

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Do Not Steal” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for July 22, 2018. The lesson is found on page 47 of *Young Teen Teacher* by Standard Publishing.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

In today’s world of social media, reputations can be utterly destroyed in a matter of minutes. It’s a powerful vehicle for calling out people for bad behavior, but what happens when the stories aren’t verified? Or what happens when this powerful tool is put in the hands of the vindictive, the wicked, or simply people who don’t stop to think about the consequences of their online actions?

Restaurants have been demolished by bad reviews, government officials have had their powers stripped, journalists have been attacked, doctors maligned, and the list goes on and on. Much of this abuse and harassment happens at a small scale—within communities. And it doesn’t seem as though it will end anytime soon. The problem is that often irreparable damage gets done before anyone has time to check out the stories and verify the reports—or not. The website and resulting book, *Shame Nation* (released in late 2017), sought to shed some light on this problem by collecting the stories of hundreds who had been the targets of online criticism and shaming, and then looking at how training people in compassion and kindness could stop the wave of often unwarranted destruction.

But now that so many have access to sites that allow them to post anonymous and utterly false statements about the character and conduct of people and institutions—what can stop them?

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above story to read. After all teens have had the opportunity to read the article, discuss it in this way:

What do you think about the freedom to post criticism online? Is it good or bad for us?

If you have a legitimate grievance with or criticism of a person or an organization, why wouldn’t you post about them online? What drawbacks could there be in publishing the truth?

Think about the possible consequences of online shaming. What can it take away from a person or a business? Is this kind of “taking” just another form of stealing? Explain.

Anything we have possession of can be stolen. And our reputations may be one of the most valuable things we own. Today we’ll look at what the Bible has to say about stealing, its cost, and its cure.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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