

the SCENE

Viewing the latest news through the lens of Scripture

Children love to pretend that they are soldiers, princesses, and sports stars. But when children become adults, imitating can become lawbreaking. Just this month, people from all over the country have been arrested for presenting themselves as officers of the law.

Brockton, Massachusetts—When 26-year-old Robert Pastena became angry with another driver, he allegedly took action. The woman in the other car told police that Pastena flashed a badge and gun at her and her two friends and claimed to be a police officer—and then drove off.

Police say they found a Plymouth County Sheriff’s badge and a loaded handgun in Pastena’s vehicle. Pastena was arrested and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon and impersonating a police officer.

Dothan, Alabama—Sheriff’s deputies arrested former bail bondsman Timothy Ramon on charges of robbery and impersonating a police officer. In the words of Sheriff’s Captain Bill Rafferty, “The allegations indicated Dickerson went to a mobile home park on Saunders Road and he went to a residence and represented himself as an immigration agent. He placed an individual in handcuffs and in custody.”

Court records show that deputies charged Dickerson with stealing \$50 cash, a debit card, and a passport from the victim during the robbery.

Whidbey, Washington—Jim Bailey was a respected and well-known Oak Harbor resident who conducted training and lectures around the state—allegedly as a retired police officer. Over the past years the local newspaper has repeatedly identified him as a former police officer in several articles and letters to the editor. The problem is that Bailey has never served on any police force.

In August, Bailey intervened in an argument between a man and a woman and reportedly told onlookers to call 911 and request assistance for an officer. Since the incident, detectives have worked with the State Patrol’s Criminal Investigative Division to look into Bailey’s background. Investigators also served a search warrant on Bailey’s residence and car and seized evidence suggesting that Bailey may have been impersonating a police officer for years and may have benefited financially.

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:

Examine the above incidents of impersonating an officer. What do you think might have been the motives of the impersonation in each case?

At one time or another, we’ve all probably acted like something we’re not. Tell about a time when you put on a false front or made claims about yourself that were not true. Why did you do that? What were the results of your pretense?

As children, it is fun to dress up and pretend that we’re someone we aren’t. But when adults “play make-believe,” it can be a much more serious matter. In the world of religions, there are those who have “dressed up” the view of God and the Bible to look very different from what the church has taught through the centuries. Are these harmless changes or dangerous impersonations? To find out, let’s first look at what the Bible says about the unique nature of God and of the Bible.