

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Breaking Barriers” the High School Sunday school lesson for March 26, 2017. The lesson is found on page 23 of *High School Teacher* by Standard Publishing.



“Deadly attack near British Parliament blamed on Islamic extremism.” “White man who wanted to harm blacks arrested in New York stabbing.” “Israeli-American arrested over threats to Jewish centers.” The headlines from this week clearly tell us something—there’s a lot of anger out there over our differences.

Not that we didn’t know this to be true already. From the time we are kids we start separating ourselves into “us” and “them” groups. Sometimes those groups are based on race or culture, sometimes they are based on who has money and who doesn’t, or who has athletic ability and who doesn’t, or who has X and who doesn’t (fill in your own idea for X).

What is it that makes us want to cling to sameness and reject differentness? And what is it that produces such anger over these separations?

It may be natural for people to gravitate toward those who are like themselves. It’s easier to make conversation and build connections with people with which you have something in common. But I think most people would agree that there is much to be gained from interacting with people who are different from you as well. It’s kind of like thinking about your dinner menu—chicken tacos are yummy, but chicken tacos every single night for the rest of your life would get really old, and would keep you from experiencing all the other wonderful kinds of meals you could be having.

Sometimes though, people identify so much with a certain group, that they begin to fear that any inclusion of others—others with differences—might erode the strength that comes from the sameness. And where there is fear, anger is never far behind. So, what do you think? How do we stop being so afraid of each other?

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

Have you ever noticed yourself getting angry at someone who was very different from you? How would you describe where that anger came from? If you’ve never experienced that kind of anger, have you ever felt fear or anxiety over meeting new people? What was that like?

This article talks about anger being linked to fear. What do you think about that connection? Is it always true?

How would you describe what is good about having diversity in the area where you live, in your school, or among your friends? What would you say is difficult about experiencing diversity?

Some people think differences show us that some people are better than others. They make value judgments about what groups of people are superior and which ones are inferior. But this type of attitude is not from God. Today we’ll look at God’s perspective on prejudice.