



Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture



Use “The Scene” to introduce *Young Teen Bible school Lesson 11*.

What’s on your feet? If you are wearing some sort of athletic shoe, your choice may have been affected by a family conflict that reaches back into the first decades of the twentieth century.

The title of a recently-published book by Barbara Smit says it all: *Sneaker Wars: The Enemy Brothers Who Founded Adidas and Puma and the Family Feud That Forever Changed the Business of Sport*. Smit tells the story of the Dassler brothers in Germany who created some of the most popular brands of modern footwear and athletic apparel.

Adi and Rudolf Dassler were brothers, based in the town of Herzogenaurach. They founded a small shoe company in the 1920s called Gebrüder Dassler (Dassler Brothers). Adi Dassler was the visionary shoemaker, creating sturdy and lightweight soccer and running shoes in the family’s laundry room. His older brother Rudolf was the company’s chief salesman.

During the early reign of Adolph Hitler, the brothers benefited from Hitler’s emphasis on sports. Hitler thought victory in athletic competition would show the world that the German people were physically superior to everyone else. Many German athletes began wearing their shoes. But in the 1936 Olympics, Adi Dassler also convinced an enemy of Hitler to wear Dassler footwear. African-American Jesse Owens, snubbed by Germans because of racism, embarrassed Hitler by winning three gold medals while sporting Dassler Brothers shoes!

But Adi and Rudolf’s personal relationship was marred by constant conflict. By the end of World War II, Rudolph severed business ties with Adi. Adi’s company became known as *Adidas* (from *Adi Dassler*). Rudolph founded a competing company called *Puma*.

As the companies and the family grew, the feud continued through the generations. Eventually, brothers, cousins, and even parents fought for athletes, contracts, and the competitive edge. The feud was sneaky at times. One group caused the competing company’s product to be stuck in customs. At other times, the feud was ugly. One accused the other of being allies with the Nazis. Children were written out of a parent’s will because they favored one brand of shoes over the other.

The companies formed by this family feud are still major manufacturers of athletic footwear. Adidas is the number two athletic shoe and apparel company in the world behind Nike. Puma remains a strong competitor as the feud rages on.

*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:*

**What is your favorite brand of athletic shoe? Why? What do you find interesting about the history of the two brands of shoes in the story above? The article does not directly mention reasons for the Dassler family feud. What do you think might have been some reasons for it?**

**Can you think of some other reasons for family conflict? What causes conflict in your family?**

**The Dassler story is not unique. Since the beginning of time, families have had conflicts within them. Today we will look at a dysfunctional family from the very early days of biblical history. Let’s try to understand some causes of family conflict.**