



 **The Scene**

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture



Use “The Scene” to introduce *Young Teen Bible school Lesson 6*.

They say knowledge is power. If that is true, a major entertainment-producing company has recently been given much more muscle by a federal judge.

The court case is a battle between the old media and the new media. Viacom Inc. has sued YouTube in order to learn who has been downloading their copyrighted videos from YouTube’s file-sharing site. This information could help Viacom learn whether or not people are more likely to download copyrighted material than amateur video also found there. Viacom also sought to find out whether or not the search capabilities of YouTube (and parent company Google) were intentionally written to treat copyrighted videos differently. Viacom wants to prove not only that YouTube has copyrighted materials on its site, but also that the company purposely makes it easy to steal copyrighted material.

Viacom is seeking at least \$1 billion in damages from Google, saying that YouTube has built a business by using the Internet to “willfully infringe” upon copyrights on Viacom shows such as Comedy Central’s *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and Nickelodeon’s *SpongeBob SquarePants* cartoons. Viacom will try to prove that YouTube has known of copyright infringement and can do more to stop it. Up until now, YouTube and similar file-sharing sites have said that they only provide a place for users to share files and that they are not responsible for what users choose to share.

U.S. District Judge Louis L. Stanton ordered YouTube to give Viacom full access to its user logs. While YouTube argued that this access would violate privacy and free speech rights, Judge Stanton disagreed. The court ordered that only a user’s Internet protocol (IP) address would be made available to Viacom, not more detailed information such as a user’s name or e-mail address.

The attorney for YouTube remained concerned by the ruling. He said a user’s IP address sometimes includes identifying information such as a person’s first initial and last name. Yet Viacom said it isn’t seeking any user’s identity. The company said any data provided “will be used exclusively for the purpose of proving our case against YouTube and Google [and] will be handled subject to a court protective order and in a highly confidential manner.”

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:

How often do you watch videos on YouTube? What videos have you viewed there recently?

Unless YouTube appeals the ruling, they will have to tell Viacom which videos are downloaded and give the IP addresses of the people who download them. How does that give Viacom power? How do you feel about a company knowing what you view on your computer? Tell why you feel that way.

Tell about times when having knowledge about what was going on around you gave you a sense of power. How did you use that power?

Viacom may soon have a great deal of information available to them. They certainly will use it to further their interests. As Christians, we also need to seek information about what is going on around us. But we are called to gain knowledge for a more selfless purpose. Let’s look at what God says about gaining knowledge about the events surrounding us.

