to keep my family from being homeless.”

Billy is an example of a person making a decision to do something (many times!) without thoughtfully considering the consequences of his action. Billy doesn’t think that people should judge others by their looks, but reality is that having porn website addresses tattooed on one’s face is not the same thing as having a big nose or ears that stick out. I don’t know how many children Billy had (if any) when he began his “tattoo odyssey,” but he should have considered the effect his appearance would have on his children’s lives. Actions have consequences (2 Corinthians 5:10).

There may be some humor to Billy’s story, but the story of Jessie Logan is sad. Jessie was an 18-year-old senior in a Cincinnati area high school. She sent a nude photo via her cell phone to a boy she had been dating for a couple of months. For whatever reason, he forwarded that photo to four other girls. Eventually the photo was sent to hundreds of teenagers in at least seven Greater Cincinnati high schools.

Jessie found herself the object of taunts wherever she went. She was called derogatory names. She was “kicked out” of several parties of her peers. She was ashamed and became introverted.

Despite the taunting at school and missing a lot of classes, Jessie graduated. Then another student at her high school hung himself and she went to the visitation and funeral. Afterwards, she went home and hung herself.

Jessie regretted taking and sending the photo, but once it was sent, she no longer controlled the consequences. She may not have thought it was immodest to send such a photo, but she apparently also did not consider the consequences of putting it in the hands of another. Actions have consequences.

I learned about Jessie's story from a television interview and a newspaper article. Her mother, Cynthia, was critical of the students who forwarded the photo, the school officials who didn't do enough to help her and the school resource officer who did not press charges (at Jessie's request).

There is plenty of blame to go around for Jessie's situation. The "boyfriend" and other students who forwarded the photo behaved in a hateful manner, as well as those who taunted her later. Jessie's mother is critical of the parents of those students, saying, "I'm just devastated by these parents that allow their children to do and say anything they want."

I think perhaps I understand why Jessie didn't consider the consequences of her action. In both the television interview and newspaper article, Cynthia Logan didn't acknowledge that all of her daughter's suffering could have been avoided had she not taken and sent the photo to another. She and her husband are launching a national campaign to encourage laws that will address "sexting," described as "the practice of forwarding and posting sexually explicit cell-phone photos online." They want a bill passed that would mandate accountability for those who engage in sexting.

It is a tragedy that Jessie committed suicide, but her parents cannot pass off their responsibility by blaming others or campaigning for laws. Were they permissive parents, allowing their daughter to "do and say anything [she] wanted"? They needed to have taught her about modesty, sexual integrity and the truth that actions have consequences.

One of the most important lessons that parents can teach their children is to consider the consequences of their decisions before acting. It can mean the difference between life and death, physically and spiritually.

Sources:

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