

# The Road Less Traveled

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By Steve Higginbotham

Richie Incognito, an offensive lineman for the Miami Dolphins, isn't "incognito" anymore. Rather he's been the lead story in sporting news for the past week. Incognito was thrust into the national spotlight because of accusations his fellow teammate, Jonathan Martin, leveled against him for bullying.

A message left on Martin's voice mail seems to verify the accusations made against Incognito. In this voicemail, Richie Incognito left a terribly vulgar, profane, and threatening message. Consequently, the Dolphins organization has suspended Incognito, and will likely dismiss him from the team.

If everything is as it seems, Incognito is deserving of punishment. He's been caught dead to rights. Whatever happens to him is of his own making. He's made himself an easy mark. But here's a question I'd like for us to answer — Have we ever been caught dead to rights? Have we ever made ourselves an easy mark? Have we ever been guilty, with no excuses to hide behind? If so, what did we need at that moment? We needed grace, forgiveness, and understanding.

I'm not suggesting that we or Incognito for that matter, shouldn't have to face the consequences of our/his misconduct, but we don't need to be abandoned and rejected in such moments. That's not what Jesus did, and as his disciples, that's not how we should respond either.

While we may not be in a position to reach out to Richie Incognito in his hour of failure, aren't there others to whom we can reach out? What about the unmarried, teenage girl who ends up pregnant? What about the person who is unfaithful to his marriage vows? What about the person who is caught in an embarrassing lie? What about the person who is caught abusing alcohol or some other drug? And the list can go on and on. These people have made themselves easy marks, and it would be easy to "pile on," but I'd like to call you to a more Christlike response. Hate the sin, but love the sinner. There are people in your sphere of influence who have really messed up. How do you plan on responding to them?