

Use “The Scene” to introduce “The Pharisee and the Tax Collector” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for July 31, 2016. The lesson is found on page 55 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.



Listening to speeches may not be your favorite thing to do, but some of the behind-the-scenes reporting about the political conventions in the United States has been interesting to hear. Recently, reporters were discussing the “creation stories” of the presidential and vice presidential candidates—present and past. Each candidates’ advisers craft messages and public relations materials to create an idea for voters of who this person they might vote for is and where they come from. What are their roots? What do they care about? Where did they grow up? Are they like me?

The reporters commented that for all of the candidates, a big question they have to decide early on is how much to let people know and exactly what kinds of details will be helpful to their image. They also have to decide how much they want to attempt to keep private. But for anyone in the public eye on such a grand scale, keeping things private is a constant challenge.

Hillary Clinton’s image is a well-crafted one, yet there is some distance between her and the press. A reporter covering her campaign commented that though during her last presidential bid she flew on the same plane with the press and often chatted with them, on recent trips she has been in a private plane with her advisers somewhere ahead in the clouds. The reporter surmised that the candidate may have felt burned by the press enough in the past to make her more wary this time around.

Another reporter suggested that though Donald Trump gives the appearance of being more approachable and conversational with his followers, he has also been very dismissive and even hostile at times toward the press—often placing himself in opposition to what reporters have to say about him or his campaign. And questions are still swirling about his actual business practices and net worth, as he has decided thus far to keep his personal tax records private.

Even with all the glossy photos and mini-documentaries, it seems it’s very difficult to get a real picture of who anyone is in this presidential campaign.

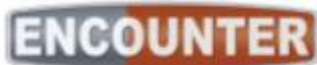
As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:

If you could ask the presidential candidates anything, what would you want to know?

Do you think people running for important government offices have a right to privacy when it comes to their personal lives? Why or why not? How much do you think they should share? If you were the adviser for any of the current presidential candidates, what would you suggest they tell about themselves?

How do you decide how much of your life to share with others? How much of your life do you share with God? When you talk to God, how much do you talk with Him about and how much do you hold back? How much do you focus on the problems of others? Think about the reasons you have for sharing or not sharing private information and discuss those reasons.

Sometimes we hear or see more than we want to know. And sometimes we may focus too much on others in our prayers instead of talking about and listening to what God has to say about what’s going on in our own hearts. Let’s think about this more as we look at Jesus’ story of a Pharisee and a tax collector.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

© 2016 Encounter Curriculum. Written by Laura Derico. Copies may be made for classroom use only. Not for resale.

<http://www.encounterface2face.com/category/the-scene/>