

Use “The Scene” to introduce “By Works or Faith?”, the High School Sunday school lesson for August 16, 2015. The lesson is found on page 67 of *High School Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

# the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

In 2003, the American Film Institute named the top 50 movie heroes of all time. The list included the superpower heroes that we’d expect, like Superman and Batman. And it included the flashy adventure-movie heroes, like Indiana Jones and James Bond. But #1 on the list wasn’t flashy; nor did he have superpowers. He was defense attorney Atticus Finch of the classic movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

In 1960, author Harper Lee published the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which became an immediate best seller and won a Pulitzer Prize. The movie was released in 1962, starring Gregory Peck, who won the Academy Award for Best Actor. In the racially charged 1960s, readers and moviegoers admired Atticus Finch in his important (and dangerous!) task as the lawyer for an innocent black man charged with rape of a white girl. Atticus Finch was also a devoted, loving father, who wisely taught his two children. A real hero, goodness personified.

And so for decades the Atticus Finch character held the position of hero in the minds of thousands of people . . . until now. In July 2015, author Harper Lee released another book, *Go Set a Watchman*, with the same lead character, but set about 20 years after the original story.

Making the news this summer are readers disappointed in a hero. In this new book, an aging Atticus Finch has negative opinions about African-Americans and even has attended a Ku Klux Klan meeting. And the Atticus Finch who, in *Mockingbird*, said he did his “best to love everybody,” now seems pro-segregation. He even chides his now-grown-up daughter, Scout, for expecting racial equality.

A perplexed high school English teacher, in a *New York Times* article, asked: “How do you take this guy who everybody looked up to for the last 50-plus years, and now he’s a more flawed individual?”

A blog post from Ravi Zacharias International Ministries describes our original view of Finch as a “champion of truth, justice, and human decency.” But then the piece gives an interesting perspective on this new development: We should be encouraged by the fans’ disappointment, because “our sorrow regarding [Finch’s] possible moral compromises shows a clear hunger for genuine goodness.” The article advises: “If we recoil from his failures, we ought to do more than just grieve; we ought to move forward and show the world a better way.”

*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 do you feel when a real live hero of yours turns out to be a “flawed individual”?**

**Do you believe that we have a built-in “hunger for genuine goodness”? Defend your answer.**

**Do you tend to think that people (including yourself) are spiritually OK as long as their good actions outweigh their bad ones? If a person can be “good enough” to get into Heaven, how does he know for sure that he’s done enough?**

**Let’s take a look at how the Bible heroes understood that we’re not capable of earning God’s approval by our own works.**



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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