

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

Water pollution is becoming a more and more serious problem each year. It kills aquatic animals, disrupts food chains, destroys ecosystems, and causes diseases. So how does one person make a difference in the face of an overwhelming global problem such as water pollution? Sixty-year-old Martin Strel has one idea: you swim in it. And not just around the lake. He’s swimming around the world.

On September 10, Strel announced his plan to undertake his 10,000-mile swim. He will set off from Long Beach, California on March 22 (World Water Day) and hopes to finish up in about 450 days. His journey will take him through oceans, rivers, canals and other bodies of water in more than 100 different countries. Strel will swim between 5 and 12 hours each day, depending on water currents and weather—all to bring attention to the issue of water pollution. “And for peace and love,” he adds.

It’s a multimillion-dollar adventure, largely coordinated by an Arizona-based marketing firm. Strel will have a support boat, providing emergency resources and a place for him to take breaks. Overnight sleeping accommodations, food, and other supplies will also be needed.

Originally from Slovenia (a small country between Austria, Croatia, and Italy), Strel now resides in Phoenix, where he has come to be known as “Big River Man.” Since 2000, Strel has swum the entire length of the Mississippi River, the Yangtze River in China, the Danube in Eastern Europe, and the Amazon River where he encountered “the most dangerous fish on the planet”—the tiny candiru. These tiny fish are described as such because they bore into every human cavity and grow by feeding on human flesh and blood. He says piranhas “are OK,” but that’s probably because he’s learned how to deal with them. After being attacked by piranhas once, Strel now has the crew on his support boat pour buckets of blood into the water to draw them away from him as he swims.

As for sharks, they aren’t that bad, according to Strel—so long as he leaves them alone and swims in the same direction they are swimming. “I touch them and it’s ‘OK! I’m your friend.’” But he swims with a knife strapped to his leg . . . just in case.

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 would you describe Martin Strel’s attitude? How do you think his attitude will impact his success or failure on this adventure?

How does your attitude (good or bad) influence your everyday life?

Why is the right kind of attitude so important?

When life isn’t going our way, it’s easy to get a negative attitude. But keeping a good attitude—even in bad circumstances—is extremely important. Today we’ll discover how to do just that.