

Use “The Scene” to introduce “Which Church Has the True Gospel?” the Young Teen Sunday school lesson for October 1, 2017. The lesson is found on page 31 of *Young Teen Teacher*.



“You can’t believe everything you hear . . . or see . . . or read . . . or learn from the news . . . or . . .” It doesn’t fit well on a T-shirt, but that statement could well be the motto of the generation growing up today.

We have more sources of information than ever before, for just about any possible subject. Any latest news story gets covered from 500 angles and talked about incessantly on a thousand different radio shows, podcasts, Facebook live videos, television shows, and more. Yet what is getting lost in all this communication, somehow, is the ability to think critically, speak clearly, and separate fact from opinion. The latest controversy over the American professional athletes kneeling in protest during the national anthem is a good example.

In the past few days, I have heard such statements as these:

“If they don’t like our country, they should just go live somewhere else.”

“People have died for our flag, so they shouldn’t disrespect it.”

“The NFL isn’t racist. If it was racist, why would there be so many black players being paid so well?”

“Why is it okay to protest racism during your work hours, but not okay to pray?”

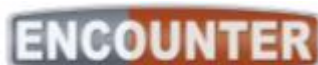
Just for the record, these have been statements made by professional (sometimes government-employed) communicators on broadcast television or radio, not just random things heard on the street, if that matters. And these statements are often used as rallying cries for people who want to take sides on the issue. But the unfortunate thing is, none of these statements reflects a sound assessment of the issues at hand.

The first one about living in the country reflects a weak and false assumption: if they are protesting during the anthem, they must hate everything about the USA. And as for the second statement, if you believe people have died for our flag or for a song, you might want to go talk to a veteran or two of the recent conflicts the USA has been involved in and see what they have to say about that.

The third statement would be laughable, if it weren’t for the sad fact that so many people think it is true. But just ask yourself this question: There are lots of women paid very well to appear in pornographic magazines and movies—does that make those magazine publishers and movie makers feminists? Does simply paying someone well for a job mean that you have sound beliefs about their equality? Or how about this question—how many team owners and leaders of corporations involved in professional sports are people of color?

And then we come to the last statement and the question this writer wants to ask in response is—who said it wasn’t okay to pray? Athletes have been praying on and off the field for years, and many teams pray before a game—even in public school and professional sports contexts. Athletes, in fact, probably mention God more often and more publicly than any other high-profile profession in the country. There have been players who have been ridiculed for their faith—yes, that is certainly true. But who was ridiculing them, and why? And were they really “not allowed” to reflect their beliefs, even on company time?

God has given us brains for a reason. Some might say He has given us brains to reason. Maybe we should start doing more reasoning and less assuming.



MEETING GOD FACE-TO-FACE

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

What do you think about this article? What is the point the author is trying to make?

Have you heard any of the statements mentioned in this article? What did you think about them when you heard them?

What makes it difficult at times to distinguish a statement about facts from one based on opinions or assumptions? Why is it important to know the difference?

Getting to the truth about an issue can be difficult, but the work is always rewarding. And some issues are certainly more important to our lives than others are—and thus, worth working hard to get at the truth. Today we’re going to look at statements about Jesus and beliefs people have about His return. We’ll consider how to tell which statements are reliable and which ones are not.



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