

Use “The Scene” to introduce “The God of Powerful Beginnings” the High School Sunday school lesson for February 2, 2020. The lesson is found on page 63 of *High School Teacher* by 21st Century Christian.

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

This past week, many mourned the death of former NBA star, Kobe Bryant, along with the death of eight others, who died suddenly when the helicopter they were traveling in crashed due, apparently, to bad weather. Among them were Bryant’s 13-year-old daughter, Gianna, and two of her basketball teammates.

After the tragedy became widely known, Bryant’s former Los Angeles Lakers teammate, Shaquille O’Neal, and StubHub (along with others) pledged to make significant donations to the Kobe and Vanessa Bryant Family Foundation. Kobe Bryant was an icon for millions of young people who grew up watching him play. Though his life and behavior were not untainted (due to a charge of sexual assault that was later dropped, and his own confession of adultery), for many years Bryant had worked to help improve the lives of young people and their families. His foundation gives scholarships and operates Mamba FC, a youth soccer club that instills leadership values through sports. The foundation also provided services for homeless children in Los Angeles. No doubt the good work of this foundation will grow and receive even greater support in the coming months as many grapple with ways to remember this legendary basketball player who was also a husband, father, brother, son, and a good friend to many. Perhaps the end of his life will become the beginning of new lives for many struggling young people.

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

Had you heard about Kobe Bryant’s tragic death? What did you think when you heard about it?

When people’s lives are cut off at a relatively young age, it can be hard to come to terms with the fact that they are gone. When you think about the young girls who died in the plane crash, or even Kobe himself, what do you feel or think? Does it make you think about anything with regard to your own life?

Bryant’s basketball career in a way was set before he was even born. His father was an NBA player as well, and when Kobe was finishing high school, his rare talents and skills helped to get him selected by the NBA’s Charlotte Hornets. He then became the youngest All-Star in NBA History at 19. Not only did he win many basketball championships and awards (including two Olympic gold medals), he produced a film to honor his beloved game, and won an Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film in 2018. But Bryant was undoubtedly most proud of his four daughters—the youngest just born last year. What do you think motivated Bryant to help other young people reach for their dreams?

Sometimes great beginnings are born out of tragic endings. When we look at the lives of the first Christians, we see how they dealt with the death, resurrection, and farewell of Jesus, and how others also gave or risked their lives to follow Christ. Today we’re going to see some of the steps God took to establish the church.

