



 **The Scene**

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture



Use “The Scene” to introduce *Young Teen Bible school Lesson 0*.

Why would someone dress a cat in a black uniform cap and hire the animal to be the chief of a train station? In the case of Station Master Tama of the Japanese Kishikawa train line, the motives are clear.

Tama, a 9-year-old tabby cat, was appointed chief of the Kishi Station in western Japan last year to bring good luck. Her job is to sit by the entrance of the station, posing for photos while in her uniform.

Appointing a cat to turn around fortunes makes cultural sense in Japan, where cats are considered good luck and are believed to bring in business. The Maneki Neko (translated as *Beckoning Cat* but also known as *Welcoming Cat*, *Lucky Cat*, *Money Cat*, or *Fortune Cat*) is a common Japanese sculpture, usually made of porcelain or ceramic, and is often placed at the entrance of a Japanese business.

The Kishikawa train line had need of good fortune. The company had been losing almost \$5 million a year as the number of passengers steadily declined. Two years ago the company completely automated the Kishi station and released all station workers to cut costs. But now tourists and commuters are flocking back to the station. After Tama the cat was appointed chief, ticket sales have grown by 10 percent.

In addition to ticket sales, the train line has been making money selling novelty goods. People are snatching up postcards, erasers, notebooks, and pins that are decorated with Tama’s photos. There’s even a \$13 book of Tama’s photos called, *Diary of Tama, the Station Master*.

“She never complains, even though passengers touch her all over the place. She is an amazing cat. She has patience and charisma,” says Wakayama Electric Railway Company spokeswoman Yoshiko Yamaki. “She is the perfect station master.”

The tabby has been doing such a good job of raising revenue for the troubled train line that she has recently been promoted to Super Station Master Tama. She was rewarded with bonus pay—all in cat food.

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:

Do you know anyone who has dressed up a pet? Why do you think they did so? How did their motives differ from the motives of the owners of the Kishikawa train line described in the article?

What does the word *motive* mean? Why is understanding someone’s motives important in interpreting their actions?

The Kishikawa train line did not dress up Tama just to make the cat look “cute.” They had well-thought-out motives for their actions! The motive behind an action is as important as the action itself. The same is true when we want to understand why Jesus did and said what He did. We know Jesus performed miracles. But the Bible tells us three reasons *why* He did so. Let’s see what those motives are.

