

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Relationships,” the High School Sunday school lesson for February 19, 2012. The lesson is found on page 75 of *High School Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

# the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

What does it take to get through difficult times? The Japanese have a word for it—*kizuna*.

Every year Japan’s Kanji Aptitude Testing Foundation takes a poll, asking citizens of that nation to choose a Chinese pictograph character (called a *kanji*) that best describes the preceding year. Half a million people took part in the annual poll this year. The runner-up for this word of the year was *wazawai*, meaning disaster. That certainly seemed an appropriate choice for a year marked with a severe earthquake, a serious leak in a nuclear reactor, and a tsunami.

But the winner was a totally different word. About 60,000 people nominated *kizuna*, a kanji meaning bonds or connections between people. After the tsunami smashed into Japan’s northeast coast last March, killing thousands and engulfing entire communities, the Japanese people’s determination to pull together drew international attention. *Kizuna* was certainly an appropriate description of that attitude.

*Kizuna* was credited with holding the nation together in its severest trial since World War II. Now that same desire for strong bonds between people is being evidenced in a variety of ways.

An upsurge of marriage is one indication. Retailers reported selling 24% more wedding rings than they did the preceding year. Dating agencies saw their membership drop. People joining such groups to find a partner decided to get married rather than continue looking. Onet, a dating agency with 34,000 clients, found its membership dropping 20% shortly after the disasters last March.

Retail sales also may indicate that people are opting for time with family and close friends rather than a night on the town. Rising sales of such appliances as espresso machines and home bakeries have been interpreted to mean that customers are entertaining at home rather than unwinding at a restaurant or coffeehouse.

But *kizuna* also seems to have a dark side. While many have sought to strengthen relationship ties that have grown weak, others have chosen to abandon old relationships to seek new ones. The Miyagi Divorce Consultation Center reported that clients doubled between April and October. Criminals have also taken advantage of an increased desire to strengthen interpersonal bonds. Con artists have called elderly victims claiming to be a relative in need of money quickly.

*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:*

**What do you remember about the disasters that hit Japan a little less than a year ago? Think of similar disasters that have affected our own country during the past year such as severe flooding and tornadoes. How has American response been similar to the Japanese response to disasters?**

**Imagine that you had to face a severe problem. To whom would you turn? What are some things we can do to strengthen ties with those people today?**

**Paul had faced many disasters in his life. He knew the value of building close relationships with others. He shared relationship wisdom with Timothy from which we can all benefit.**



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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