

Use “The Scene” to introduce “A Sinful Woman,” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for October 11, 2015. The lesson is found on page 37 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

“In all honesty, I feel sorry for him,” says Anastasia Boylan—an 18-year-old student at Umpqua Community College in Oregon. On her fourth day of college, Boylan was shot in the back by Chris Harper-Mercer. He killed nine people and wounded nine others in a shooting rampage at the college campus on October 1 before taking his own life. According to survivors’ accounts, Harper-Mercer burst into his introductory writing class and shot his professor. Afterward he began gunning down his terrified classmates one by one as he questioned them about their religious beliefs. It was the deadliest mass shooting in the United States in two years, the worst in modern Oregon history. “I feel bad for him,” continues Boylan. “I just wish he could’ve not done that.”

Police have not revealed any motive for the shootings, although it’s been clear that Harper-Mercer was a troubled young man with a passion for guns. Prior to coming to college in Oregon, he lived in California, where he graduated from a learning center for students with learning disabilities and emotional problems. He lived with his mother after his parents divorced when he was a teenager. His mother, Laurel Harper, posted frequently online about her own love of guns and her son’s emotional troubles. Yet she never seemed to worry that her son could become violent. “He’s no babbling idiot nor is his life worthless,” she wrote. “He’s very intelligent and is working on a career in filmmaking.”

So what went wrong? Ian Mercer (Chris’ father) still lives in California and says that he had no idea that his son had any guns at all. “How on earth could he compile 13 guns?” Mercer asked a CNN reporter. “How could that happen?” It’s just one of many questions that have gone unanswered since the shootings.

In the meantime, Anastasia Boylan and her family feel extremely grateful at the end of this horrifying ordeal. The bullet that entered her back missed all vital organs and apparently did no permanent damage whatsoever to her body. She was released from the hospital four days after the shootings. She has yet to regain full feeling in one of her legs, so she currently uses a wheelchair to get around.

“My heroes . . . are my peers that were in the classroom with me and experienced all of this,” Boylan remarks. “I will always share my religion and my thoughts . . . with everyone because their [her fallen classmates’] hearts and their souls will never be forgotten.”

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 think of Anastasia Boylan’s compassion toward the man who shot her?

Why would it be easier or more natural to judge or condemn him instead?

Do you know people who are commonly judged, ignored, or shunned in your own everyday circles?

It’s easy to think that we’re better than others—especially when they make a public mistake or their “dirty little secrets” come out. But that’s not how Jesus wants us to respond. Let’s look at how Jesus reacted to sinners and seek to follow His example.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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