

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Trusting God When I Feel Rejected,” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for May 31, 2015. The lesson is found on page 81 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

Melissa Gagne is just like every other mom in lots of ways. She juggles busy schedules, temper tantrums, and lunch boxes with the best of them. But Melissa has an extra challenge or two. Her son, Ryan, has autism. In an effort to help Ryan experience some typical kid stuff, she took him to a mall when he was 5 to ride the train. What happened next was anything but typical.

When the train started moving and whistling and doing all those things that trains do, Ryan was beyond happy. But for a kid with autism, that happiness often expresses itself in some unexpected ways. Ryan began flapping his arms, bouncing up and down, and making loud noises. Right away the man running the train hurried over to Ryan and started screaming at him to sit down. Ryan didn't understand why a stranger was yelling at him, and had a melt down. Melissa ran over and pulled her son off the train, but it was too late. By now Ryan was screaming, pulling her hair, biting her face, and crying in sheer terror. She explained to the man that Ryan had special needs and was just excited to be on the train. She asked if perhaps they could give it another try. His response?

“Retarded kids shouldn't be riding my train.”

By now a small crowd had gathered around, and Melissa collapsed on the floor with her son in her lap. She was sobbing and bleeding. Her emotional breakdown only fueled Ryan's. The man went back to running the train and the crowd went back to their shopping. Except for one woman.

The stranger sat beside them on the floor and handed Ryan a bag of chips. She told them how her daughter has cerebral palsy and how she often comes to the mall just to get away for a while. As Ryan began to calm down, she took Melissa by the hand and walked her to the office of the mall manager, where they filed a formal complaint against the man working the train. But before she left, the stranger said something to Melissa that she'll never forget: “You can't expect people who don't experience the pain we do on a daily basis to get it the way we do. Only other parents like us can truly empathize.”

The simple kindness of a stranger at the mall taught Melissa to relate to others in a new and different way. She says she pays this empathy forward as often as she's able to and would encourage the rest of us to do the same. “Pay attention to the special needs families in your own communities, at your schools, at your restaurants and especially those melting down publicly somewhere at a mall, grocery store, or Target. We're everywhere, and if you show the slightest bit of kindness toward us, even if you can't quite understand our pain, we will never forget it—or you.”

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:

How must Melissa have felt as the crowd of people stood and watched her and Ryan?

Why was the woman's response to her so meaningful?

We have all felt rejected at one time or another, and it can be very painful. It can even change who we are. But rather than letting rejection make us bitter or angry, we can learn to trust God during those times. Let's look at some biblical examples of how rejection can bring us closer to God.

Read more stories like this at TheMighty.com, a website designed to share “the power of stories, the strength of communities, and the beauty of the human spirit.”



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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