

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Family Crises” the High School Sunday school lesson for May 21, 2017. The lesson is found on page 75 of *High School Teacher* by Standard Publishing.



Even if you haven't seen the show or read the book it's based on, if you are a teen or work with teens, it's likely you've heard something about *Thirteen Reasons Why*. The story is focused on the events leading up to the suicide of a teenage girl, named Hannah Baker. A new girl in town, Hannah tries to make her way through the traps and trials of high school, only to be hit by rumors, lies, and harsh words that make her feel so devastated that she cannot overcome them. As she prepares to bring her life to an end, she records tapes of her stories about each of the people she feels played a role in her decision.

The show has become controversial due to the sex and violence portrayed, and its seeming glorification of suicide. Many people are asking whether it should be available to teens at all, and some schools have banned the book. Others suggest that having adults watching the show or reading the book with teens would be a good way to open up conversations about hard subjects such as bullying, gossip, guilt, shame, violence, rape, sexuality, and suicide.

Whether you watch or read it or not, the story offers the opportunity to talk about how each of us is affected by the actions and choices of the people around us—for better or worse. And for teens, what may seem like a small act to an adult can be magnified a thousand times in the mind of someone who feels she has no way out, no options to escape pain and betrayal. Though Hannah's family plays a relatively minimal role in her story, you are reminded as you listen to her telling about the events of her life that for many teens, their "family" is not just their mom and dad and any siblings. Many teens rely on their friends and other adults in their lives to be their support system, to give them advice, provide encouragement, offer protection, and be a safe place for their thoughts, and their secrets. When this support system seems to crumble away, or is never given a solid foundation in the first place, sometimes what parents have to say can't even be heard or felt.

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

Have you heard of the story mentioned in this article? What are your views about it?

What do you think? Is it OK to watch shows or read stories that include sex and violence if you are doing it to understand a perspective or have a conversation about important issues? Where do you draw the line?

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among people in the 15 to 24 age group. The statistics on the reasons for those suicides are harder to determine, but family crises are sure to have a major role. What do you think about the idea of teens considering their friends and others as part of their "family"? How might that affect a person in good and bad ways? How much do you think family crises play a role in teen suicide?

Times of crisis can make us feel like caving in, but it is possible to overcome and be stronger as a result. Today we'll look at the story of Joash and see how he survived a family crisis.