

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Faithfulness,” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for January 29, 2012. The lesson is found on page 57 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

Whom do you trust? That seems to be the theme of some recent news stories. Whether or not three prominent men have been faithful in fulfilling their responsibilities has sparked debate and investigation.

Francesco Schettino—On January 13, the cruise ship *Costa Concordia* rammed into a reef off of the coast of Italy. The collision capsized the ship. As a result, at least 13 passengers are dead, and almost 20 are still missing. Now, the actions of the ship’s captain, Francesco Schettino, are being scrutinized.

Schettino comes from a seafaring family, graduated from a prestigious Italian nautical institute, and has had a career aboard ships for thirty years. But because of his actions on one day, the captain has come under fire. Investigators are questioning whether Schettino was “showboating” and taking unnecessary risks when he sailed the *Costa Concordia* too close to the shore. Furthermore, the captain has been accused of abandoning ship, leaving passengers for whose safety he was responsible.

Joe Paterno—Joe Paterno summarized his coaching philosophy with the words “success with honor.” In his view, character came first, championships second, and academics before athletics. He insisted that on-field success not come at the expense of graduation rates. But when the 85-year-old former coach of the Penn State football team and winningest coach of Division I college football died on January 22, the news spoke of his failures as much as his victories.

Late last year, Coach Paterno was fired from his position. On November 5, 2011, former Penn State defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky was arrested for the sexual abuse of eight young boys over a 15-year period. During the investigation, it was reported that Paterno had learned of an incident of abuse years before and notified school officials but not the police. This opened a debate whether Paterno did or did not do enough and led to his dismissal.

Newt Gingrich—Newt Gingrich was tied with rival Mitt Romney in polls two days before South Carolina’s Republican primary. Then, ABC TV aired an interview on Thursday night featuring Gingrich’s ex-wife. In the interview, Marianne Gingrich said her ex-husband lacks the moral character to be president because he had an extra-marital affair that ended their marriage in 1999. The details of the events leading to the divorce were made public years ago, and Gingrich has often admitted his failings.

The first question of a debate the next day dealt with that interview. Instead of again addressing his unfaithfulness to his ex-wife, Gingrich questioned whether or not ABC and other news outlets were faithfully performing *their* duty to give unbiased coverage. “The destructive, vicious, negative nature of much of the news media makes it . . . harder to attract decent people to run for public office, and I am appalled that you would begin a presidential debate on a topic like that,” he said. Gingrich won the next day’s primary by a substantial margin, but many expect the divorce to remain an issue in his campaign.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above news story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

Consider these news stories. What do they say about the importance of remaining faithful in fulfilling one’s responsibilities? Is it enough to be faithful most of the time? Why do you think an act of unfaithfulness can quickly tarnish a person’s reputation?

We want ship captains, coaches, and politicians we can trust. Faithfulness is an important ingredient in all relationships. Paul had much to say about this in his letters to Timothy.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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